ABSTRACT

The study will make an attempt to identify patterns of gender gap in child health in India and their socioeconomic and demographic determinants, and examine the possible role of female education and women's agency in reducing the gap. It will focus on selected indicators on health outcome (e.g., child mortality, prevalence of malnutrition) and health-seeking behaviour [e.g., immunisation coverage (preventive health care), medical treatment in diarrhoea and medical treatment in fever/cough (curative health care), and breast-feeding (feeding practice)]. It will apply Borda rule, Principal Component Analysis, Logistic regression techniques on three rounds of National Family Health Survey data. Children under three years of age are the units of analysis. Identification of the determinants of gender gap in child health might help to reshape health policies to reduce and remove gender gap in child health.

With the help of 21 selected indicators of health-seeking behaviour and health outcome, in Chapter Two and Three it is shown that there are ample evidence of varying level of gender gap exists in almost all the states of India over almost one-and-a-half decades. In Chapter Four it is shown that any consistently robust pattern of gender bias against girl children in child health is not present in India. But there is a consistent pattern of girl children's absolute health achievement. This is true irrespective of the number of indicators we use or the number of state we select or the measurement of gender bias or the method to reduce dimensions. In Chapter Five it is found that the gender gap in various health outcomes are not much related to the gender gap in various indicators of health-seeking behaviour. However for the girl children's health achievement, the indicators of health-seeking behaviour are significantly related to the indicators of health outcome.

In Chapter Six we focus on the girl children exclusively as there is a robust pattern for girl children's health achievements and tried to identify the determinants of health achievements for girl children. Given the Rawlsian theory of justice with degree of inequality aversion tending to infinity, the same determinants will, in turn, be able to reduce gender bias in child health in India. In this Chapter we analyse the effects of some selected demographic and socioeconomic predictor variables on the chance of full
immunisation, chance of medical treatment in diarrhoea and medical treatment in fever/cough, chance of at least six months breastfeeding, chance of malnutrition and chance of child mortality for girl children. It focuses on health achievements for girl children (a) in all India, (b) in rural areas in India, (c) for demographic factors only in India and (d) for socioeconomic factors only in India. The study applies binary bivariate and multivariate logit model to the three rounds of National Family Health Survey data. Except for a few cases, the results are consistently robust across the different models as well as across different dependent variables. It has been found that, among others, female education and women’s empowerment does have a positive role in reducing gender bias in child health in India.

Keywords: Gender Bias, Child Health, NFHS, Logit, Female Literacy, Women’s Empowerment, India.

JEL Classification: C19, C43, D63, I18, J13, J16, O15, O18, R11