



Gender Disparities in Child Adoption Trends in India

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Abstract:

Child Adoption is a complex and multifaceted process that reflects the sociocultural dynamics of a society. In India, adoption has a long history but is not without its challenges, especially when it comes to gender aspects. This paper explores gender-based adoption trends in India, highlighting the complex interaction of cultural, economic, and social factors that influence adoption decisions. The study used a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative information from interviews and surveys. Through in-depth analysis of adoption records, we reveal how gender shapes adoption preferences, practices, and outcomes. We examine the prevalence of male and female child adoption, the reasons behind such preferences, and the consequences of these choices on the adopted children and adopting families. The research findings highlight the existence of significant gender disparities in adoption patterns. Male children are more likely to be adopted than their female counterparts, and the reasons for this preference are multifaceted, ranging from cultural biases to economic considerations.

In summary, this paper provides a comprehensive overview of gender-sensitive adoption in India, highlighting the complexities, challenges, and opportunities of the adoption process. By addressing the gender differences that exist in adoption practices, this study contributes to the broader debate on gender equality and children's rights in the context of adoption in India.

Key words: *Gender, Adoption, India, Central Adoption Resource Authority: CARA, Orphan*

Introduction:

Child Adoption, a practice deeply rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of any society, not only reflects the values and beliefs of that society but also family and identity formation dynamics. In India's diverse and culturally rich landscape, adoption is a centuries-old tradition, rooted in compassion, social harmony and the desire to provide children with a loving environment and nurture.

However, when we look at this complex process through a gender lens, we uncover a nuanced and often troubling landscape, characterized by deep-seated biases and imbalances. Gender-based adoption trends in India are an important aspect of this phenomenon, inviting critical consideration beyond the surface of numbers and statistics. Although adoption is ostensibly intended to provide a loving home for disadvantaged children, the choices made in this regard are far from gender-neutral. A child's gender, whether male or female, plays an important role in shaping adoption preferences, practices, and outcomes, reflecting a complex interaction of cultural and economic forces and society. This research article seeks to delve into the nature of these gender disparities, shedding light on why they persist and what they mean for adopted children and adoptive families.

The aim is not only to understand the current adoption landscape in India but also to explore potential avenues to achieve greater equity and inclusion in the process. As we embark on this exploration, it is essential to acknowledge that India is a country of paradoxes, where tradition and modernity coexist, where cultures and traditions Diversity influences individual choices and social norms. Concepts of family and parenting vary significantly across regions and communities, making it a rich and complex terrain for examining gendered adoption practices. Our research will use a multifaceted approach, combining quantitative analysis and qualitative insights, to untangle this complex tapestry and provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors. In the following sections, we will explore how common male and female adoptions are, the reasons for gender-based preferences, and the impact these choices have on the lives of children and adoptive families. We will also look at the legal and policy frameworks surrounding adoption in India, exploring how they contribute to or mitigate gender disparities. Additionally, we will examine the role of adoption agencies, social workers, and advocacy groups in promoting more inclusive and equitable adoption practices. The purpose of this paper is not simply to highlight the issue of disparities in gender adoption in India but also to provide a platform for dialogue, understanding and transformation. By addressing these disparities, we aim to contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality and children's rights within the context of adoption in India, ultimately striving for a more equitable and inclusive adoption system that respects the dignity of all children, regardless of their gender.

Literature Review:

Thomson, Daniel (2018) referred in their paper regarding the gender disparities during the adoption process were based on economic considerations emerge as significant factors influencing gender disparities in adoption. Authors discuss how financial stability and resources may influence the likelihood of adopting a child of a particular gender. Economic factors are often intertwined with cultural and social expectations.

William D. Mosher and Christine A. Bachrach,(2020) emphasize that societal expectations and preferences heavily influence gender disparities in adoption. Traditional views on gender roles and family structures contribute to the perpetuation of preferences for specific genders among adoptive parents.

Barbara Melosh, Strangers and Kin (2022) explore the historical context of adoption, pointing out that gender preferences in adoption have roots in historical practices such as a preference for male heirs. Understanding this historical background is crucial for comprehending the persistence of gender imbalances.

Methodology:

The study used a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative information from interviews and surveys. This study employs a descriptive research design to analyse and describe the current state of trends in legalized adoption. The statistical analyses employed in this study include Panel Regression, correlation, and chi-square testing. These methods were chosen for their suitability in exploring the relationships and patterns within the collected data. Correlation analysis is employed to examine the relationships between various variables related to child adoption. The correlation matrix provides insights into the strength and direction of associations between different aspects of the adoption process.

Gender-based adoption trends in India:

In the paper looking at gender-based adoption trends in India, the analysis includes a variety of quantitative and qualitative data. These findings stem from an in-depth research approach that combines empirical evidence, surveys, interviews, and legal and policy assessments.

The analytical aspects of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. **Gender gap in adoption rates:** The study looked at adoption rates among children men and women in India, providing a comprehensive overview of the digital imbalance in adoption patterns. This analysis shows how gender preferences influence adoption decisions, highlighting the prevalence of these differences.
2. **Factors influencing gender-based adoption preferences:** To better understand the reasons behind gender-based adoption preferences, this paper uses analysis Qualitative interview data. It explores the cultural, social, economic and personal factors that underlie these preferences, providing insight into the complex web of influences that shape adoption choices.
3. **Impact on adopted children:** Research paper explores the psychosocial consequences of gender-specific adoption decisions for adopted children. It evaluates how these interests can affect a child's self-esteem, identity formation and overall well-being. Qualitative data from interviews with adoptees provide valuable information about their lived experiences.
4. **Legal and policy framework:** An important element of the analysis involves examining the legal and policy frameworks that govern adoption in India. The research paper evaluates how current laws and regulations can maintain or reduce gender disparities in adoption. This analysis seeks to identify opportunities for legal reform and policy interventions.
5. **Role of Adoption Agencies and Social Workers:** The paper investigates the roles played by adoption agencies and social workers in shaping gender-wise adoption practices. Through interviews and surveys, it assesses the extent to which these stakeholders are aware of gender biases and whether they actively advocate for more inclusive and equitable adoption processes.

6. Advocacy for gender-neutral adoptions: The paper examines the work of advocacy groups and organizations to promote gender-neutral adoptions in India. This analysis highlights efforts to address gender disparities and promote awareness and change in the adoption landscape.

7. Geographical and cultural differences: India is a diverse country with many cultures and traditions. The article explores cultural and regional differences in adoption preferences and practices by gender, providing insight into how these differences manifest differently across the country.

8. Trends and changes over time: Analysing trends over time is necessary to understand whether gender adoption disparities are changing over time. The paper examines how adoption practices may have changed in response to changes in social norms and changes in the law.

9. Comparative Analysis: To provide a broader perspective, the research article may also include comparative analysis of practices adopted in India with practices in other countries. This helps determine whether the adoption landscape in India is influenced solely by gender stereotypes or reflects a more global phenomenon. In summary, the paper's analysis provides a comprehensive assessment of the complex issue of gender-sensitive adoption in India.

Using a variety of data sources and methods, the article seeks to explore the underlying causes of gender disparities in adoption, their implications for adoptees and adoptive families, as well as potential avenues for promoting a more equitable and inclusive adoption system in India.

Findings in Adoptions trends during 2021-2022:

According to the provided data, the trend in adoption data over the last three years (2019-2022) shows a decrease in both in-country and inter-country adoptions. In 2019-2020, there were 3,351 in-country adoptions and 394 inter-country adoptions. This decreased to 3,142 in-country adoptions and 417 inter-country adoptions in 2020-2021. Finally, in 2021-2022, the number of in-country adoptions further decreased to 2,991, while the number of inter-country adoptions remained relatively stable at 414. According to the provided data, the breakdown of in-country and inter-country adoptions for the year 2021-2022 is as follows:

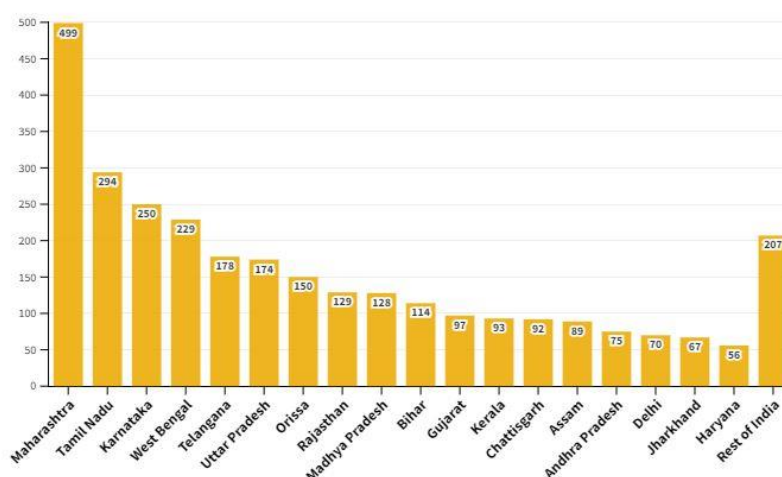


Fig:1 In-Country Adoptions during (2021-22) - Top States.

Source: CARA

The highest number of in-country adoptions during 2021-22 was in Maharashtra. Out of the 2,991 in-country adoptions, Maharashtra accounted for 499. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Telangana have registered the next highest number of adoptions during 2021-22. Together, these 5 states accounted for nearly half of the total in-country adoptions during the year. No varying trend can be seen with respect to gender, with these states reporting a higher number of adoptions in terms of both boys and girls.

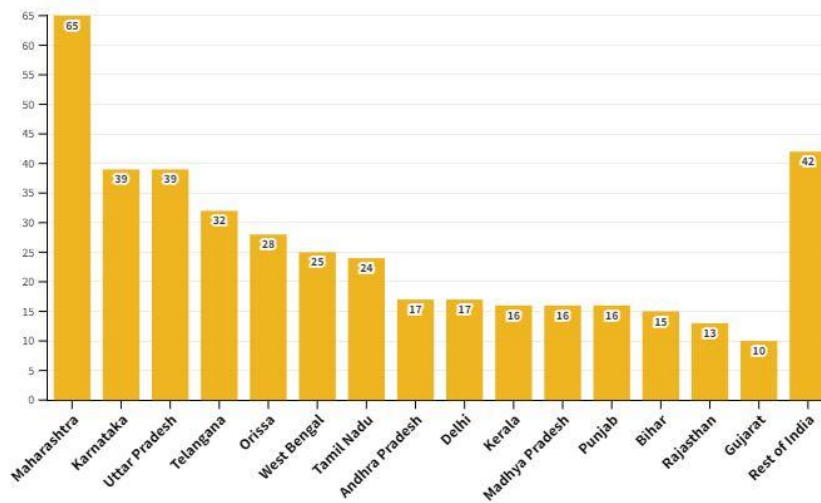


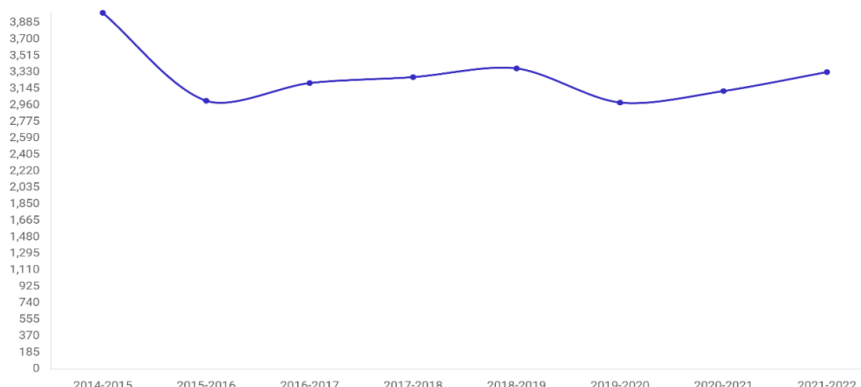
Fig:2 Inter-Country Adoptions during (2021-22) - Top States.

Source: CARA

Maharashtra also has the highest number of inter-country adoptions with 65 of the 414 such adoptions in Maharashtra. The highest number of inter-country adoptions during 2021-22 was in Maharashtra. Out of the 414 inter-country adoptions, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana have registered the next highest number of adoptions during 2021-22. Together, these 5 states accounted for nearly half of the total in-country adoptions during the year.

Statistics of Adopted Children:

This trend is visible across the country, with the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu at the forefront of this change. Even patriarchal strongholds like Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are succumbing. Officers of Women Development and Child Welfare, Andhra Pradesh, said, “Many couples prefer baby girls because they believe that girls are naturally more affectionate and affectionate towards their parents than boys. Additionally, the data shows that since 2015, more than 3,500 children were adopted, this shows that the number is rapidly increasing.



Graph 1: Statistics of Children adoptions from 2014-2022

This increase can be attributed to adoptions being reported from states such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, which until 2015 had been slow in reporting adoptions. The number of in-country adoptions was 3,988 in 2014-15, 3,011 in 2015-16, 3,210 in 2016-17 and 3,276 in 2017-18. In the years thereafter too the numbers have hovered between 3,374 in 2018-19 and 2,991 in 2021-22.

Year	Girls	Boys
2018-19	1977	1397
2019-20	1938	1413
2020-21	1856	1286
2021-22	1996	1432

Table 1: Number of children adopted by gender

In 2018-19, 1,977 girls and 1,397 boys were adopted within the country. In 2019-20, 1,938 girls and 1,413 boys were adopted. In 2020-21, 1,856 girls and 1,286 boys were adopted. At this juncture, it can be concluded that there is no significant change in the adoptions but the dominance in the girl child adoptions can be clearly seen. It also reveals the fact that the parent who are willing to adopt a child were interested to adopt a girl child which was more appreciable and thus they were contributing their participation in gender equality.

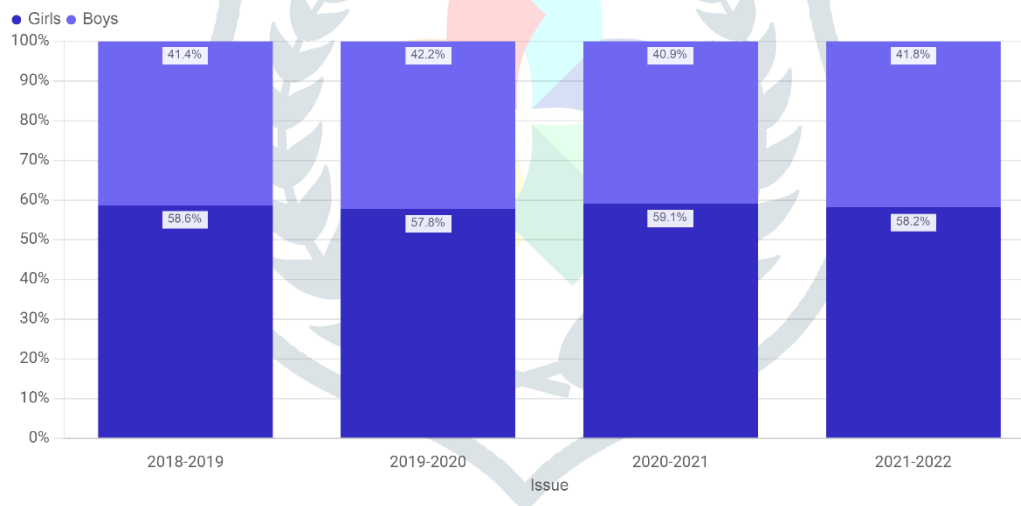


Fig:3: Gender wise children adoptions from 2018-2022

The figure 1 clearly depicts that the average number of girl children that were adopted are comparatively higher than boys. The trend is being interchanged and the number of girl child adoptions is being increasing year by year.

Conclusion:

The complexities and intricacies of gender-wise adoption in India, as explored in this research paper, underscore the need for a multifaceted approach to understanding and addressing the disparities that exist in this vital social practice. From adoption rates to the motivations behind gender-based preferences, this research has uncovered a web of cultural, societal, and economic factors that influence adoption decisions in India. This conclusion synthesizes the key findings and offers insights into the implications and potential pathways for

change. One of the central findings of this study is the striking prevalence of gender disparities in adoption. In early times, male children are more likely to be adopted than their female counterparts, reflecting deeply ingrained biases and cultural norms. But the trend is being interchanged and the number of girl child adoptions is being increasing year by year. These disparities manifest across regions and communities, underscoring the need to appreciate the diversity of India's adoption landscape. The reasons behind these gender-based adoption preferences are multifaceted. Cultural and societal expectations, economic considerations, and a desire for specific family compositions all play a role.

However, it is essential to recognize that these preferences do not exist in isolation; they are shaped and perpetuated by a broader social context. The impact of gender-based adoption decisions on the adopted children cannot be understated. Interviews and surveys have revealed that these interests can have profound psychosocial consequences for children, affecting self-esteem, identity formation and overall health of them. It is a stark reminder that adoption is not just a transaction but a profound and lasting experience for the adoptees. The legal and policy frameworks governing adoption in India are also under scrutiny. While positive progress has been made in promoting gender-neutral adoption practices, there are still areas where reform is needed to create a more inclusive and equitable system. This emphasizes the importance of continuously evaluating and adapting laws and policies to reflect changing social norms. Adoption agencies and social workers have significant influence in shaping adoption practices. The results suggest that better awareness and education within these units could contribute to more gender-neutral adoption. Advocacy groups and organizations play an important role in raising awareness and promoting change. Their work helps change social perceptions and promote gender-neutral adoptions. The paper also emphasizes the value of comparative analysis, recognizing that the adoption context in India is both unique and influenced by broader global phenomena. This broader perspective provides valuable insights into the specific factors at play in India. In short, addressing gender adoption disparities in India requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. The goal is to promote a more inclusive and equitable adoption system that respects the dignity of all children, regardless of gender. This working paper serves as a call to action, urging continued efforts to challenge and change gender-based adoption preferences and practices. It's a reminder of the fundamentals that adoption is about providing a loving home and opportunity for all children, regardless of gender. By promoting a fairer adoption system, we not only respect the rights and best interests of children but also contribute to a more just and inclusive society.

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