

SEX RATIO AT BIRTH

IN SOUTH EAST ASIA WITH A FOCUS ON VIET NAM:

An annotated bibliography designed to guide further policy research



UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

Foreword

Ever since the data analysis of the Population Change Survey in 2006 confirmed an unnaturally high number of boys born for every 100 girls born in Viet Nam, the issue of the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) has received increased attention from demographers, policymakers and from the media. The SRB, defined by the number of boys born per hundred girls is an indicator of the sex composition of those born into a population. Under normal circumstances, this ratio oscillates between 104 - 106/100. Yet in Viet Nam, the ratio has increased from this biological normal range to an alarming value of 110.5 boys per hundred girls in 2009.

A number of quantitative analyses have provided a detailed picture of the trend and evolution of this demographic indicator. In particular, the report on the Recent Change in the Sex Ratio at Birth in Viet Nam: A Review of Evidence, provides a comprehensive picture of an imbalanced Sex Ratio at Birth in Viet Nam, based on the quantitative analysis of the Population Change Survey data of recent years.

However, no document has so far collected, summarized and synthesized what is already known, in order to assess the gaps in current qualitative knowledge on this important demographic trend. This document is therefore, the first annotated bibliography of the Sex Ratio at Birth in Viet Nam and other selected Asian countries. It is a summary of a careful selection of articles from the Asian region and Viet Nam, which intends to stimulate further research and creative thinking of how the imbalanced Sex Ratio at Birth can be effectively addressed in Viet Nam. In particular, through the analysis of the gaps in evidence and understanding on Sex Ratio at Birth, this bibliography identifies qualitative research questions required to fill the current lack of knowledge on the social and cultural factors underlying the imbalanced Sex Ratio at Birth in Viet Nam.

This document should also be considered a "living document", which will be updated periodically, in order to reflect additional information and evidence on the Sex Ratio at Birth in Viet Nam as it becomes available over time. More specifically, we envisage updating this bibliography in 2015, as Viet Nam embarks on drafting its next Socio-Economic Development Plan and other policy and planning frameworks. Through this approach, it will inform future research, policy responses and programme interventions.

UNFPA would like to sincerely thank Ms Elizabeth Krijgh and Ms Khuat Thu Hong for their contribution to this report. UNFPA would like to introduce this valuable document to policymakers, managers, professionals, researchers and others who are concerned about Gender Equality, Population, and Reproductive Health in Viet Nam.

Bruce Campbell

Representative of the United Nations Population Fund

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent those of the UNFPA, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	5
<hr/>	
SECTION ONE	
Overview and Purpose	7
<hr/>	
SECTION TWO	
Summary of Documents Reviewed	9
<hr/>	
SECTION THREE	
Results	21
<hr/>	
SECTION FOUR	
Policy or Programme Interventions Which Have Been Employed	30
<hr/>	
SECTION FIVE	
Suggestions For Areas Of Further Qualitative Research And Possible Methods To Use	35
<hr/>	
SECTION SIX	
Annotated Bibliography	40
<hr/>	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	88

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1	
Summary of documents reviewed by geographic area, type of research, research methods and policy implications	10
Table 2	
Factors contributing to Sex Ratio at Birth changes in China, India, South Korea and Viet Nam	24
Table 3	
Policy and Programme interventions that may have influenced changes in Sex Ratio at Birth related behaviour and trends	30
Table 4	
Areas for further study and research methods to use	37
Figure 1	
Strategy for ongoing research as a basis for the national Sex Ratio at Birth Response	8
Figure 2	
Contrasting Sex Ratio at Birth	22
Figure 3	
Pressures contributing to the "Squeeze" on sex selection behaviour	29
Figure 4	
Areas for further qualitative research	36

Section One: Overview and Purpose

The overall purpose of this document is to abstract and summarize a selection of articles from the Asian region and Viet Nam in relation to changing trends in Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB).

This is the first annotated bibliography on the topic of the changing SRB in Viet Nam and a selected few other Asian countries. Whereas the topic of Child Sex Ratio and Sex Ratio at Birth has received a lot of attention over the past decade by demographers, researchers and government officials, and a variety of documents and research papers have been written and used to shed light on the alarming trends of rising Sex Ratio at Birth rates in various regions, an overview of these writings has not yet before been gathered into one document. The current bibliography is a first attempt to produce a dynamic document that will assist researchers, policy-makers and development partners in identifying what is already known and in addressing the needs resulting from current negative SRB trends that have been identified in Viet Nam. The document intends to provide increased access to the data and lessons learned that have been generated in Viet Nam and the Asian region on this topic. No claim is made by any means that the bibliography is exhaustive. In fact, while searching for relevant materials, it became obvious that the amount of existing literature is sparse, less integrated and in most cases less detailed than hoped for. Particularly, while excellent quantitative data have been produced and analyzed for Viet Nam recently, there is a large hiatus in terms of qualitative data that allow in-depth insight in underlying factors of SRB trends. The bibliography at hand is thus very much a “work in progress”



which intends to be thought provoking with regard to further research and to incorporate additional relevant information as it becomes available. As part of the summary, a number of gaps in current knowledge will be identified. Based on this analysis, recommendations for further qualitative research, including initial suggestions for appropriate research methods, will be made.

Our hope is that this bibliography will be considered a useful tool when commonly addressing directions for policy and action related to SRB.

Definition of relevant terms.

Sex Ratio at Birth: Statistical indicator computed as: The number of boys being born per one hundred girls. A normal SRB ratio lies between 104-106 boys for every 100 girls and remains quite stable over time.

Child Sex Ratio: Statistical indicator computed as the proportion of girls to boys aged 0-6 in a population. (Note that this indicator reflects mortality that takes place after birth).

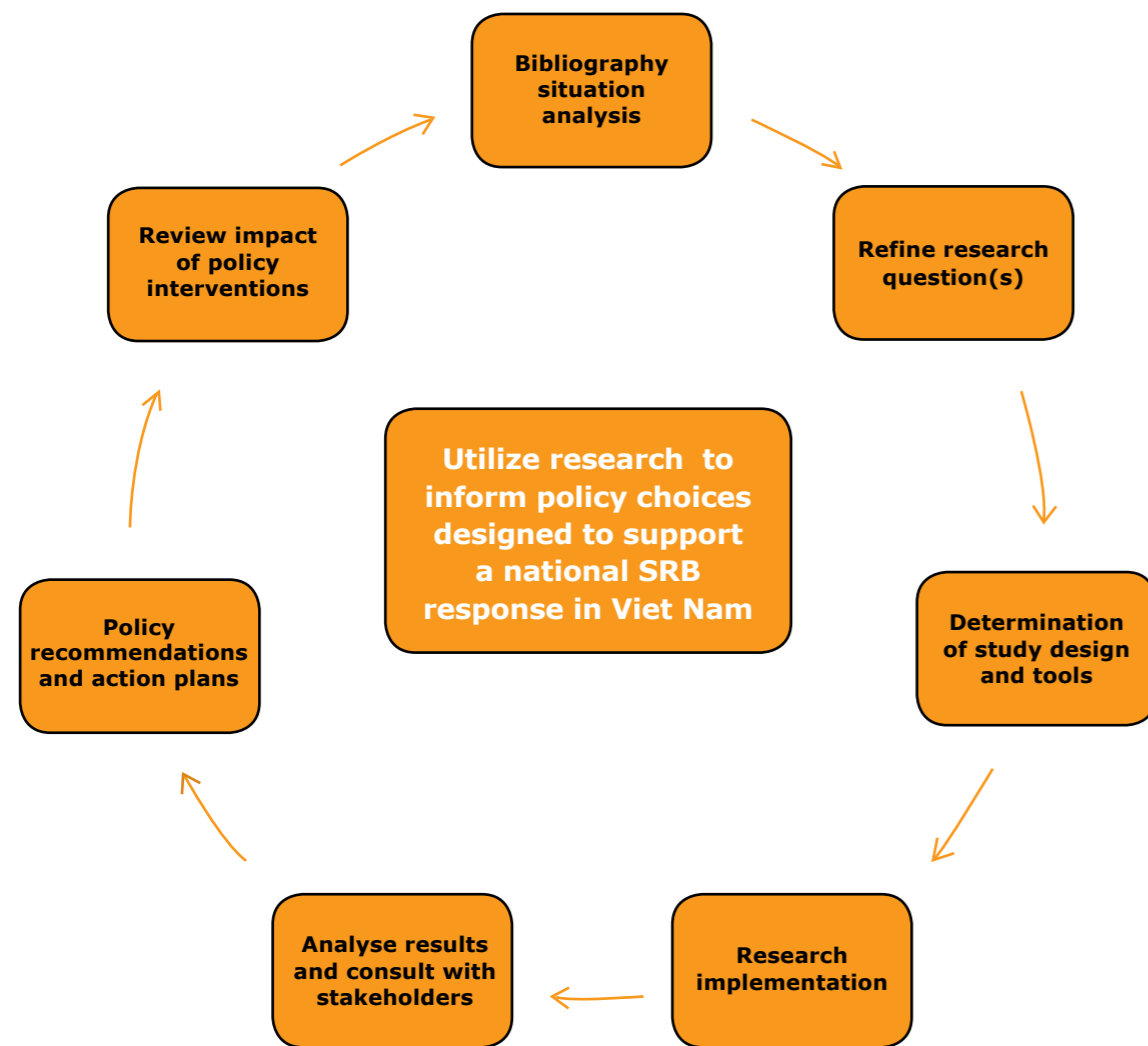
The documents identified and presented to date are, for the most part, research papers. Other documents included are government publications, peer review articles, journalistic papers and several socio-economic publications.

Besides aiming to update the annotated bibliography on a regular basis in order to stay up to date with concurrent experiences within the region and Viet Nam, the current overview and summary of issues provides a good base for the next stage of an Sex Ratio at Birth

strategy for Viet Nam: Work with a small, technical group to prioritize and refine the specific questions will take the proposed research questions to a next level of clarity, after which a robust qualitative research proposal may be developed. This proposal should include a clear sampling frame, research instruments and an interview training guide. Following the design stage, the instruments need to

be field-tested and interviewers trained prior to the launch of the study. A careful design and implementation of the study is anticipated to take place over the course of several months, after which the gathered data will be analyzed and shared with stakeholders. The expected outcome of the proposed research will be more detailed and target-specific policy recommendations and action plans.

Figure 1: Strategy for ongoing research as a basis for the national Sex Ratio at Birth Response



Section Two: Summary of Documents Reviewed

A careful selection of SRB documents were identified in relation to their ability to shed light on factors underlying the significant changes in ratios that have been identified over the past 15 years in Asia. A total of 37 documents were then classified according to those that addressed regional SRB issues, in particular in China, India and South Korea, as well as the majority of available literature on Viet Nam. In these categories, 11 documents were reviewed that covered the region, and 26 documents that covered Viet Nam. Except for 6 policy documents and one project document, the majority of documents were research articles or reports which can be classified according to research methodology adopted, whether quantitative (17 documents) or qualitative (11 documents), or a combination of the two (2 documents). Where information was available, the research methods were described as a basis for identifying the most appropriate way to address gaps in our current



knowledge. And finally, each document was analyzed to identify if it contained direct implications on policy, indirect, or no discussion on policy at all. To date no documents have been found which specifically discuss interventions addressing SRB in Viet Nam. Research following this review is intended to support efforts to identify any particular policy interventions that might be adapted and/or replicated for the context of Viet Nam.

The following table presents an overview of the articles that have been annotated, and includes the first author's name, the year of publication, the geographic region of the study, including sub-national catchment areas, whether the study was quantitative or qualitative in nature, as well as the sample size. The table also presents the research methods employed, and a short assessment as to whether or not there were policy or programming implications.

Table 1: Summary of documents reviewed by geographic area, type of research, research methods and policy implications

Author(s)	Title	Yr.	Geographic Region	Research Type Sample Size	Research Methods	Policy Implications
Asia						
1	Almond, Douglas; and Edlund, Lena Son-biased sex ratios in the 2000 United States Census	08	Korean, Chinese and Indian immigrants to the US	Quantitative Sample: 7000 women aged 15-49 in 1991, and 6500 women in 1993	Cross tabulation of 2000 US census data	Strategy to limit commercialized advertising of pre-natal sex determination techniques
2	Chung, Wonchin; and Gupta, Das Why is Son Preference Declining in South Korea? The role of Development and Public Policy, and the Implications for China and India	07	South Korea	Quantitative Sample: 7000 women aged 15-49 in 1991, and 6500 women in 1993	Frequency and chi-square tests; multivariate and univariate regression analysis; decomposition methodology	Interventions to increase gender equity; Vigorous media campaigns to enhance the value of girl children; Strategy to reformulate legislation; Sponsorship of grassroots women's organizations; Financial incentives to raise daughters
3	Chung, Wonchin; and Gupta, Das The decline of Son Preference in South Korea: The Role of Development and Public Policy	07	South Korea	Quantitative Sample: 7000 women aged 15-49 in 1991, and 6500 women in 1993	Frequency and chi-square tests; multivariate and univariate regression analysis; decomposition methodology	Increased levels of higher education for girls; equal work opportunities and benefits for women; clear pension plans for everyone; clear scheme for old age security.

Author(s)	Title	Yr.	Geographic Region	Research Type Sample Size	Research Methods	Policy Implications
4	Guilmoto, Christophe The Sex Ratio Transition in Asia	09	East Asia (China, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Viet Nam), South Asia (Pakistan, India) and West Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Albania)	Quantitative	Comparative review of Birth Registration/ birth history estimates of large surveys and census data	Strategies to weaken the supply of sex selection services; government regulations against sex selection; Awareness campaigns
5	John, Mary E.; Kaur, Ravinder; Pairiwala, Rajni; Raju, Saraswati; Sagar, Alpana Planning Families, Planning Gender, the Adverse Child Sex Ratio in Selected Districts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab	08	The northern states of India: Haryana, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh; the central states: Rajasthan and Madhya-Pradesh	Quantitative + Qualitative Sample: 4,500 households in the northern states; 2000 households in the central states; in-depth interviews in 12 households	Two-stage detailed household questionnaires; village-urban ward profiles; 12 in-depth interviews; participant observation	Schemes to raise the value of girl children; immediate rather than delayed cash incentives; schemes to target the middle class to wealthy families; disengage family planning schemes from initiatives to prevent sex selection; clear regulations with regard to abortions that follow sex selective screening versus the one that do not; expansion of public health facilities to avoid private medical enterprise; scheme to expand and improve public education; schemes to equalize job opportunities for women; campaigns to popularize matrilineal residence after marriage; government scheme for the elderly; clear government regulation for paramedical and medical health personnel with regard to sex selection

	Author(s)	Title	Yr.	Geographic Region	Research Type Sample Size	Research Methods	Policy Implications
6	Joseph, Josantony; Mattam, Matthew; Mathew, Sofy; Siradhna, Kavita;; Patkar, Rohini; Kulkarni, Vidya; Radhakrishnan, E.M.	Reflections on the Campaign against Sex Selection and Exploring Ways Forward	07	Nine states in India spread out over 3 clusters: the northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Delhi; the western states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan; the southern states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.	Qualitative Sample: "snowballing sample"	Case study; DELPHI method; Focus group discussions; Review of secondary sources; Assessment of IEC materials	Central strategy to counter Sex Ratio at Birth trends; Clear and concise government regulations regarding sex selection and sex selective abortions; Local-specific communication materials that inspire to act rather than only evoke awareness; Campaign involving the medical community; scheme to monitor accountability of medical and paramedical personnel
7	Kim, Doo-Sub	Sex Ratio at Birth in Korea: Changing Trends and Regional Differentials	04	Korea	Quantitative	Analysis of Vital Statistics data for 1985-2000; Two simulations	Strategy to weaken sex selection services
8	Li, Shuzhuo	Imbalanced Sex Ratio at Birth and Comprehensive Interventions in China	07	China	Quantitative Sample: 1% of Population	Analysis of Population Census data and other government statistics for 1992-2005	Measures to punish sex selection and sex selective abortions; Relaxed Family Planning strategy; Strict regulations with regard to pregnancy termination; rural pension and family support systems; social security schemes; Awareness campaign focusing on men and mothers-in-law; improved system of comprehensive, lifelong Family Planning services;

	Author(s)	Title	Yr.	Geographic Region	Research Type Sample Size	Research Methods	Policy Implications
9	Mishra, U.S. Dillip, T.R; George, A; Kumar, VKA	Declining Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years) in India. A review of Literature and Annotated Bibliography	09	India	Qualitative	Annotated Bibliography	Campaign to popularize uxorialocal residence for couples; Country wide competitions; Youth Volunteer Programme; Publishing of guide books; Strategy to involve national mass-media organizations; Strategy for civil society organizations
10	Poston, Dudley L; Juan Wu, Julie; Han Gon, Kim	Patterns and variation in the Sex Ratio at Birth in the Republic of Korea	03	Korea	Quantitative	Statistical Analysis through box-and-whisker plots	Strategy to weaken possibilities for sex selection and sex selective abortions

Yr.	Geographic Region	Research Type Sample Size	Research Methods	Policy Implications
09	China	Qualitative	Policy File Analysis; Field interviews	Strategy to promote gender awareness among policy makers and administrators; Strategy to improve/revise existing laws and improve existing social policies; Strategy to establish an independent, coordinating agency in charge of integrating various policies and departments at the national level to create unity while addressing Sex Ratio at Birth
Viet Nam				
08	Viet Nam	Quantitative Qualitative	Secondary Data Analysis of Population Change Surveys of 2006 and 2008; Analysis of Population policy and health practices	Strategy to regulate sex identification through ultrasound; Strategy to prohibit sex selective abortion; Policy to address gender equity; Educational campaigns to bring awareness about the consequences of Sex Ratio at Birth imbalance, and to promote the role of girls
09	Viet Nam	Quantitative Sample: 4,800 people aged 60 and older, and a subset of data for less than 3000 people aged 60 and older.	Statistical analysis of 1999 Population and Housing Census data and of 1997-1998 Viet Nam Living Standard Surveys	Experimental Programme to help young adults support their ageing parents

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Author(s)	Title	Yr.	Geographic Region	Research Type Sample Size	Research Methods	Policy Implications
Bélanger, Danielle; Thi Hai Oanh K.; Jianye L.; Thanh Thuy L.; Viet Thanh P.	Second-trimester abortion and sex-selection of children in Ha Noi, Viet Nam	09	Viet Nam/ hospitals in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh city	Quantitative	Statistical analysis of data of the 1989 and 1999 Population Censuses, the 1997/1998 Viet Nam Living Standard Survey, and hospital data	Strategy to limit/weaken services for second term abortions; Strategy to inhibit the development of private sector enterprises offering second trimester abortions.
Bélanger, Danielle	Regional differences in household composition and family formation patterns in Viet Nam	09	Ha Noi, Viet Nam	Quantitative Sample: 885 women	Short questionnaires administered to women who were about to get an abortion	Policy to address gender inequality and the preference for male children as the root causes of the sex selection behavior; Scheme for social welfare benefitting elderly, sonless parents; Strategy to increase work opportunities for women; Public campaign promoting the equality of sons and daughters and to raise public awareness about the long-term impact of imbalance of high sex ratio; Amendment of the two-child policy.
Bélanger, Danielle	Indispensable Sons: Negotiating reproductive desires in Rural Viet Nam	06	Ha Tay province, Viet Nam	Qualitative, 25 families and 74 family members	Individual interviews and informal ethnographic observation	Policy consideration to address son preference in the context when a small family size is accepted

