

## A Study on the Attitude of Gender Preference and Female Feticide among Women in Selected Settings at New Delhi

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### Abstract

**Introduction :** female feticide and infanticide can be eradicated only when people recognize the importance of women in their life. Preference for male baby reflects underlying socioeconomic and cultural patterns and prevailing inequity between genders in many societies in India.

**Methods :** A descriptive comparative research design was used to determine the attitude of 150 unmarried and 150 married women who were selected by purposive sampling technique. Data was collected using self made attitude rating scales and was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Results :** The finding in the study shows that majority of the unmarried women (86%) and married women (91.3%) have favorable attitude towards gender preference whereas majority of the unmarried women (82.7%) and married women (78%) have an unfavorable attitude towards female feticide. There was a significant difference in the attitude of unmarried and married women towards gender preference whereas there was no significant difference in the attitude of unmarried and married women towards female feticide.

**Conclusion :** The unmarried and married women have a different attitude towards gender preference and female feticide. Socio-demographic factors play a role in women's awareness of female feticide and education plays a critical role in modifying their attitudes towards female feticide.

**Key words :** Attitude; Gender Preference; Female Feticide

### Introduction

Being pregnant and giving birth is like crossing a narrow bridge: people can accompany you to the bridge, and they can greet you on the other side, but you walk that bridge alone. And the journey doesn't consistently show an abnormal sex ratio (940 women for every 1000 men). But the most alarming and disturbing aspect of 2011 census is that the child sex ratio which is a measure of female / male children below 6 years is even lower (914 /1000) and has fallen from 927 girls/1000 boys in 2001 and it is the lowest since 1947. Killing girl child in the womb of a mother is known as female feticide and is very common in Asian countries like India. Though it may seem that women have a great deal of freedom and independence, the overall condition of women in the world of today is not as it should be Sex selective abortions cases have become a significant social phenomenon in several parts of India. It is reported that about 4,000 female babies are aborted in Tamil Nadu (southern India) every year. Sex determination tests are

widely resorted to even in the remotest rural areas. Since most deliveries in rural areas take place at home there is no record of the exact number of births/deaths that take place. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the magnitude of the problem. However, the fact remains that the right to be born are being denied to the female child. Since all religions treated abortion as immoral, and contrary to divine law, this blanket ban on abortion, resulted in illegal abortions and risking the life of the woman. In countries such as China and India, the practice of infanticide continued into the 20th century. The government of India introduced the Pre- Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PNDT) in 1994 that was later amended in 2002 and 2003 as Pre- Conception and Pre- Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT) with the objective of preventing the misuse of diagnostic techniques and sex selection. Facilities using prenatal diagnostic technique were made to register compulsorily and strong penal provisions were introduced for people found to be violating the rules laid in the PCPNDT Act.

## Objectives of the Study

- ✓ To identify the attitude of unmarried women on gender preference and female feticide.
- ✓ To identify the attitude of married women on gender preference and female feticide.
- ✓ To compare the attitude of unmarried and married women on gender preference and female feticide.
- ✓ To find the association of attitude of the unmarried women with selected demographic variables.
- ✓ To find the association of attitude of the married women with selected demographic variables.

## Materials and Method

The research approach used was quantitative approach and research design adopted was comparative research design. The study was done to compare the attitude of unmarried women and married women towards gender preference and female feticide. The study was conducted in two different settings. For the unmarried women, it was conducted Post graduate studies and research and North DMC (North DMC) Medical College. The married women were selected from the Out Patient Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. The sample comprised of 300 women 150 each for unmarried and married women were selected by purposive sampling technique To check the reliability of the attitude rating scales on gender preference and female feticide, Cronbach Alpha method was used and both the reliability came as 0.7. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical committee of North DMC (North DMC) Medical College. The study was conducted from 6th March 2022 to 1st April 2022. Attitude rating scales on gender preference and female feticide was used to collect the data. The investigator explained the purpose of the study to the women

to win their cooperation. Confidentiality was assured and informed consent was taken from each woman. Attitude rating scales on gender preference and female feticide was administered to the participants with proper explanation. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS version 21 based on objectives and hypotheses of the study.

**RESULTS Section I: Description of baseline characteristics** Majority of the unmarried women (93.3%) and married women (61.3%) were in the age group of 21 to 25 years and most of the unmarried women (54%) were Christians and married women (52.7%) were Muslims. 24.7% (unmarried) and 32% (married) had a family income below Rs.10000. Most of the unmarried women (96.7%) and married women (62%) belonged to nuclear family. Majority of the unmarried women (82.7%) have the same preference for male and female child in the family while majority of married women (79.3%) had no gender preference and neither their husband (76%), and preference was supported by their in-laws (78%). 84% of the unmarried women have previous knowledge about female feticide among which 45.3% received knowledge from mass media and 38.7 % from school education. 89.3% of the married women had previous knowledge about female feticide among whom 59.3% received knowledge from mass media and 30.7 % from school education. (Table 1 and 2)

## Section II: Attitude of unmarried and married women on gender preference and female feticide.

This section deals with the area wise distribution and attitude of 150 unmarried women and 150 married women towards gender preference and female feticide, described in terms of mean, standard deviation, mean percentage, frequency and percentage.

**Table1: Frequency and percentage distribution of subjects according to baseline characteristics (unmarried women).**

| <b>n = 150</b> |                                             |                      |                       |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>S.No.</b>   | <b>Variables</b>                            | <b>Frequency (f)</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
| <b>1.</b>      | <b>Age in years Mean± SD = 22.07 ± 1.37</b> |                      |                       |
|                | 21 to 25 years                              | 140                  | 93.3                  |
|                | 26 to 30 years                              | 10                   | 6.7                   |
| <b>2.</b>      | <b>Religion</b>                             |                      |                       |
|                | Christianity                                | 81                   | 54                    |
|                | Islam                                       | 13                   | 8.7                   |
|                | Hinduism                                    | 56                   | 37.3                  |

|            |                                                                            |     |      |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| <b>3.</b>  | <b>Family income in rupees</b>                                             |     |      |
|            | Rs. 10000 and below                                                        | 37  | 24.7 |
|            | Rs. 10001 to 20000/-                                                       | 59  | 39.3 |
|            | Rs. 20001 and above                                                        | 54  | 36   |
| <b>4.</b>  | <b>Do you have siblings?</b>                                               |     |      |
|            | Yes                                                                        | 131 | 87.3 |
|            | No                                                                         | 19  | 12.7 |
| <b>a.</b>  | <b>If yes, how many siblings</b>                                           |     |      |
|            | 1 sibling                                                                  | 70  | 46.7 |
|            | 2 to 3 siblings                                                            | 48  | 32   |
|            | More than 3 siblings                                                       | 13  | 8.7  |
| <b>5.</b>  | <b>Which is your birth order</b>                                           |     |      |
|            | First child                                                                | 64  | 42.7 |
|            | Second child                                                               | 47  | 31.3 |
|            | Third child                                                                | 26  | 17.3 |
|            | Fourth child                                                               | 5   | 3.3  |
|            | Fifth child and more                                                       | 8   | 5.3  |
| <b>6.</b>  | <b>Type of family</b>                                                      |     |      |
|            | Nuclear family                                                             | 145 | 96.7 |
|            | Joint family                                                               | 5   | 3.3  |
| <b>7.</b>  | <b>Is the preference for male and female child similar in your family?</b> |     |      |
|            | Yes                                                                        | 124 | 82.7 |
|            | No                                                                         | 26  | 17.3 |
| <b>8.</b>  | <b>Do you have previous knowledge about female feticide?</b>               |     |      |
|            | Yes                                                                        | 126 | 84   |
|            | No                                                                         | 24  | 16   |
| <b>8a.</b> | <b>If Yes, source of information</b>                                       |     |      |
|            | Mass media                                                                 | 68  | 45.3 |
|            | Education (school)                                                         | 58  | 38.7 |

**Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of subjects according to baseline characteristics (married women).**

**n= 150**

| <b>S.No.</b> | <b>Variables</b>                           | <b>Frequency (f)</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1.</b>    | <b>Age in years Mean± SD = 25.08± 2.36</b> |                      |                       |
|              | 21 -25 years                               | 92                   | 61.3                  |
|              | 26-30 years                                | 58                   | 38.7                  |
| <b>2.</b>    | <b>Occupation</b>                          |                      |                       |
|              | Home maker                                 | 98                   | 65.3                  |
|              | Private employee                           | 34                   | 22.7                  |

|            |                                        |     |      |
|------------|----------------------------------------|-----|------|
|            | Government employee                    | 10  | 6.7  |
|            | Business                               | 8   | 5.3  |
| <b>3.</b>  | <b>Religion</b>                        |     |      |
|            | Christianity                           | 29  | 19.3 |
|            | Islam                                  | 79  | 52.7 |
|            | Hinduism                               | 42  | 28   |
| <b>4.</b>  | <b>Educational status</b>              |     |      |
|            | Secondary (5 to 10th standard)         | 72  | 48   |
|            | Higher secondary                       | 31  | 20.7 |
|            | (11 to 12th standard)                  | 36  | 24   |
|            | Graduate Post graduate                 | 11  | 7.3  |
| <b>5.</b>  | <b>Family income in rupees</b>         |     |      |
|            | Rs.10000 and below                     | 48  | 32   |
|            | Rs. 10001 to 20000/-                   | 70  | 46.7 |
|            | Rs. 20001 and above                    | 32  | 21.3 |
| <b>6.</b>  | <b>Husband's education</b>             |     |      |
|            | Secondary (5 to 10th standard)         | 76  | 50.7 |
|            | Higher secondary (11 to 12th standard) | 39  | 26   |
|            | Graduate                               | 32  | 21.3 |
|            | Post graduate                          | 3   | 2    |
| <b>7.</b>  | <b>Do you have siblings?</b>           |     |      |
|            | Yes                                    | 144 | 96   |
|            | No                                     | 06  | 04   |
| <b>7a.</b> | <b>If yes, how many siblings?</b>      |     |      |
|            | 1 sibling                              | 23  | 15.3 |
|            | 2 to 3 siblings                        | 64  | 42.7 |
|            | More than 3 siblings                   | 57  | 38   |
| <b>8.</b>  | <b>Which is your birth order?</b>      |     |      |
|            | First child                            | 60  | 40   |
|            | Second child                           | 28  | 18.7 |
|            | Third child                            | 16  | 10.7 |
|            | Fourth child                           | 17  | 11.3 |
|            | Fifth child and others                 | 29  | 19.3 |
| <b>9.</b>  | <b>Type of family</b>                  |     |      |
|            | Nuclear family                         | 93  | 62   |
|            | Joint family                           | 57  | 38   |
| <b>10.</b> | <b>Do you have gender preference?</b>  |     |      |
|            | Yes                                    | 31  | 20.7 |
|            | No                                     | 119 | 79.3 |

|             |                                                                            |     |      |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|
| <b>10a.</b> | <b>If yes, is your preference of gender supported by your husband?</b>     |     |      |
|             | Yes                                                                        | 24  | 16   |
|             | No                                                                         | 6   | 4    |
| <b>10b.</b> | <b>If no, does your husband have a gender preference?</b>                  |     |      |
|             | Yes                                                                        | 6   | 4    |
|             | No                                                                         | 114 | 76   |
| <b>11.</b>  | <b>Is the preference of gender supported by your in-laws?</b>              |     |      |
|             | Yes                                                                        | 117 | 78   |
|             | No                                                                         | 33  | 22   |
| <b>12.</b>  | <b>Is the preference for male and female child similar in your family?</b> |     |      |
|             | Yes                                                                        | 146 | 97.3 |
|             | No                                                                         | 4   | 2.7  |
| <b>13.</b>  | <b>Do you have previous knowledge about female feticide?</b>               |     |      |
|             | Yes                                                                        | 134 | 89.3 |
|             | No                                                                         | 16  | 10.7 |
| <b>13a.</b> | <b>If yes, source of information.</b>                                      |     |      |
|             | Mass media                                                                 | 89  | 59.3 |
|             | Education (school)                                                         | 4   | 3    |

Recommendations On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made for further study:

- v A comparative study could be conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude of primigravida and multi gravida mothers towards gender preference.
- v A comparative study could be conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude of rural and urban women regarding gender preference and female feticide.
- v Case law documentation, legal processes and rigor can be strengthened through a set of actions and therefore contribute significantly to a much more robust legal approach.
- v Interviews can be conducted among uneducated women followed by planned teaching program on awareness regarding female feticide.

## Conclusion

It is concluded that the unmarried and married women have different attitude towards gender preference and female feticide. Socio-demographic factors play a role in women's awareness of female feticide and education plays

a critical role in modifying their attitudes towards female feticide. Therefore each individual is a stakeholder in the hospital as well as in the community; every woman should be equipped with the ample amount of knowledge so that they can act as a change mediator in the society. At the radiology department in hospitals, posters on female feticide can be put up. In the OPD, pamphlets/ posters can be distributed to the expectant women on female feticide and counseling sessions can be held for antenatal couples during their antenatal visits.

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