



## College Students Perception on Declining Sex Ratio: A Jammu Based Study

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study was conducted in purposely selected colleges of Jammu. A sample of 200 respondents comprising 100 male respondents and 100 female respondents were selected through proportionate allocation random sampling method. Findings revealed majority of the male respondents (91%) and female respondents (81%) were aware about female foeticide. Television and newspaper were the sources to get information about female foeticide. Son preference and unequal status among son and daughter were mainly associated reasons for female foeticide. Students were aware about declining sex ratio at state and at national level but not sure about exact ratio. Majority of students were not aware about legal aspect of female foeticide.*

**KEYWORDS :** Female foeticide, perception and amniocentesis.

### INTRODUCTION:

Killing of infant girl children has been practiced in Indian society from a long time as in many other ancient societies, e.g. the ancient Roman Empire. This would be called 'female infanticide'. Girl children were not welcome in many societies for various cultural, religious or social reasons and were killed or left to die after their birth. However the practice of female foeticide began in India mostly in the 1970s when the technology of sonography, or ultrasound machines, became available in the hospitals. Some tests like amniocentesis, Chorionic villus sampling and ultrasound were basically pre-natal diagnostic tests to determine any congenital deformity in the foetus which began to be used as sex determination tests of the baby in the womb.

Female infanticide now in most places has been replaced by female foeticide. The reports of recovery of female foetuses from drains, garbage dumps, public lavatories etc. have created shock and public outrage in the state (Rao 2004). Female foeticide is a major social problem in India and has cultural connections with the dowry system that is ingrained in Indian culture; despite the fact that it has been prohibited by law since 1961. It is estimated that more than 10 million female foetuses have been illegally aborted in India. Researchers for the (Lancet journal 2011) based in Canada and India stated that 500,000 girls were being lost annually through sex-selective abortions. Female foeticide has led to an increase in human trafficking.

Jammu and Kashmir State of northern India - has dwindled from 900 in 2001 to 883 in 2011. In northern India too, the daughters have been considered a burden. Killing the brides for want of dowry is a common incident. So the birth of a girl child is an ill omen for the family. The reasons for high number of incidence of female foeticide in India especially in Jammu and Kashmir include a deep rooted traditional son preference, continued practice of dowry and concern for safety of the girl child and exploitation and abuse of women and girl children.

Many talked of compulsions that women have at their ends to go for sex selection abortions. These arise either out of social norms fostering son preference. Some also said that unwanted girls ran the risk of severe ill treatment at their natal homes causing them emotional and mental trauma. Hence the service providers empathised with the woman's social needs for sex selective abortions (Economic and Political Weekly, 2003). Boys are preferred because, traditionally, they remain in the family home to look after the parents in their old age. Neither laws nor the government's "Save the Girl Child" campaign have had much impact in changing these perceptions. (UNICEF, 2007). Three major prenatal diagnostic tests that are being used as sex determination tests are: amniocentesis (normally performed after 15-17

weeks of pregnancy); chorionic villa sampling (more expensive and normally performed around the tenth week of pregnancy); and ultrasound (least expensive and normally performed around the tenth week of pregnancy). To check female foeticide, the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 was enacted. The Act came into force in 1996. By itself it is a comprehensive legislation which lays down the situations in which the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques is prohibited as also where it is regulated. The influence of the family members on women in undergoing PNDT/abortion, mother-in-laws, husbands as well as father-in-law also force for abortion. Some women themselves go for abortion. (Metri, et. al 2011).

The present study was done on college students because they are future of country and if they are aware about the legal aspect of female foeticide they can save girl child.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

#### Sample:

Sample for the study were students selected from colleges. Four government degree colleges were selected from Jammu Area. 15+15 students were taken from 1st year and 2nd year and 20 students from final year. Data was collected in the month of Jan- Feb 2013.

#### Sample Technique:

Systematic random sampling technique was used for sample selection.

#### Tools used for data collection:

Selected subjects were contacted personally for data collection. Data were collected using self-devised questionnaire keeping in mind the objectives of the study. Before finalizing the questionnaire, pre-testing was done on 8 students to check the appropriateness of the tool in form of addition and deletion and questionnaire was finalized and applied on respondents.

#### Data analysis:

The responses obtained were coded, tabulated and percentage was calculated to derive detailed information about the perception of students regarding female foeticide.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

The perception of the respondents towards the practice of female foeticide was drawn out by using questionnaire. The reason for indulgence in this illegal and immoral act was known from the respondents themselves. The following main aspects were investigated and related findings are detailed out below:

**Table no: 1 Background Characteristics:**

College wise distribution of Respondents	Total	%
G.C.W (Gandhi Nagar)	50	25%
G.C.W (Prade)	50	25%
G.G.M Science college(Canal road)	50	25%
M.A.M college(University road)	50	25%

Table No 1 reveals background characteristics of students. 25% students from each college were selected. 40% respondents were selected from 3rd year while 30% and 30% from 1st and 2nd year respectively.

**Table 2: Perception and Awareness of students regarding term female foeticide:**

Awareness	Male(N=100)	%	Female(N=100)	%
Aware	88	88%	98	98%
Not aware	12	12%	2	2%
Total	100	100%	100	100%
Perception of aware students	Male(N=88)	%	Female(N=92)	%
Murder of female child in the womb	37	42%	77	77%
Intentional destruction of female foetus	24	27.5%	14	14%

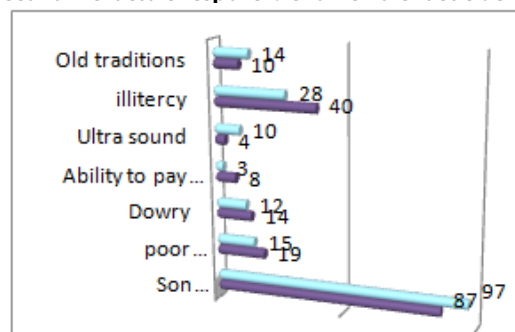
Table 2 indicates that majority of male students and female students responded 88% and 98% respectively aware about the term female foeticide. Out of 88 aware male students majority( 42%) responded murder of female child in the womb as meaning of term female foeticide. 27.5% responded intentional destruction of female foetus, 20% responded abortion, 7.95% responded abortion and remaining 2.55% responded killing of female child before birth as meaning of female foeticide. Similarly out of 98% female students majority(77%) responded murder of female child in the womb, 14% responded intentional destruction of female foetus, 1% responded abortion and 1% responded killing female child before birth.

**Table No: 3 Respondents awareness regarding declining sex ratio at National and State level**

Respondent's Awareness at National level	Male (N=100)	%	Female (N=100)	%
Awared	91	91%	81	81%
Not Awared	9	9%	19	19%
Awareness on State having highest declining sex ratio	Male (N=91)	%	Female (N=81)	%
Punjab	17	18.5%	19	23.4%
Delhi	12	13.5%	13	16.5%
Himachal Pradesh	16	17.5%	3	3.5%
Jammu & Kashmir	7	7.5%	8	9.5%
Haryana	34	37.5%	35	43.5%
U,P	5	5.5%	3	3.5%
State level Awareness	Male (N=100)	%	Female (N=100)	%
Awared	74	74%	70	70%
Not awared	26	26%	30	30%

The studied subjects showed high level awareness regarding declining sex ratio at national level (91% male and 81% female). 34% male and 35% female responded Haryana as highest declining sex ratio followed by Punjab, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. U.P state has least declining sex ratio. At state level 74% male and 70% female were aware about declining sex ratio. Similar kind of study was conducted by Chaudary et.al 2010 shows that 97.9% of the students knew correctly about female foeticide. Male and female students had almost equal level of awareness 98.7% and 98.6% respectively.

**Fig. 1 Perception of students about socio-cultural and economic factors responsible for female foeticide**



**Multiple responses**

Fig 1 shows multiple responses. Majority 87% male and 97% female student responded son preference while 40% male and 28% female students responded illiteracy as major factor for female foeticide followed by unequal status among son and daughter. Similar kind of study was done by Jabina banno 2012 which states that major socio cultural factors which are responsible for female foeticide were son preference, lack of religious knowledge, old traditions etc.

**CONCLUSION:**

This study reveals that the students had optimum level of awareness about female foeticide and almost all of them strongly felt that this harmful practice should be stopped altogether. Analysis of the themes generated gave an insight into the level of understanding of these adolescents toward this social evil as they touched upon all the major possible strategies for eliminating this practice. As college students are important stakeholders in elimination of the practice of female foeticide, it is recommended that these adolescents should be equipped with ample amount of knowledge so that they can act as change mediators in the society.

**RECOMMENDATION/SUGGESTION:**

- ❖ Government should provide girls with greater opportunities for education and employment.
- ❖ Intensive information, education and community (IEC) campaign for raising awareness should be organized.
- ❖ Sensitize students regarding the adverse effect of sex ratio.
- ❖ There should be regular workshop and seminars for youth which would greatly help to improve the status of women in country.
- ❖ Proper measures should be taken to implement the laws regarding female foeticide.
- ❖ There should be registered medical practitioner to conduct medical termination of pregnancy and registered nursing homes or hospitals.
- ❖ There is need to remove the myths of son preference from our society.
- ❖ In the end, it can be concluded that ignorance is the one of the major causes for this problem. Spreading awareness can go long way in saving our future's sisters, mothers and wives.

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