

## Research Article

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# A study of attitude, awareness and practice on female feticide of pregnant women in Udaipur city of Rajasthan, India

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Female feticide has been a big social problem in all the states of India. There is a male child preference by pregnant women including their family members. Thus this study aimed to assess attitude, awareness and practice on female feticide.

**Methods:** The present study was conducted in Udaipur city of Rajasthan in 500 pregnant women of first and second trimester from urban and rural areas of Udaipur city.

**Results:** Out of 500 pregnant women 60% had shown no gender preference, 23.4% preferred male child and 16.6% had preferred to have female child. Regarding awareness, 86.2% and 91.2% women knew that prenatal sex determination and female feticide are illegal respectively. There is significant difference in association in gender preference and awareness about female feticide between rural and urban women and their educational status. The desire to have one male child is main cause for female feticide as male child is considered as necessary condition for family name.

**Conclusions:** Being the civilized citizens, it is our duty to raise voice against the declining sex ratio and killing of girl child. Being a woman it is our primary duty as well as concern to come forward to stop this menace.

**Keywords:** Female feticide, Attitude, Awareness, Practice, Rural, Urban, Pregnant women

## INTRODUCTION

In the age of globalization and modernization the man still follows male female discrimination. Science is a boon for man. It has increased the age of a man but the misuse of the very science in female feticide has made it a bane. Female feticide has been committed by using the modern technology. Because of the lack of education this has been practiced much in rural areas, but the worst thing is that it has been committed much even in developed districts.

Most of the factors that make people to favor a male child are social and religious in origin. With the decline in average family size and preference of male child remained the same, the population of female is showing a downward trend. The birth of female child is perceived as

a curse with economic and social liability.<sup>1</sup> Female feticide cuts across all sections of Indian society with no regards to caste, religion or area of living. It is practiced by the wealthy, middle and poor and in urban areas and now spreading into rural regions.<sup>2</sup> Our society needs a woman, a mother for child, a wife for husband and a girl for garland greeting a political leader. It is awkward and uncivilized to think that woman to be honored and a girl to be cursed. A man needs women for his success in life, if so, it is a girl child future. This theory is not vindictive, but santanic.<sup>3</sup> Female feticide is an extreme manifestation of violence against women.<sup>4</sup>

On the one hand women have the equal share in works with men and the other hand heinous deed like female feticide is committed. So it is necessary to think about female feticide. It is the time to open the closed eyes and

also to change mentality. Otherwise the coming generations will certainly suffer.

## METHODS

The present study was conducted in Udaipur city of Rajasthan during the period of March - May 2016, with the aim of finding out the attitude, awareness and practice towards female feticide in pregnant women. According to the 2011 census of India, the number of females/1000 males is 940, and the child sex ratio is 914. In Rajasthan it is 926, the child sex ratio (0-6 yrs) is 883 - projecting the acutely damaged sex ratio.

Assuming level of awareness regarding female feticide to be 44% with reference to other studies and 95% confidence level and 10% absolute error, the sample size has been calculated using statistical formula of sample size determination:

**Table 1: Area wise distribution of attitude on gender preference and awareness on prenatal sex determination and female feticide of pregnant women.**

Attitude/Knowledge		Rural (n <sub>1</sub> =250)	Urban (n <sub>2</sub> =250)	Total (n=500)	χ <sup>2</sup> value	P value
Gender preference	No	140 (56.0%)	160 (64.0%)	300 (60.0%)	5.963	<0.05*
	Male	70 (28.0%)	47 (18.8%)	117 (23.4%)		
	Female	40 (16.0%)	43 (17.2%)	83 (16.6%)		
Prenatal sex determination is illegal	Know	206 (82.4%)	225 (90.0%)	431 (86.2%)	5.447	<0.05*
	Don't know	44 (17.6%)	25 (10.0%)	69 (13.8%)		
Female feticide is illegal	Know	215 (86.0%)	241 (96.4%)	456 (91.2%)	15.571	<0.001**
	Don't know	35 (14.0%)	9 (3.6%)	44 (8.8%)		

Significant \*, Highly Significant \*\*

Table 1 shows, 60% of pregnant women were having no gender preference. In 80 % of them, main reason found towards no preference was their first pregnancy. 23.4% women preferred to have male child because 62% of them had girl child before and 30% of them wants to have male child for the family name and 8% were having no reason for preference of boy. 16.6% women preferred to have female child because of the same reason that 80% of them had male child before and of them wants to have female child for the reasons such as good luck and more caring and responsible.

There is significant difference in association between rural and urban regarding gender preference (P=0.05). Thus it was concluded male is preferred for financial support and female for moral support at the time of old age.

Preference of male child was found to be 28% among rural and 18.8% among urban women. It was found that 86.2% followed by 82.4% rural and 90% urban knew that prenatal sex determination is illegal. The association was

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times P(1-P)}{E^2} = 489$$

Thus, total of 500 pregnant women of first and second trimester from urban and rural area of Udaipur city. Sample was taken from different socio-economic backgrounds and religions. Educated and uneducated women, both were included in the study.

## RESULTS

The mean age of pregnant women under study was found to be 25.93±3.01 for the age limit of 18-40 years taken under study. Majority of women (61.0%) were of age 22 to 30 years. 54% of the women had done secondary/senior secondary followed by 24.8% graduate/ post graduate women and 21.2% were found to be illiterate.

significant between rural and urban area (P=0.020). And 91.2% followed by 86% rural and 96.4% urban knew that prenatal sex determination is illegal and also the association was found to be statistically significant between rural and urban area (P<0.001).

Table 2 shows that there was significant difference in association due to level of education of women on attitude towards gender preference (P<0.001) and knowledge about prenatal sex determination (P<0.001) and female feticide (P<0.001). Out of total 100% women were had curiosity about gender of unborn child but only 10% wants to go for sex determination even they knew that sex determination is illegal and 86% of them wants to have baby boy and only 14% of them wants to have baby girl.

Remaining 90% women who doesn't wants to go for determination was because of 48% already having male child or and 44.89% of them knew that prenatal sex determination is illegal and they will be punished if they caught and only 7.11% because of no gender preference due to morality and faith in god.

**Table 2: Education wise distribution of attitude on gender preference and awareness on prenatal sex determination and female feticide of pregnant women.**

Attitude/Knowledge		Illiterate (n <sub>1</sub> = 106)	Secondary/Senior secondary (n <sub>2</sub> =270)	Graduate/Post graduate (n <sub>3</sub> =124)	Total (n= 500)	χ <sup>2</sup> value	P value
Gender preference	No	26 (24.53%)	175 (64.81%)	99 (79.84%)	300 (60.0%)	100.28	<0.001**
	Male	60 (56.60%)	45 (16.67%)	12 (9.68%)	117 (23.4%)		
	Female	20 (18.87%)	50 (18.52%)	13 (10.48%)	83 (16.6%)		
Prenatal sex determination is illegal	Know	8 (7.55%)	239 (88.52%)	112 (90.32%)	431 (86.2%)	99.68	<0.001**
	Don't know	26 (92.45%)	31 (11.48%)	12 (9.68%)	69 (13.8%)		
Female feticide is illegal	Know	80 (75.47%)	260 (96.30%)	116 (93.55%)	456 (91.2%)	42.26	<0.001**
	Don't know	26 (24.53%)	10 (3.70%)	8 (6.45%)	44 (8.8%)		

Highly Significant \*\*

**Table 3: Distribution according to attitude to know about the gender of unborn and preference.**

Attitude	Response		
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Curoosity about gender of fetus	500 (100%)	Nil	500 (100%)
Wish to go for prenatal sex determination	50 (10%)	450 (90%)	500 (100%)
Prefer male child	43 (86%)	7 (14%)	50 (100%)

**Table 4: Reasons for not wishing to go for prenatal sex determination (n=450).**

Reasons	Number of pregnant women (n=450)
Already having male child	216 (48.0%)
Prenatal sex determination is illegal	202 (44.89%)
No gender preference	32 (7.11%)
Total	450 (100.0%)

**Table 5: Reasons in subjects for wishing to go for prenatal sex determination (n=50).**

Reason	Number of pregnant women (n=50)
First child	01 (02.0%)
One female child	09 (18.0%)
Two female children or more	40 (80.0%)
Total	50 (100.0%)

The attitude towards preference for female feticide by pregnant women who wishes to go for it was found to be 18% in case having one female child and 80% in case of two or more female children whether it was only 2% when it was first child. The reason for this was found to be preference of male child because of family pressure

followed by need of both gender for balancing of family and small family size.

**Table 6: Distribution of subjects according to sources of providing awareness about female feticide (n=500).**

Sources	Number of pregnant women (n=500)
Television	410 (82.0%)
Newspaper	380 (76.0%)
Social network	400 (80.0%)
Doctors, friends and relatives	175 (35.0%)
Others	50 (10.0%)

90% of women were found to be aware about the drawbacks of female feticide such as social imbalance,

difficulty in marriage and increase in violence and crimes in society and families too.

But still male child was found to be necessary over female child in our society and 93% women thinks that they will have complete family only when male child will be there in family.

Majority of women got information through social networking (80%), television (82%), and newspaper (76%).

## DISCUSSION

In our study it was observed that 60% had no gender preference, 23.4% preferred male child and 16.6% preferred female child which found very close to findings of R Kansal et al. who reported no preference as 66%, 22.2% male and 11.8% female.<sup>5</sup>

In the it was found that preference of male child was 28% among rural and 18.8% among urban women which is in contrast with the study revealed that socio demographic factors affects gender preference as 70.68% of rural and 53.28% of urban women had given preference to male child.<sup>6</sup>

In study majority 86.2% were found to be aware of fact that prenatal sex determination is illegal and 91.2% knew that female feticide is illegal and women who found to be aware of fact that prenatal sex determination (89.09%) and female feticide is illegal (95.43%) were educated which is close to the finding of study that 71.2% women had given their view that female feticide is considered as crime.<sup>7,8</sup>

Majority of women got information through social networking (80%), television (82%), and newspaper (76%). It was found that 78% of women have got information through television and social media.<sup>9</sup> Thus media played an effective role in decline in prenatal sex determination and female feticide practices.

## CONCLUSION

Female Feticide is one of the gravest issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which needs to be addressed and tackled effectively by the human fraternity. Unless paid attention, Female Feticide, if being carried on at the existing rate, is bound to bring forth several social problems in the near future. Owing to shortage of the female sex, there will be a sharp increase in the instances of rape, molestations and

growth of homosexuality in the society. For the growth and development of mankind and the progress of humanity, men and women cannot be in conflict with one another; rather they are sought to be in coordination and cooperation with one another, for they are incomplete alone. Saving the girl child hence becomes absolutely important as in the long run man cannot strive alone. Being the civilized citizens, it is our duty to raise voice against the declining sex ratio and killing of girl child. Being a woman it is our primary duty as well as concern to come forward to stop this menace.

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