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Attitude towards gender preference among pregnant mothers and family members

M Susmitha and S Swarna

Abstract

Introduction: Common wisdom is that the preference for sons is motivated by economic, religious, social and emotional desires and norms that favour males and make females less desirable.

Objectives: To assess the attitude towards gender preference among pregnant mothers and family members, to find out the association between attitude among pregnant mothers and family members with their selected demographic variables.

Methodology: The research approach used for the present study was descriptive survey. The sample size was 50 pregnant mothers and 50 family members, convenient sampling technique was used to carry out the study Pre-tested Structured interview schedule was used to collect the data.

Results: Majority of pregnant mothers 21(42%) and family members 33(66%) expressed favourable attitude towards male child, major reason for preference was organizing death anniversaries, for rearing of girl child requires more money, girl child need more protection, most probably mother in law and father in law prefer male child.

Conclusion: Findings of the study showed that pregnant mothers and family members are expressed favourable attitude towards male child. This findings suggested health education and awareness programme in order to reduce the consequences of decreased sex ratio.

Keywords: Common wisdom, pregnant mothers and family members

Introduction

Preference for male child is well known phenomenon from the ages. UNICEF states that systematic gender discrimination has resulted up to 50 million girls and women going missing from the Indian population. For more than 100 years, the Indian census had shown a mark gap between the number of boys and girls, men and women. This gap, which has nationwide implications, is the result of decisions made at the most local level—the family. Common wisdom is that the preference for sons is motivated by economic, religious, social and emotional desires and norms that favour males and make females less desirable: Parents expect sons will provide financial and emotional care more than daughters especially in their old age; sons add to family wealth and property while daughters drain it through dowries; sons continue the family lineage while daughters are married away to another household; sons perform important religious roles; and sons defend or exercise the family's power while daughters have to be defended and protected, creating a perceived burden on the household.

This is very serious issues in our country and need immediate action. A recent report from the NITI Aayog highlighted sex ratio at birth (SRB) nationwide had dropped from 906 in 2012-2014 to 900 in 2013-2015. In all, 17 of 21 large Indian States saw a drop in the SRB, with Gujarat performing the worst, declining 53 points. Also, newer data from India's Sample Registration System show the SRB fell even further in 2014-2016, from 900 to 898.

Most alarming decreasing child sex ratio (0-6 year's age group) in india was 976 in 1961, 964 in 1971, and 962 in 1981. 945 in 1991, 927 in 2001 and 914 in 2011. The sex ratio (0-6 years) is least in Haryana which was 830 and the sex ratio is highest in Mizoram which was 971 according to 2011 census. Hence the investigator felt there is a strong need to know the attitude towards gender preference.

Methodology

A Descriptive Survey Research design was adopted for this study, which included the sample size of 50 pregnant mothers and 50 family, sample selected by convenient sampling technique, Data was collected by pre tested structured interview schedule, The time taken for the completion was 40-45 minutes for each subject.

Results

Majority of pregnant mothers(38%) are in age group of 26-30 years, majority (52%) were multipara, studied (24%) up to secondary school and equal number of mothers were found to be illiterate, nearly 3/3th belongs to Hindu, living (86%) in nuclear family and living in urban area (64%), majority of them are house wives.

Family members profile shows that half (52%) of them were aged above 30 years, most of the women accompanied by husbands (58%) that shows husbands involving during her check-ups, studied (30%) up to inter and above, nearly 3/3th belongs to Hindu, living (70) in nuclear family and living urban area (66%).

Attitude of Pregnant Mothers and Family Members

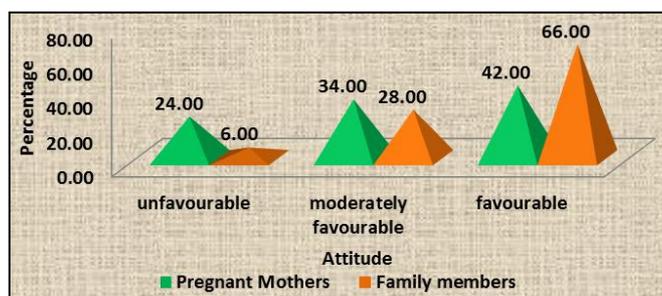


Fig: Attitude of pregnant mothers and family members

Above graph shows that both pregnant mothers and family members expressing favourable attitude towards male child. Compare to pregnant mothers, family members strongly prefer for male child.

Table 1: Percentage (%) distribution of attitude towards gender preference among pregnant mothers and family members.

Sl. No	Items of gender preference	Pregnant Mothers (%)	Family Members (%)
1.	A male heir is required for organize death anniversary.	72	94
2.	Girl child need protection	38	48
3.	Most probably mother-in law and father in law prefer male child.	38	36
4.	Preference of son is mainly due to increasing number of crimes against girl child	38	48
5.	If government provides facilities like money and basic education we should preference to have only one girl child	42	40
6.	Exposure to various source of media is significantly decreases weaker son preference	42	44
7.	Would you like female as your successor as mentioned in Hindu laws	56	50
8.	Girl child is more responsible than male child	56	70

Table 2 shows that majority (76%) pregnant mothers were strongly agreed with a male heir is required for organizing death anniversary, 36% were strongly agreed that girl child need protection, 38% were strongly agreed with most probably mother-in law and father in law prefer male child and preference of son is mainly due to increasing number of crimes against girl child, 42% were strongly agreed with if government provides facilities like money and basic education we should preference to have only one girl child and exposure to various source of media is significantly decreases weaker son preference, half above (56%) were strongly agreed that they will like female as their successor as mentioned in Hindu laws and were strongly agreed with girl child is more responsible than male child. More than 3/4th (94%) were strongly agreed with a male heir is required for organizing death anniversary, 48% were strongly agreed that girl child need protection and preference of son is mainly due to increasing number of crimes against girl child, 36% were strongly agreed with most probably mother-in law and father in law prefer male child, 40% were strongly agreed with if government provides facilities like money and basic education we should preference to have only one girl child, 44% were strongly agreed exposure to various source of media is significantly decreases weaker son preference, half of (50%) them were strongly agreed they will like female as their successor as mentioned in Hindu laws, majority (70%) were strongly agreed girl child is more responsible than male child.

Discussion

In the present study, it was found that 2/3rd of pregnant

mothers (42%) expressed favourable attitude, 34% of them expressed moderately favourable attitude towards male child and 24% of them were expressed unfavourable attitude. Similarly it was reported by study conducted by Dr Sachin Singh Yadav *et al.*; (2018) [4] Out of 400 women 53.5% showed preference for son, 17.5% for daughter. The present study was supported by study conducted by Dr Priyanka Sachdeva *et al.* (2018) [5] 39.45% antenatal mothers had preference for male child in their current pregnancy, 27.52% antenatal mothers had preference for female child. The present study was supported by study conducted by Ms Mercy Zounsiami *et al.*; (2017) [6] among 150 unmarried and 150 married women, majority of the unmarried women (86%) and married women (91.3%) have favourable attitude towards gender preference. In the present study, it was found that majority of the family members (66%) expressed favourable attitude, 28% were expressed moderately favourable attitude and 6% expressed unfavourable attitude towards male child. The present study is supported by the study conducted by s Tawri P, Patole K (2017) among 100 women nasik district, gender preference of the particular sex in families was 45% which came down to 12% during the post awareness .their desire to know the gender of foetus come down to 4% from 15% after the awareness programme. The study to the association between favourability of attitude among pregnant mothers and age ($X^2=13.280$, $p=0.039$), education ($X^2=30.730$, $p=0.000$), occupation ($X^2=23.697$, $p=0.003$) are significant at $p<0.01$ level and family income ($X^2=11.362$, $p=0.023$) per month was significant at $p<0.05$ level. The study is supported by the study conducted by by chavada mallika in 2007 [7] to assess the effect of socio cultural factors on the

preference of the sex of the children, among 385 married women in Ahmedabad. Son preference was observed higher in illiterate women, son preference observed more in rural areas. The study found that education, place of residence, cultural factors play a role in son preference. The study to the association between favourability of attitude among family members and age ($X^2=17.825$, $p=0.007$) is significant at $p<0.01$ level, and residence ($X^2=6.816$, $p=0.33$) was significant at $p<0.05$ level. The study is supported by the study conducted by Mnju Toppo *et al.*; I 2015 to assess the attitude, belief and practice of mother in law and her son regarding son preference among 307 families in Bophal district, association between mother in law education and son preference was found statistically significant (<0.0001), that is higher the literacy or lower school education, higher was the preference for boy [32].

Conclusion

Findings of the study showed that favourable attitude towards male child among pregnant mothers and family members. This findings suggested health education and awareness programme in order to reduce the consequences of decreased sex ratio.

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