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Naaz Bano
Department of Extension
Education and Communication
Management, CCS HAU, Hisar,
Haryana, India

Asif Beg
Department of Farm Machinery
and Power Engineering, CAU,
Manipur, India

Arti Kumari
Department of Human
Development and Family
Studies, CCS HAU, Hisar,
Haryana, India

Rajesh Dahiya
Assistant PROFESSOR
Department of Extension
Education and Communication
Management, CCS HAU, Hisar,
Haryana, India

A critical review: Problem of female foeticide and female infanticide in India

Naaz Bano, Asif Beg, Arti Kumari and Rajesh Dahiya

Abstract

Female foeticide is a conscious and deliberate act of aborting a fetus since it is a female. Female fetuses are specifically aborted. Subsequently, around 10 lakh girls are missing from the Indian population. The census of the Govt. of India has uncovered a sharp decrease in the sex proportion of children in the 0-6 age group in the 10 years since the last statistics (from 945 to 927 female per 1000 male). Female foeticide not only brings about a declining girl population, but also disregards our notion of human rights, and in particular poses a question of the survival of the human race prompting development crisis. To prompt prosperity, movement and progression of the individuals and development and advancement of communities and nation overall, it is important to plan measures, laws, policies and approaches to eliminate these practices. The people, having a place or belonging to rural communities and deprived, marginalized and economically weaker sections of the society are the ones, who should be sufficiently mindful regarding these measures, approaches and measures, policies and laws. Female foeticide and female infanticide cannot be controlled unless the condition changes and families start to give importance to their daughters more than they do at present. Increasing awareness of the problem has led to various campaigns by journalists and celebrities to combat evil practice of female foeticide. Aamir Khan devoted the first episode "Daughters Are Precious" of his show Satyamev Jayate to create awareness on this widespread practice. Therefore among all the components related to the empowerment of girls and women which need consideration, education is the most significant component to raise the status of girls in the society.

Keywords: Sex ratio, foeticide, abortion, infanticide and legislative measures

Introduction

The census 2011 and the new news reports information show a bleak segment picture of declining female to male proportions. Shockingly the most influenced states are reformist states like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Gujarat. As indicated by UN standards, male-female proportion in the world is generally 1050 females for 1000 guys. In Human Development Survey Report likewise, India is put in 124th situation among 173 nations. It is a fact our nation is much behind contrasted with different nations in regard of education, gender discrimination and health. It is because of female foeticide and female infanticide.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971 accommodates restricted a lot option to end the pregnancy, when the existence of the mother is in question or there is a considerable danger to the existence of the child. What is to be noted here is that the MTP Act 1971, doesn't perceive the privilege of the mother to abort, this right to decide on termination of pregnancy vests with a registered medical practitioner. Further a few states in India have made exceptional enactments to present extraordinary assurance to the existence of foetuses. The Nuclear Installations Act, 1965 perceives risk for pay in regard of injury or harm caused to an unborn kid by the event including atomic matter or the outflow of ionizing radiation.

The PC-PNDT Act was established on 20 September 1994 with the aim to forbid pre-birth indicative strategies for assurance of the sex of the embryo prompting female foeticide. In other words the starter object was to put a beware of female foeticide. Most likely the exposed scrutiny of the Act demonstrates that it is a draconic act from the purpose of its impact on radiologists/sonologists. The Act doesn't offer any escape to the erring radiologist/sonologist. But simultaneously it is easy to satisfy and abide by the requisitions of the Act. The couple of fundamental necessities of the Act are: 1. Enrollment under Section (18) of the PC-PNDT Act. 2. Composed assent of the pregnant lady and forbiddance of conveying the sex of embryo under Section 5 of the Act. 3. Support of records as given under Section 29 of the Act. 4. Creating awareness among the people at large by placing the board of prohibition on sex determination.

Corresponding Author:
Naaz Bano
Department of Extension
Education and Communication
Management, CCS HAU, Hisar,
Haryana, India

The Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostics Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Determination) Act 2003, with rules is an Act to protect the girl child. The Courts have at all material times and in all possible manners delivered judgments indicating therefore that the PC-PNDT Act is actually a whip to penalize those indulging in sex determination to fill in as an impediment to other people.

Understanding the Meaning of Female Foeticide and Female Infanticide

Female foeticide and female Infanticide female foeticide is aborting the female child in the mother's womb. While female infanticide is killing a baby girl after she is being born. The act of killing the female child after her birth has been prevailing in our society for many years. However, female foeticide is the inheritance and commitment of the advancement made by the medical science. Amniocentesis was introduced in 1975 with identify fetal anomalies yet it before long started to be utilized for deciding the sex of the child. Ultrasound scanning, being a non-intrusive strategy, immediately gained popularity and is now available in some of the most remote rural areas. Both techniques are now being utilized for sex assurance with the goal of early termination if the baby ends up being female. With the advancement of privatization and commercialization, the utilization of pre-natal diagnostic technologies is growing into a flourishing business in India. This is principally with the end goal of sex assurance specific early termination of the female foetus. The abuse of technology simply reinforces the secondary status given to girl children in such a way that they are separated out even before they are born. Compared to infanticide, foeticide is foeticide is likely a more acceptable means for arranging off the undesirable girl children. Infanticide can be an clearly cruel practice while foeticide that is done by experts that utilizes logical methods, abilities, scientific techniques and skills and reduces the guilt factor associated with the entire exercise.

Female Foeticide is a violation of an unborn girl child. It likewise has implication on the health of the mother. It affects status of women and has serious ecological and demographical ramification. It is a grave issue that influences the life and soundness of society. And yet the problem of female foeticide and female infanticide has get little consideration.

Objectives of the review paper

1. To review the factors leading to female foeticide and female infanticide in India
2. To review the perception and attitude of people towards female foeticide and female infanticide
3. To review the awareness level of people regarding female foeticide and female infanticide
4. To review the legislative measures taken to combat female foeticide and female infanticide

Ghosh, (2001) [8] carried out a study by selecting one village from two blocks in Allahabad district (UP). From each village a sample of 50 couples younger than 45 years were randomly selected. A significant number of males (64%) and females (74%) had no information about the sex-proportion, while 35 % males and 20 % females had low information about it. There were none in the high knowledge level. Female foeticide was referred to by respondents (41% males and 36% females) as the fundamental reason behind the imbalanced sex

proportion. Only 7 % males responded dowry deaths resulting in higher female mortality as one of the reasons. 81 % guys and 65 % females felt that the serious issue because of imbalanced sex ratio would be the non accessibility of girls for marriage.

Sarna, (2003) [27] analyzed the pattern and factors responsible for female feticide and further noted that the components liable for female feticide are specially attributed to financial dependence of females on husbands or in-laws, social security, evil of dowry and certain cultural factors.

Mathur *et al.*, (2004) [14] conducted a study on relationship between livelihoods and childhood poverty and prosperity in the State of Rajasthan found that the act of female infanticide, female feticide and strong son preference in most communities were major factors contributing to the imbalance in the sex ratio.

Gandhi *et al.*, (2005) [7] investigated the income strata and rural – urban variations in extent and justification for female feticide/ infanticide, and to catch the linkages between male child inclination with the sexual orientation framework and the act of female feticide/ infanticide in urban, semi-urban and rural areas of three districts (Bhatinda, Jalandhar and Amritsar) of Punjab. Findings demonstrated that 19.4% of the respondents depended on early termination in light of the fact that a female child was detected, and they needed a male kid. Resort to female feticide was accounted by the middle income level group (23.2%), followed by upper income level group (18.3%) and least by the lower income level group (15.5%).

Srivastava *et al.*, (2005) [31] observed that women welcome a girl child irrespective of their family type. But when it comes to welcome a girl child by the entire family, the attitude of the women is significantly impacted by the mentality of the male individuals in the family.

Aggarwal, (2005) conducted a study in Haryana to explore the sex specific segregation in terms of active and passive termination of girl child in different socioeconomic conditions. The proportion of female deaths over male was found to be less than 1 in the lower birth orders which increase to 1.8 in the higher birth order recommending that there is ignorance and neglect of female child in the higher birth order. A remarkable sex differential was seen in the morbidity as well as immunization pattern showing more disregard for the female child.

Sharma, (2005) [25] observed that one of the main reason of the “save the girl child campaign” is to lessen the preference for a male child by featuring the accomplishments of young girls and to establish environment where sons and daughters are valued equally. This ought to be combined with highlighting the issue and dangers of female feticide and slanted sex ratio and the main drivers for gender biasness should be handled first and step towards empowerment of women.

Walia, (2005) [34] conducted a study with the total sample of 240 respondents and reported that in Ludhiana 67.50 per cent of respondents practicing farming and half the sample of respondents not practicing farming gave a nod to female feticide. Respondents argued that they could manage the cost of just a single female kid in the family. From the total sample taken from Ludhiana 27.50 percent communicated their dispute towards female foeticide. As per them, it was a grievous act and should be punished by law.

Chaudhary *et al.*, (2010) [5] led a cross sectional study on 527 students between the age group of 11-18 years of various schools form Ludhiana district of Punjab to assess the awareness and perceptions of school children with respect to

female feticide. The findings indicated that 97.90 per cent students were aware of the female feticide issue through TV, followed by print media 33 per cent. Majority of the students (65.30 per cent) felt about the discrimination between boys and girls.

Aishwarya *et al.*, (2010) [2] carried out the study in selected Bikaner Panchayat Samiti of Bikaner district of Rajasthan to assess the awareness about female feticide among rural and urban women. According to the findings of the study (55 per cent) rural women and (70 per cent) urban women had medium level awareness about female feticide. Further outcomes of the study demonstrated that mass media exposure and high socio economic status had positive and significant association with awareness about female feticide among rural and urban women.

Kansal *et al.*, (2010) [10] conducted a study to assess the perception of pregnant women towards gender biasness as well as knowledge about the practice of prenatal sex determination and female feticide among pregnant women. A majority (66.00 per cent) of the pregnant women did not show any gender biasness. A high extent of (89.70 per cent) the pregnant women were aware about the prenatal sex determination and female feticide.

Shiakh *et al.*, (2011) assessed the perception of couples regarding the female feticide practices in Surat city of Gujrat. Only 51.90 per cent of the women were aware of the fact that 3 female child killed every minute in India. Prenatal sex determination among their family members and neighbors were accounted for by 80% respondents, however they themselves had never turned to it. Supporting to this statement, 25.90 per cent respondents reported of ever been compressed by their family members to undergo prenatal sex diagnosis of their fetus. Encouragingly 90% respondents had believed that repeated prenatal sex diagnosis and early terminations are impeding to the psychological and wellbeing of a woman and is entirely preventable. Stricter laws and authorized enforcement of these laws were the most common suggestions by respondent to prevent female feticide in public arena.

Khatun *et al.*, (2011) [12] considered that female feticide has become a social danger of global importance in the time of ultrasound innovation and industrialist advancement and tries to focus on the rationale behind the feticide, and the consequences of this practice on the Indian society.

Rashmi *et al.*, (2011) [22] in a cross sectional study done with the objective of comparing some parameters such as attitude & practice of gender discrimination in rural and urban areas of Ahmedabad district of Gujrat and results alarmingly showed adverse sex ratio was low among urban preschoolers. Preference of male child over girl child by the couples was an indicator of gender discrimination in the study areas, It was correlated with female literacy rate, their low mean age at marriage and first conception. Whereas urban areas indicated more adverse sex ratio coupled with awareness and use of ultra sonography (USG) for sex determination rural areas exhibited poor literacy of females and poor contraceptive use.

Subramanian & Corsi, (2011) [32] noticed that insufficient economic advancement in India doesn't really clarify the differential in female-to-male ratio of birth as indicated by the study households with high education and wealth were found to had a convergence of an imbalanced sex proportion.

Salivkar *et al.*, (2012) [23] distinguished 5 significant reasons answerable for female feticide and the declining sex proportion. In the study secondary sources of information was

used and from the results it was concluded that female feticide is more committed by educated people than uneducated as they as they know about prenatal sex determination tests and sonography.

Avachat *et al.*, (2013) [4] conducted a cross sectional study among 79 medical interns and noticed that the knowledge of current sex ratio was significantly better among female interns and creating awareness is powerful method to battle declining sex proportion and only 33 interns had right information in regards to all measures. The study emphasized upon the need to sensitize doctors regarding all the aspect of Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act and specific sex assurance.

Kavita *et al.*, (2013) [11] conducted a study to analyze the impact of educational programme on level of awareness regarding female feticide and infanticide among boys and girls studying in 11th standard. Findings indicated that a significant impact of educational programme was observed in the level of awareness regarding female feticide and infanticide among the boys and girls.

Manhas and Banoo, (2013) [15] led an investigation on the perception of Muslim Doctors of Jammu regarding the practice of female feticide and found that female feticide in Muslim community is due to son preference, family and social values and lack of religious knowledge.

Nisha *et al.*, (2013) [17] contemplated a reality that new innovative technologies from the mid 1980's onwards is responsible for the declining sex ratio as they present the birth of girl child and promote the birth of boy child. She distinguishes that there is a need to address the mindset of the people and to create awareness among the people regarding women issues.

Choudhary (2014) [6] concluded that majority of women had awareness about causes and unsafe effect of female feticide, and contradict this evil practice. However, most extreme women had an opinion that Government should carefully authorize laws against female feticide and punish people and medical practitioners involved in this evil act. In addition to this, efforts should be taken to create awareness regarding this practice and to ensure equal status of men and women. As females are significant partners in end of the act of female feticide, it is suggested that this group should be furnished with plentiful measure of information so that they can act as change agent in the society.

Shashi *et al.*, (2014) [28] observed that majority of the women (74 per cent) were aware about the presence of gender biasness in society and the technologies available for sex determination such as ultrasound. The findings also indicated that women were also aware about legal implications for female feticide yet no one had exact information about legal punishment. Majority of the women (78.00 per cent) responded that dowry is the main reason for female feticide. Women who belonged to below poverty line were also aware about the consequence of female feticide. like lack of girls (72 per cent) and world will finish according to (60 per cent) women.

Shashi, (2014) [28] noted that decreasing sex proportion in Himachal Pradesh is raising a caution as girls were vanishing from the homes of hills. The decreasing sex ratio in state was not only due to the socio-economic and culture factors but may also be due to the progression of most recent medical technology, which had contributed in the serious problem of female feticide. The findings of the study stated that majority of the women were aware about sex selection test specifically

ultrasound.

Sindhu, (2014) ^[30] stated that the immediate cause for the practice of female foeticide is that daughters are perceived as financial and social burden to the family because of a few factors like such as dowry system and worry about getting her married.

Srivastava, (2014) ^[33] suggested that the prohibition of sex-determination test, though an essential and desperately required step, but it is not the ultimate solution to the problem. In the long run, social prejudices against women have to be address by improving her status in the family and community.

Kumar (2015) ^[13] geographically investigated the child sex ratio in Haryana of the districts which were included under "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" and some other districts of the state by the use of census data from 1971 to 2011, it was noted that Haryana had maximum number of gender critical district in India, 12 out of its 21 districts of Haryana state were in this category closely followed by Punjab having 11 Gender Critical District and Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh with 10 districts each. Male child preference and dominant patriarchal system were the main drive force of low child sex ratio. Mewat, the only district of Haryana state had child sex-ratio more than 900 that was 906. can be inspiration to make "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" programme a success in „Gender Critical District“ which were being covered.

Purwar (2015) ^[18] reported that all the women were aware of the techniques which were utilized for the Pre-Natal Sex determination test (PNDT). More than half of the women responded that boys mainly carries the name of the family and inherit property, 55 per cent women responded that burden of dowry system is the main cause of female foeticide and 49 per cent women responded that girls needed more safety. Majority of them recommended that this evil practice should be stopped.

Sharma (2015) ^[26] recommended five new innovative ideas for upgrading change through "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" creating awareness about the Programme, by education and knowledge, with the help of Information communication Technology (ICT), by campaign, awareness through community radios and Behavior change campaigns.

ANI (2016) ^[3] detailed that Women and Child Development Minister, Maneka Gandhi while Addressing a meeting on activities and accomplishments of the Women and Child Development Ministry at the "all India regional editors' conference" in Jaipur on 1st February 2016, reported that the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' conspire, which was at first launched in 100 districts, was reached out to 61 additional districts.

Ram (2016) ^[19] observed that Female foeticide in India is a serious problem to handle with. There is a long way to fight the pre-birth termination of female. A focused effort by everyone in community is local area is the need of an opportunity to control the danger of female foeticide.

Rana (2016) ^[20] recognized that female infanticide and female foeticide was the major concealed crimes against women had to be declared a misdeed against humankind. An exclusively legitimate way to deal with gender biasness will only shove the subject under the carpet where it will breed gregariously. The law without any strict punishment can't destroy these seriously dug in inclinations being an integral asset for social change.

Rani (2016) ^[21] conducted a study on knowledge regarding

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme and the findings indicated that there was increase in knowledge regarding the programme and women were aware about overall effectiveness of all components of media package regarding female foeticide and abortion, awareness and benefits of the scheme etc. was highly effective in rural women.

Neogi, *et al.*, (2017) ^[16] inspected the utilization of sex selection for a social reason is a threat which is should have been handled. It was highlighted that Government of Haryana is focused to address the menace of sex selection and improving the status of women because of persistently declining sex ratio from past decades. Several efforts are being taken in different parts of north India to curb this threat.

Measures to curb the acts of female foeticide and female infanticide

To prompt successful development and movement of the people, communities and nation as a whole, it is important to produce data regarding the estimates that are expected to check the demonstrations of female foeticide and female infanticide. These have been stated as follows:

Changes in Viewpoints and Perspectives -The people belonging to rural communities, who are living in the states of neediness and backwardness need to changes in their perspectives and points regarding girls. They should value the birth of the girl children and regard them as loving family member. They need to shape good perspectives in regards to girls and feel that when their development and improvement will occur in a viable way, they won't just arise into into productive members of their families and communities, but also productive citizens of the country. Therefore, when changes will happen in the perspectives and viewpoints of these people, they will deliver a critical commitment in a proficient manner in curbing the acts of female foeticide and female infanticide.

Advancing Acquisition of Education – Education is viewed as an instrument that gives information and comprehension to the girls not only regarding academic concepts, yet additionally different elements that would empower them to profit in number of ways. When the girls will acquire education, they will be able to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate, support their everyday environments in an efficient way, inculcate the traits of diligence, ethics, conscientiousness and morality emerge into productive citizens of the nation. In order to promote education among girls, girls education centres should be established in rural areas, which will provide opportunities to the girls to develop their literacy skills and acquire knowledge in terms of various academic aspects. In this way, it can be stated that promoting education among rural areas will also enable society to treat girls with respect and courtesy and curb the acts of female foeticide and female infanticide.

Giving Equal Rights and Opportunities to Boys and Girls

– The girls and boys ought to be furnished with equivalent rights and opportunities. One of the significant areas in terms of which equal rights and opportunities need to be provided to both boys and girls is the acquisition of education. Education significantly contributes in empowering the individual to advance prosperity of themselves just as their families and communities. When girls will acquire knowledge, hey will increase their insight and capabilities. At the point when they

will expand their insight and capabilities, they won't just improve their profession possibilities, yet additionally turn out to be support systems to their families. Therefore, it can be stated that through giving equivalent rights and freedoms to girls as their male counterparts, people will shape useful perspectives and as such the acts of female foeticide and female infanticide will get alleviated.

Usage of Laws and Policies – The Government of India has executed various programs, projects, laws and strategies that have the principle objective of creating awareness in the community that they should not consider girl children as liabilities, but should value their birth. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao is a campaign of the Government of India with main objective to generate awareness among the individuals that they should save the girl child and provide better education to her. The scheme was launched with the initial funding of Rs. 100 crores. This campaign is mainly focused in the states of Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Accordingly, it tends to be expressed that usage of laws and approaches will deliver a significant commitment in controlling the practices of female foeticide and female infanticide.

Advancing Skills Development among Girls – The guardians need structure the perspective that advancing abilities girls would empower them for better livelihood opportunities. In rural areas, agriculture is regarded as the major occupation of the community. Aside from the farming area, the people are occupied with different occupations such as production of handicrafts and artworks, silk weaving, pottery making, food items, and so forth. It is crucial for the parents to inculcate efficient skill among their girls in terms of their work duties. At the point when the girls will increase their abilities and capacities, they will help their parents in the production and manufacturing processes as well as marketing of the goods. In this manner, advancing abilities advancement among girls will contribute in valuing their birth and alleviating the acts of female foeticide and female infanticide.

Motivating Girls to Participate in Activities – The parents should encourage girls in the participation of social, cultural and religious events. Parents should encourage their daughters to develop interest and enthusiasm in sharpening their abilities and capabilities in terms of extra-curricular and creative activities. These activities includes, playing of musical instruments, singing, making handicrafts and artworks, dancing, role playing, physical activities and sports. At the point when they are skilled in terms of these areas, they will utilize them in a productive way, when they are motivated to participate in social, cultural and religious activities. In this manner, when the girls will be encouraged to participate in activities, they will contribute in improving the livelihood status of the families. This will lead promote development of positive perspectives against girls and help in decreasing the practices of female foeticide and female infanticide.

Implementing and Executing Measures and Schemes for Women and Child Development – It is imperative to actualize measures and plans that are pointed towards prompting women and child development. The government had implemented different plans that are committed towards advancing prosperity and well-being of women and children. When the people and society generate awareness in terms of

measures and schemes and get help from them, they can frame positive perspectives and appreciate birth of the girl child. Subsequently, it tends to be expressed that, the people generate awareness in terms of various measures and schemes, which are mainly dedicated towards improving the well-being of women and children, than they will be able to contribute effectively in eradicating the practices of female foeticide and female infanticide.

Conclusion

People from both rural as well as urban areas have to be aware about the need of female child in the society as that of male child. A reformative legislation alone cannot solve these social evils of female foeticide and female infanticide. The people must be aware of the reformist legislations which has certain deterrent facts. Numerous women are pressurized to undergo tests and seek abortion if female detected A novel spirit has to be imbibed propagating that a female child is not a curse. She is not a burden. She is not a drain on the economy of the country. She is not a tool through which dowry has to be given. An inclination must be sustained that she is the mother, she is the girl, and she is the life partner. However the government of India has been making constant efforts to elevate the status of the girl child in the country as well as incentivize her education through various programs and schemes. These have surely contributed to raising the status of girls in the society yet a lot more needs to be done for girls to be actually treated as equivalent to boys.

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