

## Role of educational intervention to change the knowledge and perception of young males regarding female feticide: A Quasi experimental study

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** the so called “Son mania” determines the attitude of the young cohort of the Eligible couple which are in reproductive phase or will soon enter into it.

**Objective:** can an educational intervention on female feticide change the knowledge and opinion of young college going males?

**Methodology:** Study design is Institution based quasi experimental study, Study unit is Polytechnic students (male). Sampling technique is consequential, where all the students entered into the first year of the polytechnic course were part of the study. Data collection tool was self administered questionnaire which was administered pre and post interventions. Variables included in the questionnaire were ever heard about female feticide, methods related to pre-natal sex determination and factors responsible for female position in society.

**Results:** 82% respondents had heard about the term “female feticide” but only 30% respondents understood that it is meant for killing of female fetus in the womb. 38% respondents before intervention mentioned that, female feticide is morally wrong, which was increased to 84% after intervention, and the difference was statistically significant. When asked about the solution of the problem 68% before intervention and 95% after intervention said that ‘we as a responsible citizen’ can only solve the problem. This difference was statistically significant.

**Conclusion:** Most of these variables have shown significant difference after the educational intervention given to these male students. The most important change was noticed for bearing the responsibility in future as responsible citizen to solve the problem (95% post Intervention from 68%, <0.001).

**Keywords:** Female Feticide, Educational Intervention, Young Male Students.

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### Introduction

Female infanticide and feticide is not a recent phenomenon in India. Sir Jonathan Duncan was the first to present officially earliest known evidence of infanticide in India amongst the Rajkoomar tribe of Junapore areas of Banaras district in 1789 (Pakrasi, 1970).<sup>(1)</sup> In India, a women's status is associated not only with her reproductive capability but also on her success in delivering a male child, which enhances women's will to give birth to male child<sup>(2)</sup> Even today, female feticide is quite prevalent in India, but its form of action has changed. In India, deaths of young girls exceed those of young boys over three lakhs each year, and every sixth infant death is specifically due to gender discrimination.<sup>(3)</sup>

Changes in sex-ratio reflect socioeconomic and cultural practice of a society. A skewed sex ratio is an issue of major concern and has long-term social and demographic consequences. At the heart of the problem is the inferior status of women in society, a patriarchal social framework and value system based on “son mania”.<sup>(4)</sup> This the so called “Son mania” determines the attitude of the young cohort of the Eligible couple which are in reproductive phase or will soon enter into it. 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.<sup>(5)</sup>

As the young males would be the important future decision makers in the demographic maintenance of gender balance, their knowledge and opinion would determine their action for female feticide. Therefore, this study focus to explore that can an educational intervention on female feticide change the knowledge and opinion of young college going males?

### Objective

1. To assess the knowledge and attitude of the male young students for the female feticide.
2. To assess any change in their knowledge and attitude for the female feticide after educational intervention.

### Methodology

**Definition of female feticide:** Female feticide is the elimination of female fetus through abortions. It refers to the abortion of a fetus of female gender as a result of a sex determination test.<sup>(6)</sup>

**Operational definition of attitude:** attitude is a hypothetical consent that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for an item. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views for a person, place, thing or event.

Study design is Institution based quasi experimental study, conducted in Subharti Polytechnic College, Meerut. Study unit is Polytechnic students (male).

Sampling technique is consequential, where all the students entered into the first year of the polytechnic course were part of the study. Thus sample size was 100.

Data collection tool was self administered questionnaire which was administered pre and post interventions. Variables included in the questionnaire were ever heard about female feticide, methods related to pre-natal sex determination and factors responsible for female position in society. Interventions given were power point presentation for the “situation of the girl child”, “Facts about the missing girls” and “responsible factors” and it was followed by open discussion. Data was analysed in Microsoft Excel and Z Proportion test was applied.

### Results and Discussion

In our study 82% respondents had heard about the term “female feticide” which was increased to 100% after intervention; and this difference was not statistically significant. Only 30% respondents understood that it is meant for killing of female fetus in the womb, which was increased to 76% after intervention and was statistically significant. Manhas S et al in their study also mentioned that 88% were aware of the female feticide but 42% knew the meaning of it.<sup>(7)</sup> (Table 1)

Before educational intervention, 32% students mentioned that it is more in higher income and educated class and 16% mentioned that test for sex determination is conducted in the 3<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. Their knowledge was increased to 76% and 77% after the intervention; and these are statistically significant difference. (Table 1)

For means of detection of prenatal sex, 46% students before intervention were able to mention Ultrasonography as an easy diagnostic procedure. This proportion was increased to 88% after intervention, which was statistically significant. Manhas S and Banoo J found that 96% fathers were aware about ultrasound method for sex determination of fetus.<sup>(8)</sup> (Table 1)

Meaning of demographic indicator ‘Sex Ratio’ was known to 38% students and 40% knew that determining the sex of the fetus is a punishable crime in India. Their knowledge was increased to 84% and 85% respectively after intervention, which was statistically significant difference. (Table 1)

For searching the causes of female feticide in their opinion in our study, 84% predominantly mentioned for

preference for son. Manhas S and Banoo J<sup>(8)</sup> mentioned that 70% fathers responded that son preference is the main cause of female foeticide in the community. Lower status of women in the society and big dowry demand for girls marriages was mentioned by 36% and 34% respectively. Lack of safety for girls in the society was mentioned by 32% whereas 18% said the fear of family honor as the cause of female feticide. (Table 2) Choudhary M mentioned in her study conducted in Ludhiana city that dowry (35%) and increased crime against women (33.9%) as a reason for less preference of girl child.<sup>(9)</sup>

On further exploration for their attitude for female feticide, 38% respondents before intervention mentioned that, female feticide is morally wrong, which was increased to 84% after intervention, and the difference was statistically significant. (Table 3) Choudhary M<sup>(9)</sup> mentioned in his study that 91.6% subjects has perceived female feticide as morally wrong, whereas it was believed by 96% of fathers in the study conducted by Manhas S and Banoo J.<sup>(8)</sup>

72% respondents before intervention who did not mentioned female feticide as a morally wrong practice, mentioned lack of safety of women in the society (32%) and big dowry at the time of girls marriage (34%) as reason for it.

Women in the society is held responsible for the birth of the female child as it is “SHE” who is giving the birth to the child, was mentioned by 60% and 72% respondents before and after intervention, which was not found statistically significant. On further exploration for whose “gene” is responsible for female child. 32% students were able to mention correctly that it is male partner gene, which was increased to 84% after intervention; and this difference was statistically significant. (Table 3)

On exploring their view for the societal effect by decrease no of female in the society, 34% students mentioned that social evil will increase as a result of less numbers of females, which was increased to 72% after intervention, which was statistically significant. (Table 3) Choudhary M mentioned in the study that 82.4% study subjects perceived that female feticide has harmful impact on society and 36.8% said that social problems in society will increase.<sup>(9)</sup>

When asked about the solution of the problem 68% before intervention and 95% after intervention said that ‘we as a responsible citizen’ can only solve the problem. This difference was statistically significant. (Table 3)

**Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their knowledge on female feticide, pre and post intervention**

Question (Correct response)	PRE INTERV.	POST INTERV.	Z value	P value
Ever heard about female feticide: (Yes)	82%	100%	1.83	0.066
What is Female feticide (Killing of female fetus in the womb)	30%	71%	5.79	<0.001
In which socio-economic class it is more: (In higher income and educated class)	32%	76%	6.24	<0.001
In which month of pregnancy sex determination test is conducted: (In 3-4 <sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy)	16%	77%	8.64	<0.001
Which Procedure is commonly used for determination of sex: (Ultra Sono Graphy)	46%	88%	6.31	<0.001
What is sex ratio: (No of female/1000 male)	38%	84%	6.66	<0.001
Do you know that prenatal sex determination is Crime with legal punishment. (Aware)	40%	85%	6.57	<0.001

**Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to their opinion for causes of female feticide (Multiple responses)**

Causes	Percentage
Preference for son	84%
lower status of women in the society	36%
Big dowry demand for girls marriage	34%
Lack of safety for girls	32%
Fear of family honor	18%

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their perception on female feticide, pre and post intervention**

Question (Correct response)	PRE INTERV.	POST INTERV.	Z -Value	P Value
Is female feticide morally wrong (Yes)	38%	84%	6.66	<0.001
Why female is held responsible for birth of a girl child ( as it is women who is giving birth)	60%	72%	1.79	0.073
Whose gene is responsible for the female child: (Male partner gene)	32%	84%	7.44	<0.001
What effect will occur with the decreased number of females in the society: (Social evil will increase)	34%	72%	5.67	<0.001
Who can help to solve the problem : (We, as a responsible citizen)	68%	95%	4.91	<0.001

### Conclusion

Male member of the family, whether husband or father in law, carries significant determining role as decision makers for the family. Decisions of the future young cohort will depend on the attitude pertaining to the problem. In our study, before intervention, though majority have heard about female feticide but actual correct meaning was known to 30% of the students. USG as a mean of sex determination test was known to almost half of them and 40% knew that it is a legal crime by Indian law. In their opinion 32% knew that male genes

are responsible factor in determining the sex of fetus and 60% had opinion that women is responsible for female child birth as she is the one who is giving birth. Most of these variables have shown significant difference after the educational intervention given to these male students. The most important change was noticed for bearing the responsibility in future as responsible citizen to solve the problem (95% post Intervention from 68%, <0.001). This generate hope among the researchers that if educational campaign are organized to change the mind set of those boys, who will soon enter in to family

life and in position of responsible decision maker, it can make a dent in the social perception for female status or otherwise would the daughter be continue as unproductive investment of the family in lieu of their societal status?

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