

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Female foeticide - A bane to the society: Community based knowledge assessment study in Kolhapur city

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Abstract

Background: Female foeticide is the abortion of a female foetus outside of legal methods. Subsequent studies have provided evidence that it is excessive female mortality before birth; at birth, in infancy and childhood which mainly accounts for imbalance in sex ratio and missing of large number of female children in India. The Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act was passed in 1994, making sex-selective abortion illegal.

Objectives: i) To assess awareness about female foeticide, ii) To study knowledge, attitude and perception about female foeticide amongst adults of Kolhapur city.

Material & methods: i) Study design - An observational - cross sectional, knowledge; attitude & perception study. ii) Tools used - Predesigned, pretested, structured questionnaire based survey in adults of Kolhapur city. iii) Study population – Male & female Adults residing in defined study area of Kolhapur city during study period, iv) Statistical tests – mean, percentage and other statistical analysis was conducted by using Microsoft- Excel.

Results: Total 150 (85 females & 65 males) adults participated in this study. 142 subjects had knowledge about female foeticide. 81 felt son preference was main reason for female foeticide. Amongst participants, 95 heard about female foeticide prevention act.

Conclusion: Results of study revealed that majority participants had knowledge about female foeticide but there was need to increase awareness regarding female foeticide prevention act.

Keywords: female-foeticide, adults, PCPNDT act.

Introduction

Female foeticide is the abortion of a female foetus outside of legal methods.¹ In a legal context, it refers to the deliberate or incidental killing of a fetus due to a criminal human act, such as a blow to the abdomen of a pregnant woman. As a medical term, feticide is destruction of a fetus, for example as the first phase of a legal induced abortion²

Infanticide by illegal way was the only inhumane option for discarding the female child. This heinous practice continues today in the some parts of India where families cannot afford a

female foetus which is considered as burden to family and they determine the sex of the baby using prenatal sex determination tests like Ultra SonoGraphy (USG) etc and if female gender is found they abort it by various ways.³

Subsequent studies have provided evidence that it is excessive female mortality before birth; at birth, in infancy and childhood which mainly accounts for imbalance in sex ratio and missing of large number of female children in India.⁴

This process began in early 1990s when the ultrasound technique gained wide spread use in India. There was a tendency of family to produce children until a male child was born.⁵ The Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act was passed in 1994, making sex-selective abortion illegal. It was then modified in 2003 holding medical professionals legally responsible. Still till date, authorities are struggling to enforce the PCPNDT Act with its full capacity.⁶

Female foeticide is taking place for various factors like financial burden on family, socio-ritual practices like dowry, son preference by family members, patriarchal-male dominated society pattern & many other reasons.⁷ Females are considered as weak & vulnerable to brutalities of the male in the forms of physical, mental and sexual assaults and traumas. Females are subjugated, condemned, and deprived in sphere of life.⁸ Every parents of a girl child is at risk for their daughter in this patriarchal society for the mentioned causes. For the funeral ceremonies of the parents, presence of a son is a must. According to some literatures, a man cannot attain moksha (redemption) unless he has a son to light his funeral pyre. In old age the sons will care for them believably. "Male Children are a Better Investment." The main reason is the idea that the male offspring will better support the family.^{9,10} Since sons are seen as the main source of income, who will help run the house and look after his parents. The availability of low-cost technologies like ultrasound, have led to increased sex-based abortion of female fetuses.¹¹ Indian family planning policies promote a two-child family and health workers say this often leads to abortion of female fetuses in efforts to have a "complete family" with at least one son.^{12,13}

Aim

To assess, the knowledge, attitude, perception, socio-cultural factors and demographic profile of study participants about female foeticide.

Objectives

1. To assess awareness about female foeticide amongst study participants.
2. To study knowledge, attitude and perception about female foeticide in selected Kadamwadi area amongst adults of Kolhapur city
3. To find out the demographic profile of study subjects.
4. To suggest recommendations that can help in creating and increasing awareness about female foeticide in community.

Methodology

An observational, cross sectional, Knowledge, Attitude & Perception community based assessment study about female foeticide was conducted amongst adults residing in Kadamwadi area of Kolhapur, Maharashtra. A predesigned, pretested questionnaire containing demographics details of participants, questions to assess knowledge, attitude & perception were asked. Total 150 adults who were present at their house during data collection time were enrolled in present study. Each participant was interviewed with the help of questionnaire & approximately 10 min were needed to complete one interview. To maintain confidentiality, no names were mentioned on questionnaire. Prior permission was taken from institutional ethical committee. The data was collected in month of May & June

and total study period was from March to September 2019. Mean, Percentage and other statistical analysis was calculated using Microsoft excel.

- **Study design** - An observational, cross sectional, Knowledge, Attitude & Perception study.
- **Tools used** - Predesigned, pretested, structured questionnaire based survey on knowledge & perception about female foeticide.
- **Study population** – Male-female Adults residing in selected study area.
- **Inclusion Criteria:** i) Adults (> 18 years of age) present at their house during data collection period. ii) Adults who were willing to participate in study.
- **Exclusion criteria:** i) children, adolescents who were less than 18 years of age. ii) Adults who were not willing to participant in study.
- **Statistical tests** – mean, percentage and other statistical analysis was conducted by using Microsoft- Excel.

Results

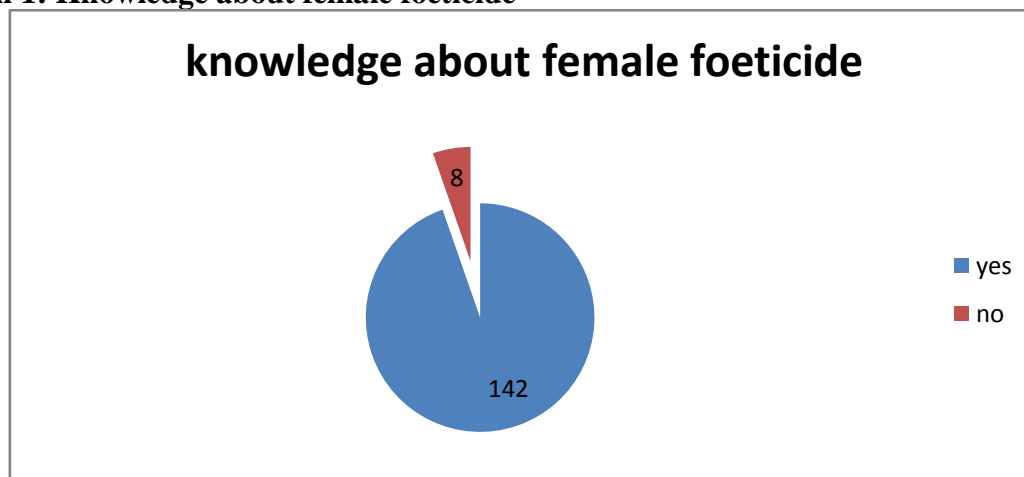
In the present study, total 150 adults were interviewed with the help of predesigned questionnaire. Amongst them, 85(57%) were females & 65(43%) were males. 105(70%) study subjects were from age group 30 to 49 years (Table 1). 142(95%) subjects knew about female foeticide (Graph no.1). 81(54%) felt son preference was main reason for female foeticide in society (Table 2). 102(68%) respondents showed preference towards male child adoption if they have to adopt. Amongst participants, 95(64%) heard about female foeticide prevention act (PCPNDT act) and about punishments under it. Amongst study subjects, 135(90%) opined that prenatal tests like USG should be used only to check health status of foetus (Table 3).

Table 1: Demographic details

Age group	Male	Female	Total (%)
18 years to 29 years	5(8)	9(11)	14(1)
30 years to 49 years	45(69)	60(70)	105(70)
50 years to 69 years	10(15)	12(14)	22(18)
70 years & More	5(8)	4(5)	9(6)
Total	65(100)	85(100)	150(100)

In the above table, it was seen that, 85(57%) were females & 65(43%) were males. Amongst females, 60(70%) were from age group of 30 years to 49 years and 12(14%) were from age group of 50 years to 69 years. Amongst males, 45(69%) were from 30 years to 49 years and 10(15%) were from 50 years to 69 years age group.

Graph 1: Knowledge about female foeticide



In graph 1, it was noticed that 142(95%) adults had some knowledge about female foeticide but 8(5%) had not.

Table 2: Reason for (declining sex ratio) female foeticide

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Son preference	81	54
Social reasons	67	45
others	2	1
Total	150	100

In table 2, 81(54%) thought son preference by family members was the main reason for declining sex ratio or female foeticide whereas 67(45%) believed social reasons as male dominant society, dowry tradition, financial burden, illiteracy were main reasons for sex selective abortions or female foeticide.

Table 3: Knowledge about PCPNDT act and its punishment and USG usage during prenatal period

Knowledge about PCPNDT	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	95	64
No	55	36
USG usage during prenatal period to monitor foetal health only		
Yes	135	90
No	15	10
Total	150	100

In table 3, it was seen that, only 95(64%) participants knew about PCPNDT act and its punishment. But 135(90%) adults opined that use of USG during prenatal period should be done only to monitor foetal health.

Discussion

In the present study, 95% subjects knew about female foeticide. 54% felt son preference was main reason for female foeticide in society whereas 45% believed social reasons as male dominant society, dowry tradition, financial burden, illiteracy were main reasons for sex selective abortions. 68% respondents showed preference towards male child adoption if they have to adopt and 32% desire for girl child. 64% heard about female foeticide prevention act (PCPNDT act) and about punishments under it whereas 36% had not heard about it. 90% opined that prenatal tests like USG should be used only to monitor health status of foetus.

In one similar study conducted by Sunil Kulkarni et al at Satara, Maharashtra, out of 50 newly married couples almost 1/3rd couples had not correct attitude towards prevention of female foeticide, ten & 6 husband & wives had good, whereas 32 husband & 30 wives had average knowledge of prevention of female foeticide, unfavourable attitude found in 12 husbands & 14 wives.¹⁴

In another study done by Pavithra M B et al in Bengaluru city, it was found, out of 100 pregnant women 53% showed preference for a male child, Only 37% were aware about the decline in sex ratio and 59% knew that PNDT act existed and sex determination was legally wrong, Majority (93%) of them were aware that sex determination of the foetus could be done through ultrasound.¹⁵

Conclusion & recommendations

Present study was conducted in a community to assess knowledge, attitude & perception about female foeticide amongst adults of Kadamwadi, Kolhapur. This study revealed that, in majority participants there was adequate knowledge about female foeticide but almost one third were not aware about PCPNDT act & punishment under it. To implement this act with

its full capacity, there is need to create more awareness regarding this act against female foeticide in community through mass media like TV, newspapers, online social platforms etc. Also it was observed that still in our society females are considered as weak & financial burden to family due to dowry tradition, which should be stopped through educating people and making females independent by providing safe society. Medical technologies such as various prenatal tests, USG must be used to monitor foetus health and in good manner only. Awareness programmes should be launched to make the woman aware about their rights and about the ill effects of abortions.

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