

Abstract:-

The present study was conducted to study the knowledge and perception of BPL women towards female foeticide in Jammu. Snowball Sampling Technique was used for sample selection. The sample comprised of 50 BPL women selected from rural area (Flora Nagbani) of Marh block Jammu District. Tools used for the study were self-devised interview schedule and focus group discussion. Data was collected by home visits. The results revealed that (74%) of women were aware about the existence of gender discrimination in society and the techniques used for sex determination i.e ultrasound. They were also found aware about legal implications for female foeticide but nobody had exact knowledge about legal punishment. Majority (78%) of women responded that dowry is responsible for female foeticide because of dowry demanded by the groom's family. BPL women were also aware about the consequence of female foeticide like lack of girls (72%) and world will finish according to (60%) respondents.

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A STUDY ON KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF BPL WOMEN TOWARDS FEMALE FOETICIDE IN JAMMU(J&K)

Keywords:

BPL Women , Female Foeticide , Sampling Technique .

INTRODUCTION

In India, the girl child has been a topic of discussions and debates for the past several decades but, even today, the position appears to remain unchanged. The girl was always an unwanted child, and was found killed at birth. With the advancement of Science and Technology this killing has only gone still further-for now the girl child is being killed even before birth.

“Female foeticide” is the selective abortion/elimination of the girl child in the womb itself, done deliberately by the mother, after the detection of the child’s gender through medical means. This is usually done under familial pressure from the husband or the in-laws or even the woman’s parents. Unplanned pregnancy is generally the reason behind abortion. However, female foeticide is a far more heinous sin than the age old practice of killing an unwanted child, even before it’s born.

Problems persisting in the society such as “female foeticide” lead to a much imbalanced sex ratio. Sex ratio is the number of females to males in a particular region of the country. The census since the last 5 years has seen a lot of changes in the sex ratio of women per 1000 males in the region. If this problem of female foeticide continues, then the sex ratio gets dropped more and the number of females would just keep lowering down to the number of males in the country, reducing the population of women. The immediate result of this has been a drop in the sex ratio from 971 in 1901 to 940 in 2011 and decline in child sex ratio. In the 0-6 age group, from a ratio of 1010 girls to every 1000 boys in 1941, the year 2011 saw a ratio of 914 girls to every 1000 boys which resulted in that 50 million girls since independence.

A poor himself defines his poverty more broadly by including lack of education, health, housing, empowerment, humiliation, employment, personal security and more. Thus considering the relevance of the factors, other than income taken into account even by a poor person to define their poverty, it becomes even more significant to capture the housing conditions, work profile and other indicators of social and economic status of the households, in order to rightly benefit the vulnerable & needful masses of the country. A study by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative using a Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) found that there were 650 million people (53.7% of population) living in poverty in India.

Women in general are the most disadvantaged people in Indian society, though their status varies significantly according to their social and ethnic backgrounds. Due to poor economic status of status of BPL population they face problems in upbringing of daughters due to their inability to pay dowry, marriage expenses and due to son preference for carrying family name and lineage.

The above picture of child sex ratio indicates the prevalence of sex selective abortion and alarming misuse of sex selective techniques which lead to decline in sex ratio which shows that there is an urgent to conduct this type of study to find out the reasons responsible for female foeticide among BPL women. So keeping in view the above said facts the present study has been designed on the knowledge and perception of BPL women towards female foeticide in Jammu. An important component of the study is the intervention programme with BPL women on issue of female foeticide.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the knowledge and perception of the BPL women regarding:-

- a) Female Foeticide
- b) Sex determination tests

2. To examine the reasons for prevalence of female foeticide

3. To plan and execute need based Intervention Programme

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample Size The total sample size of the study was 50 BPL women were selected from rural area of Marh Block.

Locale of the Sample The present study was conducted in Flora Nagbani rural area of Marh Block of Jammu District.

CRITERIA FOR SAMPLE SELECTION

- a) The respondent selected must belong to BPL family.
- b) The respondent selected must be married and within the age group of 25-40 years.
- c) The respondent selected must have children.

Sampling Techniques

Snowball Sampling Technique was used for sample selection.

Tools used for the Study

Interview Schedule for BPL women:- A self devised interview schedule was used keeping in mind the objectives of the study so that information needed can be collected in order to find out the required result. Interview schedule was made to know the knowledge and perception of BPL women towards female foeticide.

Focus Group Discussion:- A focus group discussion is a good way to gather together people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest. It also helped the investigator to obtain in-depth information. It is qualitative method for gathering data.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection involves two phases :-

Pre-testing:- Before finalizing the interview schedule pretesting was done on 10% BPL women to see appropriateness of the interview schedule in the form of addition and deletion and then interview schedule was finalized and applied on respondents.

Data collection:- For data collection home visits were made for interviewing BPL women between the age group of 25-40 years. Visits were made to BPL families from lower, upper and middle Flora to study their knowledge and perception related to female foeticide. BPL women were interviewed for about 1 hour.

Data Analysis

Collected data was coded, calculated and analyzed by both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Intervention Programme

A need based intervention programme was planned and executed. Issues like female foeticide in present scenario, legal aspect of female foeticide and laws/acts regarding female foeticide were discussed. Audio-visual aids like charts and posters on female foeticide were used to provide information in this regard.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data collected on “A study of Knowledge and Perception of BPL women towards female foeticide in Jammu”, has been analysed and interpreted with the help of tables and figures under following categories:-

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of BPL Women

Age of Respondents	No. (N=50)	%
25-30 years	14	28%
30-35 years	15	30%
35-40 years	21	42%
Total	50	100%
Educational Qualification of Respondents	No. (N=50)	%
Illiterate	19	38%
Primary	6	12%
Middle	12	24%
Matric	11	22%
Intermediate	1	2%
Graduate + Post Graduate	1	2%
Total	50	100%
Occupation of Respondents	No. (N=50)	%
Working	5	10%
Non-working	45	90%
Total	50	100%
Monthly Income of Respondents	No. (N=50)	%
Rs.500-1000	3	6%
Rs.1000-2000	2	4%
Non-working	45	90%
Total	50	100%

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics related to respondent's age, educational qualification, occupation and monthly income. It reveals that 42% of BPL women were in the age group 35-40 years, 30% in the age group 30-35 years and remaining 28% were in the age group of 25-30 years. Further educational qualification, reveals that 38% of BPL women were illiterate, 24% were educated upto middle standard, 22% were up to matric, 12% were studied up to primary level whereas only 4% were studied up to intermediate (2%) and graduate and Post graduate level (2%).

Table 2: Knowledge and Perception of BPL Women about Gender Discrimination

Knowledge and perception about Gender Discrimination	No. (N=50)	%
Aware	37	74%
Unaware	13	26%
Total	50	100%
Areas of Gender Discrimination	No. (N=50)	%
Education	13	26%
Restriction	4	8%
Psychosocial Stimulation	10	20%
Financial matters	9	18%
Preference for male child	1	2%
Unaware	13	26%
Total	50	100%

The above table (Table 2) revealed that the majority 74% of BPL women aware about gender discrimination whereas 26% were not aware. It is depicted from the table that according to BPL women major area of gender discrimination among 26% was in education like not allowing girls for higher education, according to 20% women in psychosocial stimulation, according to 18% ,it was found in terms of financial matters like not providing financial support to girls, among 8% in terms restrictions like not allowing girls alone during night time and not allowing to wear dress of their own choice and remaining 2% in case of preference for male child. Most of the respondents were aware about the prevalence of ongoing gender discrimination which is in our society. All the respondents hailing from BPL community took female child as burden on shoulders of poor parents in term of her bringing up, education and marriage etc.

During the focus group discussion, it was found that poor parents can't bear the burden of education as far as female child is concerned. For most of the parents especially those who are poor and uneducated, a girl is born to perform household chores and must be brought up to perform services for her parents and in-laws.

Fig 1: Perception of BPL Women about Female Foeticide

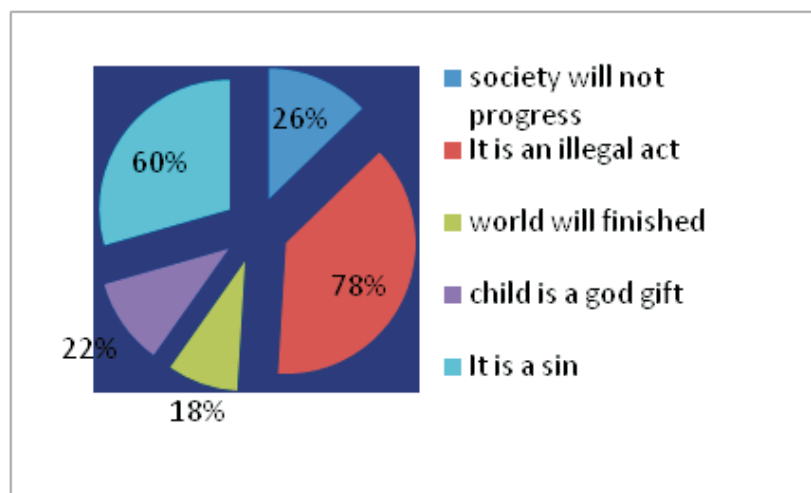


Fig 1: shows that majority 78% of BPL women responded that aborting the girl child after sex determination test is an illegal act, 60% viewed that it is a sin, 26% responded that without girl the

society/world will not progress, 22% opined that child is a god’s gift and should not be aborted after sex determination and remaining only 18% of BPL women perceived “female foeticide” that when girl finished, world will finished.

On being questioned about sex determination tests most of the BPL women burst into tears because they believed that it is a sin. During the focus group discussion, it was found that majority of respondents had a sound perception regarding girl child. They themselves believed that aborting the girl child means hatred for one’s own gender which even sound disgusting.

Fig 2: Perception of BPL Women Regarding Reasons Responsible for Female Foeticide

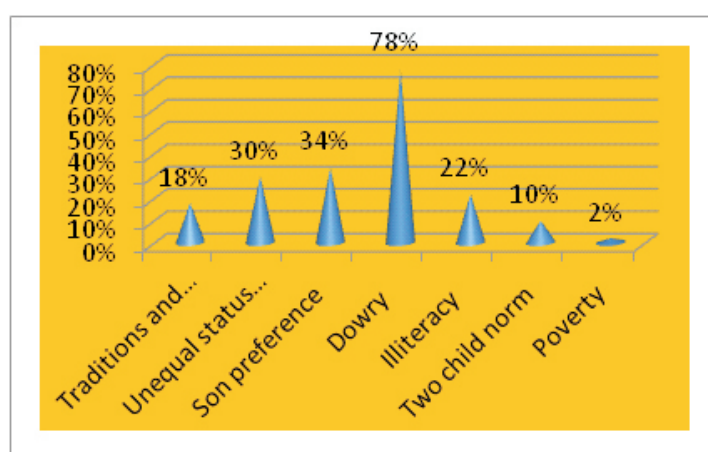


Fig 2 shows that majority 78% of BPL women perceived that dowry is responsible for female foeticide because of heavy payment demanded by the groom’s family, 34% viewed that son preference is the major contributing factor, 30% had viewed for unequal status among son and daughter, 22% viewed that illiteracy is the contributing factor, 18% responded that tradition and rituals are the reasons responsible for female foeticide, 10% had viewed two child norm and remaining 2% women viewed poverty is the reason responsible for female foeticide. Maximum BPL women believed that “female foeticide” on one hand proves to be beneficial as it helps poor parents to get rid of unwanted female child. Walia in 2005 also cited dowry as the major reason for female foeticide.

During the focus group discussion, it was found that dowry proves to be major barrier which sails to bridge the gap between male and female child as poor parents can’t bear huge dowry demanded at the time of girl’s marriage.

Table 3: Knowledge and Perception of BPL Women about Consequences of Female Foeticide

Knowledge and Perception about Consequences of Female Foeticide	No. (N=50)	%
Lack of girls	36	72%
Respect for girls	9	18%
Decline in population of girls	21	42%
Without girls society/world will not progress	17	34%
When girl finish the world will finished	30	60%
Boys will be unmarried	9	18%

*Multiple Responses

Table 3 depicts that majority 72% of BPL women had the opinion about consequence of female foeticide that girls will be missing/lack of girls, 60% viewed that due to female foeticide world will finished, 42% viewed that female foeticide would lead to decline in population of girls in comparison with boys, 34% viewed that without girls society and world will not progress, 18% had opinion that due to female foeticide boys will be unmarried and another 18% viewed for respect for girls in all over the world.

It was found during the focus group discussion that most of the respondents firmly believe that if people continue with the same practice of female foeticide, society will become stagnant and boys will remain unmarried, automatically it result in stagnance of the world. BPL women were also responded that female foeticide has adverse effect on women health. They also responded that the society can continue when both male and female counter part actively play their role and if owing to any reason the one is not able

to play one part, the society cannot progress .

Table 4: Knowledge of BPL Women about Techniques for Sex Determination

Knowledge about Sex Determination Techniques	No. (N=50)	%
Aware	37	74%
Unaware	13	26%
Total	50	100%
Techniques for Sex Determination	No. (N=50)	%
Ultrasound	37	74%
Amniocentesis	--	--
Chronic villa	--	--
Unaware	13	26%
Total	50	100%

It is depicted from the table (Table 4) that majority 74% of BPL women were aware about sex determination techniques and 26% were unaware about these techniques. Further among the aware women 74%, all 74% were aware about only ultrasound technique and no one were found aware about other techniques.

It was found during the observation that most of the respondents were aware of the techniques but they hesitated in saying so. Most of respondents responded that they are aware because their doctors recommended and advised them for the same when they conceived their children.

Fig 3: Knowledge of BPL Women about Laws/Acts Regarding Female Foeticide

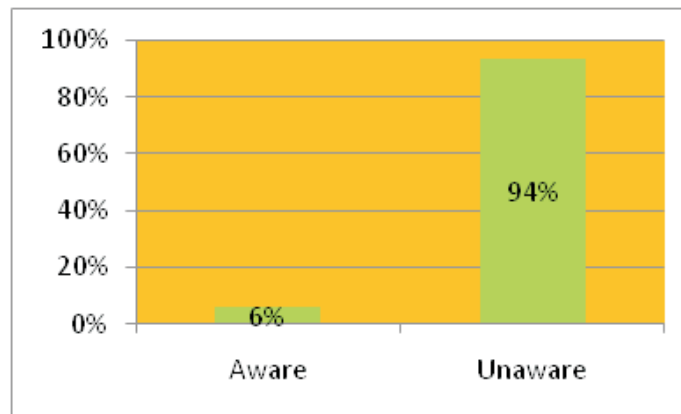


Fig 3 reveals that majority 94% of BPL women were not aware about laws/Act related to female foeticide and 6% were aware about these laws but they were not exactly known about these laws/Act. It was found during the focus group discussion, that most of the illiterate respondents nodded their head suggesting negation and other who are bit educated were aware about the laws/acts but they were not aware of the exact implications of laws/acts.

Table 5: Knowledge and Perception of BPL Women about Legal Implications of Female Foeticide

Knowledge and Perception about Legal Implications of Female Foeticide	No. (N=50)	%
Aware	37	74%
Unaware	13	26%
Total	50	100%
Knowledge about Imprisonment for violators	No. (N=50)	%
General Imprisonment for offenders	21	42%
Imprisonment for 1 years	1	2%
Imprisonment for 5 years	3	6%
Imprisonment for 10 years	1	2%
Imprisonment for 10-15 years	6	12%
Life time imprisonment	1	2%
Don't know	17	34%
Total	50	100%
Knowledge about Fine for violators	No. N=50	%
General Penalty for offenders	20	40%
Penalty of Rs.5000	2	4%
Penalty of Rs.10000	2	4%
Penalty of Rs.1 lakh	1	2%
Don't know	25	50%
Total	50	100%

The result from the above table (Table 5) depicts that majority 74% of BPL women were aware about the legal punishment for female foeticide and remaining 26% were not aware. On the other hand about the time period of imprisonment 42% of BPL women were not known about the time period of imprisonment but they had the opinion about the general imprisonment for offenders. 34% of BPL women were not aware about the years of imprisonment for female foeticide, 12% had the opinion that imprisonment is for 10-15 years whereas 6% had 5 years of imprisonment, 2% had opinion that imprisonment for 1 year, 4% responded Rs. 10000 fine for it, 4% claimed penalty of Rs.5,000, another 4% penalty of Rs. 10000 and remaining 2% claimed penalty of Rs. 1 lakh. Further this table reveals that 17% of BPL women were not aware about imprisonment and 25% were not aware about legal fine for female foeticide.

During the focus group discussion, it was found that maximum respondents were aware that fine is to be imposed for female foeticide and in severe cases, a person should be sentenced to imprisonment. But nobody had exact knowledge about legal punishment and they all responded on their whims and fancies.

Table 6: Perception of BPL Women about Suggestive Measures for Prevention of Female Foeticide

Perception about Suggestive Measures for Prevention of Female Foeticide	No. (N=50)	%
Strict law enforcement	16	32%
Ban on illegal sex detection	15	30%
Raid on sex detection clinic	12	24%
It is illegal and should be stopped	9	18%
Respect and equality should be for girls	11	22%
To change attitude of society	11	22%
Imprisonment for offenders	8	16%
Don't know	2	4%

*Multiple Responses

Table 6 reveals that majority 32% of BPL women suggested that there should be strict law enforcement against offenders, 30% viewed ban on illegal sex detection, 24% suggested that raids should be conducted on illegal sex detection clinics, 22% viewed that attitude of society should be changed and same percentage of BPL women opined that respect and equality should be for girls in the society and world, 18% of BPL women viewed that female foeticide is illegal and should be stopped, 16% viewed that imprisonment should be for offenders and remaining 4% of women had no opinion for eradicating of female foeticide. A study conducted by Bansal et. al in 2011 also explored stricter law and honest enforcement of laws to prevent female foeticide in society.

During the focus group discussion, it was found that most of the respondents firmly believed that practice of female foeticide is a sin and should be stopped as earlier as possible. Strict law must be enforced, media can play an important role in educating general masses. Status of women must be improved by providing quality education. Suggestions given by the respondents were in favour of saving girl child and suggestive measures entertained from their side seemed in favour of discarding this malpractice and enlightening others to stop this crime against girl child.

Conclusion: From the results of the study it can be concluded that majority 74% BPL Women were aware about prevalence of gender discrimination in the form of female foeticide and sex determination techniques. 78% respondents were aware that abortion of girl child after sex determination test is an illegal act. Majority 94% of BPL women were not aware about laws/acts related to female foeticide but 74% were aware about legal implications of female foeticide. BPL women opined dowry as the major reasons responsible for female foeticide. BPL women were aware about the consequence of female foeticide like lack of girls and suggested strict law enforcement and ban on illegal sex determination for eradication of female foeticide.

SUGGESTIONS:

- As dowry is considered to be an important cause of female foeticide, the Dowry Prohibition Act should be made more stringent by proper amendments and should be implemented strictly.
- Cancellation/permanent termination of the Doctor's license who part takes in fulfilling a client's demand to do away with her girl child.
- Laws prohibiting sex selective abortions should be strictly implemented and the violators should be punished.
- In order to make the females independent, women should be imparted skill and training through various vocational programmes. Free and compulsory education should be provided to female children so that they can support themselves during exigency. Also it would remove the attitude that investing in girls is unnecessary.
- Affirmative action on part of the government and the corporate sector by providing security for parents and granting financial aid to the girl child can help in changing the mindset of the society of treating the girl as a burden.
- Awareness programmes should be launched to make the women aware about their rights and about the ill effects of abortions. Women should be aware about their rights regarding adoption, maintenance, marriage, property, employment, education etc.

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