

Original Research

Knowledge and attitude regarding declining sex ratio among married females

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The present study was conducted for assessing the knowledge and attitude regarding declining sex ratio among married females. **Materials & methods:** The present study was carried out on 200 married females within the age range of 25 to 45 years. A pre-framed study questionnaire was administered to all the subjects for assessing their knowledge and attitude regarding declining sex ratio. The Likert score range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Higher the score on Likert scale depicts strong agreement with a statement. The scores in each domain were added up and converted into a categorical variable. The score higher than the median was labelled as positive attitude. **Results:** 41.5 percent of the subjects responded positively of the question that "Have you heard of declining sex ratio". About the question "Awareness about female feticide prevalent in India", 87.5 percent of the subjects answered positively. 38.5 percent of the subjects positively answered to the question "Awareness about large scale abortion to eliminate female foetus". 92 percent of the subjects positively answered to the question "Awareness of health effects of abortion". About the knowledge and attitude of married women about declining sex ratio, 60.5 percent of the subjects had opinion that son's preference was the prime cause for it. **Conclusion:** From the above results, the authors conclude that the knowledge and attitude of married women low sex ratio was low.

Key words: Married, Knowledge, Ratio

Received: 07 March, 2022

Accepted: 12 April, 2022

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This article may be cited as: Aditya A, Rana M. Knowledge and attitude regarding declining sex ratio among married females. Int J Res Health Allied Sci 2022; 8(3):18-20.

INTRODUCTION

Female gender discrimination due to a cultural preference for males is a common global problem, particularly in Asian regions. India is no exception. Gender discrimination manifesting as increased female mortality, female infanticide, and sex-selective abortion has received considerable attention in recent years. The sex ratio trend in India indicates a growing imbalance, with estimates from the 2011 census indicating approximately seven million fewer girls than expected in the 0-to-6 age group.¹⁻³

Sex ratio, defined as the ratio of one sex to another is the statistic most often reported to describe this phenomenon. Most epidemiologic literature uses the term sex ratio to denote the number of males per 1,000 females in a given population. However, in India, the sex ratio is calculated on the number of females per 1,000 males in the defined population.⁴⁻⁶

Desire for male child manifests so blatantly that parents have no qualms about repeated, closely spaced pregnancies, premature deaths and even terminating child before it is born. Birth of female child is perceived as a curse with economic and social liability. Female foeticide has resulted in decline of child sex ratio, and has led to enforcement of Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act.⁶⁻⁸ Hence; the present study was conducted for assessing the knowledge and attitude regarding declining sex ratio among married females.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The present study was conducted for assessing the knowledge and attitude regarding declining sex ratio among married females. The present study was carried out on 200 married females within the age range of 25 to 45 years. A pre-framed study

questionnaire was administered to all the subjects for assessing their knowledge and attitude regarding declining sex ratio. The Likert score range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Higher the score on Likert scale depicts strong agreement with a statement. The scores in each domain were added up and converted into a categorical variable. The score higher than the median was labeled as positive attitude. All the results were recorded and analysed using SPSS software.

RESULTS

A total of 200 subjects were scrutinized during the study. Mean age of the subjects was 31.6 years. 41.5

percent of the subjects responded positively of the question that "Have you heard of declining sex ratio". About the question "Awareness about female feticide prevalent in India", 87.5 percent of the subjects answered positively. 38.5 percent of the subjects positively answered to the question "Awareness about large scale abortion to eliminate female foetus". 92 percent of the subjects positively answered to the question "Awareness of health effects of abortion". About the knowledge and attitude of married women about declining sex ratio, 60.5 percent of the subjects had opinion that son's preference was the prime cause for it.

Table 1: Knowledge and attitude of married women about declining sex ratio

Variable	Number	Percentage
Have you heard of declining sex ratio (yes)	83	41.5
Awareness about female feticide prevalent in India (Present)	175	87.5
Awareness about large scale abortion to eliminate female foetus (Present)	79	38.5
Awareness of health effects of abortion (yes)	184	92

Table 2: Reasons for declining sex ratio- subject's prospective

Variable	Number of patients	Percentage
Reasons for declining sex ratio	Female feticide	33
	Female infanticide	29
	Son preference	121
	Others	17

DISCUSSION

Gender Biased sex selection is a discriminatory practice against girls which is a result of a different social and cultural factors prevailing in our country. The United Nations Children's Fund states that systematic gender discrimination caused 50 million women and girls to go missing from India's population. With the increased misuse of advanced technologies there is a continuous decline in sex ratios and increase in female feticides. Sex ratio at birth is considered to be more accurate indicator of sex selection as it indicates the factors that come into play before birth. India's sex ratio at birth was 919 females per 1000 males while in rural area sex ratio was 927 and even lower in the urban area i.e., 899.⁶ Hence; the present study was conducted for assessing the knowledge and attitude regarding declining sex ratio among married females.

A total of 200 subjects were scrutinized during the study. Mean age of the subjects was 31.6 years. 41.5 percent of the subjects responded positively of the question that "Have you heard of declining sex ratio". About the question "Awareness about female feticide prevalent in India", 87.5 percent of the subjects answered positively. 38.5 percent of the subjects positively answered to the question "Awareness about large scale abortion to eliminate female foetus". Pavithra MB et al assessed the knowledge, attitude and practice of pregnant women regarding Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act and gender preference. A cross-sectional study was

carried out in 100 pregnant women attending the antenatal clinics of Sulthanpalaya Urban health center, Bangalore. A pre-designed and pre-tested questionnaire was used to get information. 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. Over all 41% had poor knowledge. Whereas 43% had average and 16% had good knowledge and 74% had the right attitude in this study. Good knowledge about PNDT act had significant influence on the attitude of the people ($p < 0.05$). The falling ratio of girl child is a matter of grave concern. Effective implementation of the PNDT Act in addition to spreading awareness about this act among people is the need of the hour.¹⁰

92 percent of the subjects positively answered to the question "Awareness of health effects of abortion". About the knowledge and attitude of married women about declining sex ratio, 60.5 percent of the subjects had opinion that son's preference was the prime cause for it. Kaushal A et al assessed the knowledge and attitude of married females residing in rural area of district Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, toward declining sex ratio and female feticide prevalent in the society. Of 350 households from the village, 106 were covered in the given time period. Systematic random sampling was used to select households. The youngest married female from the household who has recently given birth to a child was selected. A pre-designed semi-

structured questionnaire containing sociodemographic details of the family and knowledge and attitude questions was used. One-third heard about declining female-to-male ratio. Killing of fetuses was known to 84% of female respondents. Only 24.5% were aware about law related to abortion and prenatal sex determination. The reason for decreasing sex ratio was quoted as preference for a male heir (62.3%). Around 60% of females have been harassed by a male and 48.1% have at least once felt not to have a female child. The attitude toward consequences of declining sex ratio was neutral among the females. The consequences of low sex ratio are liable to damage our social and economic fabric beyond repair. Solution needs to be tailored in the social context of country.¹¹

CONCLUSION

From the above results, the authors conclude that the knowledge and attitude of married women low sex ratio was low.

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