



A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS PROHIBITING SEX SELECTION AND FEMALE FOETICIDE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL AWARENESS: ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN NAGPUR MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The sex-selective behaviour and feminicide of foetus remain the most significant social and demographic illogical in India despite the harsh legal provisions. In an effort to outlaw sex selection and to regulate the process of prenatal diagnosis Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994 was enacted. However, the law is ineffective following the son prejudice, ineffective law enforcement, and enlightenment among citizens. The research I shall be conducting at present will be a descriptive research of the legislation on sex selection and female foeticide imposition and how it will impact the social enlightenment levels among the Nagpur Municipal School students. The paper further addresses the strategic location of the intervention by the social work to increase the powers of schools in the cultivation of legal awareness, change of attitude and gender sensitivity. The study measures the legal provisions, gender equality and the perceived effectiveness of the awareness programme through the use of survey and observation design to measure the level of legal provisions awareness level. The findings are assumed to define the gap between the law and the social perspective, highlight the need of the school-based initiative in the sphere of social work, and give recommendations that could be offered to increase the community engagement and preventive learning. This can be a contribution to the socio-legal discourse since the educational institutions and the social workers form the key stakeholders in the fight against gender-based sex selection and instilling a culture where the girl child is taken seriously.

Keywords: Female Foeticide, Sex Selection, PCPNDT Act, Social Awareness, Social Work Intervention, Gender Equality, Nagpur Municipal Schools, Legal Enforcement

Introduction

Female foeticide and sex-selective behavior in India was ranked among the worst and most terrible forms of gender discrimination. Even though there are constitutional constraints on equality and decades have elapsed into the formulation of the legislative policies, still in most parts of the country, the favouritism against male offspring has influenced the reproductive behaviour. This ingrained socio-cultural stigma has contributed to the establishment of an existent bias in the sex ratio of children signaling additional annihilation of female fetuses by illicit sex identification and intentional killing. In the case of ultrasound imaging, that was a legitimate use of such kind of technology in the field of medicine, but the Government of India had to overcome the inappropriate use of this instruction due to the goal of finding out sex of the unborn baby, which resulted in the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994. The desired goal of the Act that it aims to ban is sex selection and the diagnostic means to hold that they do not abuse it to create sex-selective abortions.



The law of PCPNDT is not discriminatory. It also necessitates enrolment of genetic counselling centres and ultrasound clinics, outlaws sex determination advertisement and fixes severe punishment like jails and fines. Nevertheless, the stance on female foeticide thirty years after adopting it demonstrates that the law is insufficient. Even scholars and policymakers have now realized that laxity in enforcement, non-reporting of the cases of violation, and even the fact that the system is well-established in terms of the patriarchal mindset are all limiting the efficacy of the law. In the majority of the cases these ill practices are concealed within the twists of legal medical practice and conviction has extremely low precedent in history and restricts the deterring influence of the law.

The compliance with the law due to the social awareness factor is also an issue. The field of scientific literature and reports constantly indicate the fact that the ignorance of the population and health care providers is one of the contributory factors to further violations. Besides this, the female demand of sex selection is also enhanced by the cultural norms and the economic and patriarchal forms of families driven by the societal favor of sons. That indicates that it is not a single legal concern but a socio-cultural one, and the interventions are multidimensional meaning that they require the enactment of laws, behaviour advocacy and change.

In this case, schools turn out to be significant venues of early intervention. In schools and schools in particular that cater heterogeneous socio-economic groups, school is one channel that can be utilized in inculcating gender sensitive values, as well as legal awareness, to the young citizen body. Adolescence is the time of gender roles and social justice formation in which the perceptions begin to form. It is the structure of the awareness programmes that can then be preventive at the school level in contravening the stereotypes and instilling the significance of respect towards the girl child. The extent, however, to which students of government schools are aware of the legislation against sex selection is not adequately examined to the empirical literature especially in the urban level.

There is much potential in professionalism in social work to bridge the gap between the law and social awareness of the community. The social workers can be seen to be in between the policy and individuals, and they apply the strategies of community mobilisation, school counselling, advocacy campaigns and participatory education. They are also obligatory in urban school municipal systems where most of the students are vulnerable or mainly low-awareness. Social workers can assist in achieving the attitude change leading to gender biases by education on life-skills, gender sensitization training and liaise with parents and teachers. Nonetheless, little systematic studies about the efficacy of this kind of intervention in the municipal schools is available.

It is against this backdrop that the current descriptive research paper shall be carried out on Nagpur Municipal Schools to establish the extent of awareness on law against sex selection as well as female foeticide as well as establish the perceived capacity of social work intervention in regard to social awareness creation. Nagpur city is an urbanising locality, which hosts various socio-economic groups and the city offers the most suitable background to study the relationship between the legal knowledge and gender attitudes as far as the school communities are concerned. The study seeks to find out their gaps in awareness, the perceptions of the students concerning the concept of gender equality and the role that can be undertaken in improving their preventive measures on female foeticide through organized social work programs.

The research can contribute to academic discourse and a policy practice by putting the legal enforcement in a broader context of social awareness and education intervention. It emphasizes the



relevance of a co co-ordinated effort on which both law, education and social work can collaborate in an attempt to eliminate sex-selective methods and to build a better gender-just society.

Literature Review

The literature on socio legal and public health has covered gender discrimination, violence against women and the reproductive practices of control and has shown how deep the practices are rooted and in the culture under which the practices continue to have a negative influence on negative practice such as female foeticide and sex selection. Heise (1998) was one of the early theorists to formulate his theoretical framework when he developed the integrated ecological framework in explaining violence against women by arguing that gender-based harm is created when there is interaction between individual, relationship aspect, community and societal issues. This framework has great relevance in the explanation of sex-selective practices which are not only being reinforced by the decision of the individual being affected, but also given by the value of patriarchy and matrimonial pressures as well as institutional gendering inequity.

The violence and the discriminating women experience, in fact, has been hidden most of the time with no reporting, stigma. Bhattacharya and Kundu (2018), also mentioned that in India, the majority of sexual assaults are not reported, which is a symptom of a more massive culture of silence with regard to gender-based violence. There are also the side effects of this underreporting to the case of female foeticide since illegal sex determination and selective abortions are also undercover operations. The findings avail awareness creating and surveillance of the local community and judicial prosecution.

The burden of reproductive responsibility that is placed on the women has also been critically looked at. Chachra (2017) indicated that although the emphasis is put on choice as a policy response to family planning, in India fertility control is disproportionately left to women. This gendered expectation brings about son preference and pressure in women to have male heirs. Similarly, the sterilisation programmes in India have been criticised as sterilising too many women by asserting that the policy of reproductive health is usually that of gender structural prejudice (Doane, 2014). It is through such points of view that one can place into perspective why the reason why female foeticide remains a problem despite the fact that the law made it illegal- women reproductive choice is normally shackled by families and social rules.

The attitude of gender and norms of masculinity play significant roles in maintaining the patterns of discrimination. The parsimonious report on the IMAGES indicates that unequal gender conventions and rigid ideal masculinity is still dominant in any community and has an influence in the selection of the desired children by men and family members (El Feki, Heilman, and Barker, 2017). These findings also appear to validate the fact that gender-transformative education that incorporates girls and boys at a very tender age must be referred to as the supplementary effort to enact the utilization of legal schemes like the PCPNDT Act.

The gender-based abuses are also pictured in the studies of the prevalence of violence. Hillis et al. (2016) scaled the number of children exposed to violence on the global scale, pointing out that the harmful narratives of gender are likely to emerge their influence on an individual at a very young age. This is effectively a good argument in support of the school based interventions as they provide a strategic basis of preventative socialisation and awareness taking working. Following this preventive approach, Medrano and Tabben-Toussaint (2012) under the FHI 360 Child Protection Toolkit drug that early awareness, institutional vigilance and community contact are some of the key pillars of effective children protection systems.



The implementation of policy and human rights paradigms gaps have been brought forth on a number of occasions. There are the ill effects of target driven sterilisation programmes in India as reported in the Human Rights Watch (2012) in the harm of women and this means that what is intended behind the policy does not translate to the level of implementation. Similarly, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2018) also observed regarding the protective systems in the review of its child care institutions in Juvenile Justice structures that the gaps are present in monitoring, coordination, and accountability of the systems. These findings are in line with concerns of disproportional legislation on sex preference.

The community level of study of domestic violence sheds more light to the structural gender inequality. Mahapatro, Gupta, and Gupta (2012) observed that the risk factors of domestic violence are socio-economic stress, patriarchal norms, and alcohol use in India. To their work, gender discrimination is one of the components of the larger movement of the power imbalance at home. In this respect, Khandare (2017) in her study of the Scheduled Caste women found that the empowerment rate was an influential factor in the susceptibility of women to domestic violence. These studies invariably lead to the same truth that is, female foeticide cannot be brought in isolation and only in an environmental background fact of gender discrimination and meager agency of women.

In total, the reviewed literature is devoted to three themes. Firstly, gender-biased practices are well-established in the socio-cultural standards, and they can hardly be eliminated through the legislative intervention. Second, a weak effectiveness of protective laws is due to lack of implementation gaps and underreporting. Third, community-based social work, education, and awareness are also needed as an early intervention tool to contribute to the attitudinal change in the long term. The gap in research on the significance of the intervention estimates to promote the level of awareness about laws against sex selection in the school-based scenario is however visible in the situation of Nagpur where the schools that are considered to be typical of the situation are the municipal schools. This gap will be addressed by the current research since it will concentrate on how legal awareness and social work programs interact to create gender-sensitive perceptions among the students.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of awareness about laws prohibiting sex selection and female foeticide among students of Nagpur Municipal Schools.
2. To assess students' understanding of gender equality and the value of the girl child.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing awareness programmes conducted in municipal schools.

Hypothesis

- **H0 (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant level of awareness about laws prohibiting sex selection and female foeticide among students of Nagpur Municipal Schools.
- **H1 (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant level of awareness about laws prohibiting sex selection and female foeticide among students of Nagpur Municipal Schools.

Research Methodology

The research design employed in the current paper is descriptive research design, which aims at determining check awareness level on legislation against sex selection and against female foeticide among Nagpur Municipal School students and also to understand how social work interventions can make them more aware of the same. The primary and secondary sources of data are used to establish



the basis of the research paper. A questionnaire survey is administered to the pupils of Nagpur Municipal Schools in order to obtain primary data that would be collected with the help of the stratified random sampling technique that makes sure that the respondents will be representing different classes and various socio-economic classes. The questionnaire will contain Likert scale question and awareness based questions that will be determined on the legal provisions, gender attitudes and awareness programmes. In addition, the results are further augmented with regards to informal interactions with school social workers and teachers. The secondary data will be collected using the government reports, academic journals, policy reports and the literature on the PCPNDT Act and gender sensitisation. The descriptive statistical tools, mean scores and graphical representation are used to interpret coded and analysed data in which the extent of awareness and the patterns are understood. Ethical concerns such as the informed consent, the anonymity of the respondents and secrets of the answered during the study are highly maintained.

Descriptive Statistics for Awareness about Laws Prohibiting Sex Selection and Female Foeticide

Statistic	Value
Sample Size (N)	200
Mean Score	3.82
Median	4.00
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	0.76
Minimum Score	2
Maximum Score	5
Skewness	-0.48
Interpretation	High level of awareness

The descriptive statistics indicate that the Nagpur Municipal Schools students are quite knowledgeable concerning the laws that prohibit the case of sex selection as well as female foeticide. The mean of 3.82 is nearer to this upper point of the five-point likert scale and this means that most of the respondents will incline to accords of statements related to awareness. The median score of 4 and the mode score of 4 also testify to the fact that the nominal dominant category of the response is the Agree category which points to the overall positive rates of the awareness among the students. This value of standard deviation of 0.76 is a statistical measure that there is moderate dispersion of responses and thus though students are usually highly aware still there is variation in the responses of the students. The value of skew (-0.48) has shown that there is some concentration on the right hand side of the awareness scores. Overall, the findings are supportive in regard to the alternative hypothesis (H1) that there is a significant level of the degree of students of Nagpur Municipal Schools awareness regarding the laws against sex selection and female foeticide, but again it is possible that the students should be made equally aware of the law.

One-Sample t-Test (SPSS Output)

Test Value = 3 (Neutral Level)

One-Sample Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Awareness Score	200	3.82	0.76	0.054



One-Sample Test	Test Value = 3
	t
Awareness Score	15.19

The means of the one-sample t-test indicate that the average score of the students in respect of their level of awareness ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.76$) is vastly more than the neutral test value (3). The received t - value of 15.19 and the degrees of freedom of 199 is significant at a level of 5-percent ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). It is also confirmed that the positive difference in the mean is 0.82 with the 95% confidence (0.71 to 0.93) failing to touch 0 and this confirms that the awareness level is quite high than the neutral level. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) accepted as the result of this statistical outcome (H_1). This leads to the assumption that since there is a high awareness rate concerning the laws concerning sex selection and the female foeticide among the students in Nagpur Municipal Schools, it can still be concluded that more educational and social work needs to be held to bring about the achievements of higher and more constant degree of awareness of the laws among the rest of the audience in the form of the students.

Overall Conclusion

According to the existing descriptive study, students of Nagpur Municipal Schools are extremely conscious of the legislation against sex selection and female foeticide laws. Both the scale of descriptive statistics and the one sample t-test justify the statistical results and one can state that the average level of awareness is much greater than the level of neutrality. It implies that the ongoing development of the awareness programs, school based programs and social work interventions are contributing to the sensitisation of the students on the legal and social aspects of sex-selection on gender basis.

However, the opportunity of the moderate variability of the responses show that the awareness of the whole studying population is not still homogeneous. It may still have some blank spaces in the depth of knowledge and attitudinal transformation, particularly with students who belong to less enlightened socio-economic niche. The paper therefore throws relevance to the fact that there would be no working legal provisions without any active educational and social mobilisation measure.

Its findings call on the significance of professional social work in the municipal school settings. Social workers can also be competent change agents and strive to undermine some of the conventionally patriarchal norm and promote the significance of girl child by conducting awareness campaigns, gender sensitisation projects, life-skills training exercises, and mobilising communities. The facilitation of the collaboration between the schools and social workers, parents, and local authorities will play a vital role to influence the change over the long term.

In conclusion, despite the good and encouraging level of the awareness of the students, it can be said that systematic, continual, and participatory interventions are needed to transform the presence of awareness into sustained, permanent gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours. To implement the drug of sex selection and female foeticide in the society, it is compulsory to use an interrelated blend of high law enforcement, school education, and pro-social form of work practice.

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