

# To Assess Awareness and Perspectives of Female Foeticide among School Children

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## Abstract

**Background:** One of the most heinous ways of discrimination against women in a society is through female foeticide. The present study was conducted to assess knowledge and awareness regarding female foeticide among school children.

**Materials and Method:** The present study was conducted on 580 school children of both genders. A self questionnaire was administered and all participants were asked to reply to assess knowledge and perceptions regarding female foeticide.

**Results:** Out of 580 subjects, male were 320 and female were 260. 68% had correct knowledge regarding sex ratio, 65% had correct knowledge regarding district sex position, 67% had correct knowledge regarding state sex position and 74% had correct knowledge regarding foeticide definition. The difference was significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). 76% replied correct that pre natal gender detection is crime, 72% replied that female foeticide should stop, 65% replied that female foeticide practice will harm society and 86% replied that pre natal gender detection is severely punishable act. The difference was significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Authors found students had sufficient knowledge and awareness about female foeticide.

**Keywords:** *Abortion, foeticide, Awareness, perspectives, sex selection.*

## Introduction

Female foeticide is perhaps one of the worst forms of violence against women where a woman is denied her most basic and fundamental right i.e. “the right to life”.<sup>1</sup> Sex selective abortions cases have become a significant social phenomenon in several parts of India.<sup>2</sup> It transcends all castes, class and communities and even the North South dichotomy. The girl children become target of attack even before they are born. The girls have not vanished overnight.<sup>3</sup>

A deleterious fall-out of the subjugated position of women is their vulnerability to violence like domestic violence, rape, sexual abuse, dowry harassment, trafficking etc, with little or no mechanisms for combating the same, either by way of effective laws and implementation or civil society action.<sup>4</sup> One of the most heinous ways of discrimination against women in a society is through female foeticide. To discriminate against women when she enters what is often referred to as a man’s world is one thing, to not even let her be born to face that world, is quite another.

About 5.7 lakh females go missing every year due to practice of female foeticide.<sup>5</sup> Many laws have been implemented to bring a hold on female foeticide. Some of them are MTP Act 1991, PNDT 1994 (Regulation and prevention of Misuse) Act, PCPNDT (Prohibition of sex selection) Act 2003. Despite such efforts, numerous

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clinical ultrasounds and abortions still continue to happen. In a diverse country like ours about 19.6% of the population is adolescents. The now adolescents are going to be responsible adults of tomorrow. Hence it is necessary that every adolescent must be equipped with ample amount of knowledge which can help them to bring a change in society.<sup>6</sup> The present study was conducted to assess knowledge and awareness regarding female foeticide among school children.

### Materials and Method

The present study comprised of 580 school children of both genders. All were informed regarding the study and written consent was obtained. Ethical Clearance was obtained prior to the study.

Data such as name, age, gender etc. was obtained. A self questionnaire was administered and all participants were asked to reply to assess knowledge and awareness regarding female foeticide. Results thus obtained were subjected to statistical analysis. P value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

### Results

**Table I: Distribution of subjects**

Total-580		
Gender	Male	Female
Number	320	260

Table I shows that out of 580 subjects, male were 320 and female were 260.

**Table II: Assessment of knowledge regarding female foeticide**

Knowledge	Correct	Incorrect	P value
Sex Ratio	68%	32%	0.02
District Position	65%	35%	0.03
State Position	67%	33%	0.04
Foeticide Definition	74%	26%	0.01

Table II shows that 68% had correct knowledge regarding sex ratio, 65% had correct knowledge regarding district sex position, 67% had correct

knowledge regarding state sex position and 74% had correct knowledge regarding foeticide definition. The difference was significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table III: Awareness regarding female foeticide**

Awareness	Yes	No	P value
Pre natal gender detection is crime	76%	24%	0.02
Female foeticide should stop	72%	28%	0.03
Female foeticide practice will harm society	65%	35%	0.05
Pre natal gender detection is severely punishable act	86%	14%	0.01

Table III shows that 76% replied correct that pre natal gender detection is crime, 72% replied that female foeticide should stop, 65% replied that female foeticide practice will harm society and 86% replied that pre natal gender detection is severely punishable act. The difference was significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).

### Discussion

The social, cultural and religious fiber of India is pre-dominantly patriarchal contributing extensively to

the secondary status to women.<sup>7</sup> The patrilineal social structure based on the foundation that the family life runs through a male, makes men a precious "commodity" that needs to be protected and given a special status.<sup>8</sup> Another important pillar of the patriarchal structure is marriage wherein women are given a subordinate status, having no say in the running of their lives or any control over their bodies or bodily integrity.<sup>9</sup> The dowry or groom price is so staggeringly high irrespective of the class structure that generations may have to toil to

repay the debts incurred during marriage. All of this has contributed to a secondary status for women in society, to such an extent that even the birth of a girl child in a family is sought to be avoided.<sup>10</sup> The present study was conducted to assess knowledge and awareness regarding female foeticide among school children.

In this study, out of 580 subjects, male were 320 and female were 260. We found that 68% had correct knowledge regarding sex ratio, 65% had correct knowledge regarding district sex position, 67% had correct knowledge regarding state sex position and 74% had correct knowledge regarding foeticide definition.

Koradia et al<sup>11</sup> conducted a cross-sectional study among 200 school students with a pre-tested, semi structured questionnaire in order to assess the awareness & perception regarding female foeticide among adolescents. Majority (52.5%) of the study subjects were males. Majority (70%) of the subjects could define foeticide. Boys have better knowledge than girls regarding current sex ratio (21%), state position(20%) and district position (33.3%).The most common reasons for not preferring girl child were not carrying family name and burden to the family. Major source of information was social media.

We found that 76% replied correct that pre natal gender detection is crime, 72% replied that female foeticide should stop, 65% replied that female foeticide practice will harm society and 86% replied that pre natal gender detection is severely punishable act.Kansal et al<sup>12</sup> investigation was taken up to study the impact of educational programme on level of awareness regarding female foeticide and infanticide of adolescent boys and girls studying in 11th std. A sample of 120 adolescents (60 boys+60 girls) belonging to middle and high SES were taken. The finding of the study revealed no gender and SES difference was observed differences in the existing level of awareness regarding female foeticide and infanticide. A significant impact of educational programme was found in the level of awareness regarding female foeticide and infanticide among adolescent boys and girls belonging to high and middle SES as a highly significant difference was observed in the pre-test and post-test scores of adolescents.

### Conclusion

Authors found students had sufficient knowledge and awareness about female foeticide.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

**Source of Funding:** Self

**Ethical Clearance:** Ethical Clearance has been taken from Institutional Ethical Committee

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