

Socio-economic Intergenerational Differences in Attitude of Rural Women towards Female Foeticide

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ABSTRACT The present study was undertaken to assess the intergenerational differences in attitude of rural women belonging to two different socio-economic strata (SES) (middle socio-economic status and low socio-economic status) towards female foeticide in Ludhiana district. The study was based upon the sample of 200 respondents belonging to Jat Sikh community drawn equally from the two socio-economic levels (low socio-economic status=100 and middle socio-economic status=100). The respondents were distributed equally over the two generations at each SES level, the first comprising of mothers-in-law (n=50 for each SES group) and the second comprising of daughters-in-law (n=50 for each SES group). Data were collected through interview schedule. Results revealed that no significant difference was found in attitude of 1st generation (mothers-in-law) of both the socio-economic status. Similar results were observed for the 2nd generation (daughters-in-law) as well. No significant socio-economic difference was observed in the overall attitude of respondents towards female foeticide.

INTRODUCTION

In India, welfare measures like empowerment of women, reservation in Parliament, free education to girl child and a lot of other woman progressive initiatives, do not make sense when we look at cases of female foeticide. There are only 940 females for every 1000 males (Census 2011) against global figure of 1060 females per 1000 males. Sex ratio is a composite indicator of woman's status in a society. If we analyse state-wise sex ratio, it is most disturbing to note that in States like Punjab and Haryana, which are among the prosperous states of India, female-male ratio is continuously declining. Figures like this particularly pose a number of questions over the issue of socio-economic status being a factor behind this heinous crime, as thinking and perceptions are built over generations, which are the interplay of various social, cultural, historical and economic factors. The socio-economic status of a person is thought to have a very profound effect on the thinking and perception of the person. So the present study was planned to see the intergenerational differences in the attitude of respondents in relation

to their socio-economic status and the overall difference in the attitude of respondents because of their socio-economic status.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in rural areas of Ludhiana District. Random sampling technique was followed. A list of blocks falling in Ludhiana district was prepared. Out of the 11 blocks, block 1 was randomly selected. A list of villages falling under block 1 was prepared and out of them, six villages were randomly selected for drawing the sample. The study was based upon the sample of 200 respondents belonging to Jat Sikh community drawn equally from the two socio-economic levels (low socio-economic status=100 and middle socio-economic status=100). The respondents were distributed equally over the two generations at each SES level, the first comprising of mothers-in-law (n=50 for each SES group) and the second comprising of daughters-in-law (n=50 for each SES group). The data were collected through Interview Schedule which consisted of both positive and negative items and analyzed using percentages, Z Test. Scoring was done on a three-point scale by assigning 3,2,1 scores for agree, doubtful and disagree respectively for positive items and vice versa for negative items.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 depicts the difference in attitude of respondents of 1st generation (mothers-in-law)

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belonging to different socio-economic status. A close scrutiny of the results suggest that 10 per cent of the respondents of 1st generation from middle socio-economic status showed favourable attitude towards female foeticide as compared to the 14 per cent of the respondents from the low socio-economic status. The Z value came out to be non-significant ($Z = 0.62$) in this respect. The results are in collaboration with the findings of Pandey and Malhotra (2006) who revealed in their study that wealth and economic development do not reduce son preference. This is evident in the lower sex ratio of the affluent states who are extremely biased against the girl child.

Table 1: Difference in attitude of respondents of 1st generation (mothers-in-law) belonging to different socio-economic strata (N=100)

Attitude/ Generation 1 st	Middle SES ($n_1=50$)		Low SES ($n_2=50$)		Z- value
	Fre- quency	% age	Fre- quency	% age	
Favourable	5	10.00	7	14.00	0.62ns
Neutral	41	82.00	37	74.00	0.97ns
Unfavourable	4	8.00	6	12.00	0.67ns

ns: Non significant.

Further probing the data, it was found that no significant change ($z = 0.97$) was found in respondents of 1st generation from both the status in having a neutral attitude towards female foeticide as was shown by 82 per cent and 74 per cent of the respondents from middle and low socio-economic status respectively.

It is quite evident from the results that again no significant change ($z = 0.67$) in attitude was observed in terms of having an unfavourable attitude towards female foeticide as there were only 8 per cent of the respondents in the middle socio-economic strata and 12 per cent in the low socio-economic strata who exhibited a negative attitude towards the practice of female foeticide.

Table 2 throws light on the difference in attitude of daughters-in-law belonging to different socio-economic status. It was found that no significant change ($z=0$) was found between the daughters-in-law from the two socio-economic status in having a favourable attitude towards female foeticide.

It is quite apparent from the table that 28 per cent of the daughters-in-law from low socio-economic status had shown neutral attitude towards

Table 2: Difference in attitude of respondents of 2nd generation (daughters-in-law) belonging to different socio-economic status (N=100)

Attitude/ Generation 2 nd	Middle SES ($n_1=50$)		Low SES ($n_2=50$)		Z- value
	Fre- quency	% age	Fre- quency	% age	
Favourable	0	0.00	0	0.00	0ns
Neutral	9	18.00	14	28.00	1.19ns
Unfavourable	41	82.00	36	72.00	1.19ns

ns: Non significant

female foeticide as compared to 18 per cent of the respondents of the middle socio-economic status who showed a neutral attitude in this respect. Difference in attitude was found to be non-significant ($z = 1.19$).

The table further elucidates that no significant ($z = 1.19$) difference was found as 82 per cent of daughters-in-law of middle socio-economic status had shown unfavourable attitude towards female foeticide. On probing the data for the low socio-economic status, it was observed that unfavourable attitude was shown by 72 per cent of the respondents.

Table 3 elucidates overall attitude of respondents towards female foeticide according to their socio-economic status. It is apparent from the table that favourable attitude towards female foeticide was shown by 5 per cent of the respondents from middle socio-economic status as compared to the 7 per cent of the respondents from the low socio-economic status. Difference in attitude was found to be non-significant ($z = 0.59$). The results are in collaboration with the findings of Sharma and Rehlan (2007) who observed in their study that this inhuman practice is prevalent not only in poor classes but even the middle class and rich are biased against the girl child and this is very much evident since some of the wealthiest states of India have a very low sex ratio like Punjab and Haryana.

On further probing the data, it was observed that 50 per cent of the respondents from the middle socio-economic status had neutral attitude towards female foeticide. In the low socio-economic status, almost similar number of respondents, that is, 51 per cent had shown neutral attitude towards female foeticide. No significant difference was observed as the z value came out to be 0.14.

It was found that again no significant change ($z=0.43$) was found between the two socio-economic

Table 3: Overall attitude of respondents according to their socio-economic status (N= 200)

Attitude	Middle socio-economic status (n ₁ = 100)		Low socio-economic status (n ₂ = 100)		Z value
	Fre- quency	% age	Fre- quency	% age	
Favourable	5	5.00	7	7.00	0.59ns
Neutral	50	50.00	51	51.00	0.14ns
Unfavourable	45	45.00	42	42.00	0.43ns

ns: Non significant.

conomic strata in having unfavourable attitude towards female foeticide. There were 45 per cent of the respondents in the middle socio-economic status who had disfavoured attitude towards female foeticide as compared to 42 per cent of the respondents from low socio-economic status.

CONCLUSION

The study depicts that respondents of both the socio-economic status have indifferent atti-

tude towards female foeticide and it seems that the economic factor is not significant. The concerning facts that come into light is that nowadays female foeticide is no more an urban phenomenon as rural people are also getting more and more involved in it and come all the way to cities to get these tests done. Although the degree may vary but the neglect of girl child and discrimination goes hand in hand. So basically it is the social and cultural factors that are setting the attitude against the girl child. Therefore, efforts must be put together in direction to give the girl child struggling inside their mother's womb to come out to a world of equal opportunities, to grow and to blossom.

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