

Kinship System, Fertility and Son Preference among the Muslims: A Review

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ABSTRACT This review illustrates that differences in kinship system between north (by an large patrilineal) and south (by an large matrilineal) of India is an important factor to bring about regional disparities in sex preference of children by the Hindu parents but not by the Muslim parents in whom Kinship system is traditionally unique as it shares similarity with Dravidian system in marriage pattern and inheritance from paternal side and similarity in kinship terminology with Indo Aryan system of the north while among the Hindus it is traditionally based on patrilineal inheritance, notwithstanding the Hindu succession Act of 1956'. Though dowry and sex selective abortion are the determinants of status of women among the Hindus, they are generally not practiced among the Muslims. However, the lower education status, economic status and social status (due to patriarchy and religious ideologies) respectively and together produce circumstances leading to son being seen as the best socio-economic insurance by the Muslim women. This review of studies conducted on the above topic shows that high fertility among the Muslim women is also a consequence of son preference arising out of socio-economic compulsion in the traditional absence (due to strict religious prohibition) of sex selective abortions.