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## A descriptive study to assess gender preferences and perceptions related to it among expecting mothers visiting antenatal OPD of government medical college and hospital, Chandigarh

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### Abstract

A descriptive study to assess gender preferences and perceptions related to it among expecting mothers visiting antenatal OPD of GMCH-32 Chandigarh was conducted in full compliance with ethical committee of GMCH 32. The objective of study was to assess gender preferences and perceptions related to it among expecting mothers visiting antenatal OPD and to find association between gender preferences and perceptions related to it with selected socio demographic variables. In the present study total 62 samples participated. The study concluded that 80.6% of the total sample had no gender preference, 9.7% of them had female gender preference and equally same i.e., 9.7% had male gender preference. The findings of study revealed that 85.5% had negative perception regarding gender roles and only 14.5% of them had positive perception regarding gender roles. Significant relationship was obtained between sociodemographic variables i.e., expecting mothers with previous 2 female children, where husband and wife were decision maker for gender choice, those living in joint family and Son preference. Also, Significant relationship was obtained between sociodemographic variables i.e., expecting mothers with 1 or 2 female children, where husband and wife were decision maker for choice of gender, those from joint family and Positive perception related to gender roles.

### Keywords:

**Gender Preference:** Expecting mother's desire for a specific gender from her current pregnancy i.e., male, female or no preference.

**Perception:** Interpretation of gender roles through gender assessment scale.

**Expecting mothers:** A woman who is pregnant and visiting antenatal OPD of GMCH 32

### Introduction

#### Background of the study

Unfavorable sex ratio is not unique to India. Sex preference especially the preference for sons is increasing in our country since ages. Over the past decade, gender equality has been explicitly recognized as a key factor not only for the improvement of the health of nations but also for their social and economic development <sup>[1]</sup>. A couple's gender preference for children is being usually influenced by traditional background, cultural practices, and patriarchal gender norms over generations. Women have a perceived belief that sons are the only breadwinners and represent the power status of family, help and inherit family business, and continue their family name. Old age dependency, family status, women unsafety, marriage expenses like practice of dowry, and fact that girls will not stay with parents after marriage are some of the factors which influence non-preference for daughters. Thus, girl child faces the neglect of the family in terms of food, clothing, love, shelter, supervision, education, and even medical care <sup>[2]</sup>.

According to National family health survey 2019-2021, Although India's overall sex ratio i.e. women per thousand men is now at a level seen in developed countries i.e., for every 1,000 men, India has 1,020 women but there is a cause for concern too, Since the sex ratio at birth continues to be lower than what is naturally expected. Analysis shows that 13 states and union territories still have more males than females. In a rural versus urban analysis, the sex ratio was found skewed in favor of males in rural areas of 14 states, while 22 states had a sex ratio favoring males in urban areas. Chandigarh witnessed a decline in sex ratios compared to 2015-16 i.e.

The sex ratio at birth in Chandigarh has dropped to 838 females for every 1000 males, a significant drop of 14% in the last five years. Therefore, it is clear that it is important to assess the gender preferences and perception of gender roles of expecting mothers living in Chandigarh [3].

### Need of the study

A strong preference for male child exists, particularly in India, and is a major obstacle for reducing national fertility levels. According to this argument, if couples continue to bear children in order to have a minimum number of desired sons, they would exceed the two children norm advocated by the national family planning program [4]. At the same time, desires for controlling fertility and achieving the wanted sex composition of children which includes at least one son, put pressure on couples to intervene the biological process of reproduction through sex selective abortion for the fulfillment of both these desires. Studies in India have identified some factors like old age security, socio-cultural utility, property inheritance and economic utility etc. that favors son preference. Discrimination of female child is one of the main reasons for the disappearance of female child and female feticide [5]. Therefore, there is a need to assess the magnitude of male and female preferences, so that appropriate interventional measures may be adopted. With this need current study was conducted to assess gender preferences and perceptions related to it among expecting mothers visiting antenatal OPD of GMCH 32, Chandigarh.

### Problem statement

A study to assess gender preferences and perceptions related to it among expecting mothers visiting antenatal OPD of GMCH-32, Chandigarh.

### Objectives

- 1) To assess gender preferences and perceptions related to it among expecting mothers visiting antenatal OPD.
- 2) To find association between gender preferences and perceptions related to it with selected socio demographic variables.

### Material and Methods

**Research approach and design:** Quantitative research and Descriptive research design.

**Research setting:** Antenatal OPD of GMCH-32

**Sample size and technique:** 62 expecting mothers who were visiting Antenatal OPD of GMCH 32 were selected with Probability sampling technique.

### Tool for data collection

For collection of data, Tool used was a Gender Biased Quiz developed by Tezare, Kisanet (2015) which was modified and used to assess perception of gender roles. Tool consisted of Part A which included Socio-demographic data i.e. Age, education, occupation, religion, type of family, decision making for determination of gender choice, type of community. Previous no. of children of expecting mothers, Part B consisted of Questionnaire regarding gender preferences and Part C consisted of standardized modified questionnaire to assess perception of gender roles.

### Result

#### Gender preferences of expecting mothers

Result showed that majority of sample had no preference i.e., 80.6% followed by equal percentage of expectant mothers

preferred son or daughter i.e., 9.7%.

**Table 1.1:** Gender Preferences

Categories	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)
Son Preference	9.7%	6
Daughter Preference	9.7%	6
No Preference	80.6%	50

N=62

#### Perception of expecting mothers related to gender roles

Result showed that majority of sample had negative perception for gender roles i.e., 85.5% and only 14.5% of sample had positive perception for gender role.

**Table 1.2:** Criteria measure for perception of gender roles

Perception	Percentage	Frequency
Positive (41-80)	14.5%	9
Negative (<-40)	85.5%	53

N=62

#### Association of sociodemographic variables with gender preferences

Son preference was seen significantly higher in expectant mothers with previous 2 female children (n=4) while expectant mothers with no female children had higher preference for daughter. (n=6). Also, son preference was seen significantly higher in mothers where husband and wife were decision maker for gender choice (n=3). Also, son preference was seen significantly higher in mothers living in joint family (n=4) but was seen low in both nuclear (n=1) and extended family (n=1). High son preference was seen in women in age of 25-35 years (n=4), up to 12<sup>th</sup> pass (n=4), housewives (n=4), Hindus (n=4), and women with no male child (n=5), though it was not significant.

#### Association of sociodemographic variables with perception regarding gender roles

Positive perception was seen in large proportion in women with 1 or 2 female children i.e., (n=4), (n=4) respectively, also positive perception was seen significantly higher in mothers where husband and wife were decision maker for choice of gender (n=6), also positive perception was also seen significantly higher in expecting women from joint family (n=5). Positive perception was also seen higher in women in age of 25-35 years (n=7), housewives (n=5), up to 12<sup>th</sup> pass (n=6), Hindus (n=7), and women with no male child (n=7). Though it was not significant.

### Conclusion

Majority of expecting mothers had no preference i.e., 80.6%. Preference for male child was equal to preference for female child i.e., 9.7%. Among 62 expecting mother's majority of them i.e., 85.5% had negative perception regarding gender roles and only 14.5% of them had positive perception regarding gender roles.

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