
LEGAL ENFORCEMENT, SOCIAL AWARENESS, AND SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION AGAINST FEMALE FOETICIDE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS IN NAGPUR MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Gender conflicts and social inequality amongst men and women in India has persisted overtime due to female foeticide that has contributed negatively to the social justice, human rights and equality. Despite the coming to existence of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act [PCPNDT Act] and the continuous advocacy that had to take place, the declining child sex ratio in some of the areas portrays that there are violations of the law, ignorance among the people and level of actions of the community. The teachers particularly those working in the municipal schools are in the vantage point because they are the agents of the social change who can shape the attitude of young learners and their families as well. The existing empirical research study will be centered on the extent of legal awareness, the effectiveness of social awareness campaign and the effects of social work intervention in preventing female foeticide among the teachers in Nagpur Municipal Schools. In the research, the level of the knowledge of the teachers concerning the PCPNDT Act, their perception related to gender bias, and the activities they engage in the field of the awareness promotion using both the analytical methods and the structured questionnaire are evaluated. It is estimated that the results will show the significance of gaps in the enforcement and the outreach of the community and establish the potentials to harmonize the school-based social work practices. The study article will also help in policy debate as it will be suggestive of multi-stakeholder responses to make enforcement of the law more effective, gender sensitive regarding gender-sensitization programmes, and will empower teaching fraternity as the main driving force of change in halting acquisition of reproductive technology to prevent female foeticide.

Keywords: Female Foeticide, PCPNDT Act, Legal Enforcement, Social Awareness, Social Work Intervention, Gender Discrimination, Municipal School Teachers, Nagpur

Introduction

The social-cultural preference of the male children in India, which is deeply rooted in the Indian societal structure, provides an opportunity to define the female foeticide as the grim side of gender discrimination. Through the assistance of the exploitation of the prenatal diagnoses technologies, the practice has resulted in an imbalance in child sex ratio that has remained steady, and this has been put forth in the face of grave demographic, ethical, and human rights issues. Through the assistance of the now aware nature of the issue the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act was created in the year 1994 (amended in 2003), by which the use of sex selection was banned, and the standards of diagnostic techniques use were controlled. However, the fact that female foeticide is still remaining indicates that the legislative systems cannot administer justice when it fails to offer a powerful enforcement, social knowledge and the change of behaviours on a societal level. The key role, in this regard, therefore, belongs to the learning institutions and then to the teachers.

The teachers in municipality schools are not only teachers, but they are also influential players in the social context that is in immediate contact with children and their families in most cases and has varied socio-economic backgrounds. In large cities such as Nagpur, it is possible that such a concentration of lower and middle-income citizens in municipal schools and the existence of the traditional gender norm are high in them. That, in turn, presents a unique opportunity to the teachers to provide gender equality, dismantle gender machismo, and disseminate the information concerning the legal and social consequences of female foeticide. Their awareness levels, the attitudes and the engagement levels can have a significant impact on the levels of community perceptions in the long run.

The PCPNDT Act has remained to be not uniformly adhered to across the nation due to the administrative boundaries, inadequacy of the number of diagnostic centres being tracked and general reporting on the offences. Simultaneously, even such social awareness campaigns as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, as they are represented by the government, cannot always reach to the very bottom of the local population until facilitated by the procedure of the constant grassroots activism. The social work interventions that include counselling, community mobilization and school based sensitization programmes are increasingly being realized to be important complements of the legal measures. Nonetheless, there is minimal empirical research evidence on this topic of teachers perception and participation in such interventions, particularly in school systems in the municipal level.

The existing study is therefore hoping to examine the three dimensions that are interconnected that is, the level of the awareness of the teachers regarding the legal provisions in female foeticide; the effectiveness of the occasioned social awareness campaign in the school ecosystem; and the opportunities of organized social work involvement of teachers as a key stakeholder. The study will provide the contextual knowledge to influence policy, educational planning and community outreach interventions to address the problem of the target population of municipal school teachers in Nagpur.

The development of the current research is significant because it is an interdisciplinary research entailing the integration of the legal studies, social work and educational practices. Their willingness and how teachers perceive it will help in the cognition of whether the schools are in a proper use as a gender-sensitizing and legal literacy medium. The findings will tend to be helpful in shaping particular training packages, school-community associations, and enhanced enforcement-support systems on the grassroots. Last but not least, the role of teachers as agents of social change can also contribute their share as long as a general national goal of eliminating female foeticide and the concept of gender justice in Indian society is the topic of discussion.

Literature Review

The topic of female foeticide is an established one within the community that has been reinforced by the cultural and economic aspects and the gender assumption both of which have a dire social price on both population demographics and gender equality. Grech (2015) utilized the data on the number of births among pregnant women collected by the United Nations to indicate the relationship between economic deprivation and female foeticide. The research team also discovered that the willingness to bear male children was also more prominent in the regions where the economic insecurity was elevated, which means that socio-economic background can also be regarded as one of the critical factors to continue with sex-selective abortion (Grech, 2015). This goes in accord with the past

findings that poverty and cultural needs make gender biases in taking decisions within the family particularly those that touch on reproductive decisions.

Joshi and Bajwa (2012a, 2012b) examined the knowledge and attitude of the rural women about the inter-generational level of female foeticide. Their research had discovered that despite the fact that people have partial knowledge regarding the ban on the legal prohibitions, there are still high rates of gaps that are largely perceived among the old generations. It was also shown that the interplay of social capital and aspect of education and gender attitudes had a socio-economic disparities and level of education in perceiving female foeticide. These findings outline the need to have certain awareness campaigns enabling to consider generational peculiarities and the reality of the place where the population resides which can be further applicable to the urban Municipal schools populations in which teachers have to work with families representing different socio-economic statuses.

In her study, Kumari (2015) examined the aspect of autonomy of educated women in urban setting, and how such factor affected the perception towards female foeticide. The authors found a positive association between education and autonomy and protest against the practice, meaning that interventions that were based on education could help women to alter traditional values. This helps the notion of interventions within the school context where there would be no teaching of teachers but roles model and change agents that would initiate gender equity among learners and communities.

Regarding law and implementation, Mudda and Uzair (2014) examined implementation or enforcement of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act in the region of Gulbarga. They found that the legal framework was not being implemented into practice due to the absence of all-organizational monitoring and ignorance of both the healthcare providers and the individuals. Priyadarshini (2022) also examined legal interference in female foeticide and infanticide focusing on failure to report, punishment and ignorance of the law among individuals. These studies all lead to the fact that legal efforts, which do not rely on social awareness and community engagement, may not be enforced.

In the article by Mehmood, Yasin, and Malik, a forensic audit of the cases of foeticide, neonaticide, and infanticide is conducted in which the researchers emphasize the need to achieve the existing laws through sufficient records and monitoring systems. Similarly, Rao (2010) found the medico-legal and ethical connotations of foeticide and infanticide and the role of professionals in report making and prevention of such practices. The implication of using information technology and digital knowledge campaigns to enhance the policing and reporting of any illegal activity as suggested by Sharma (n.d.) could be used to uplift the current legal enforcement and involvement of the community as a modern tool.

Finally, gender cultural tendencies and inclinations remain in the middle of the conceptualization of female foeticide perpetuation. Shirazi, (2009), the author, investigated the subject of gender preference in family set ups and he discovered that the norms of patriarchy and the socio-cultural needs were still skewed in favor of male children. Lindqvist (2012) highlighted subtle connections between gender and cultural perceptions, which in its turn demonstrates that even symbolic preferences such as those the gender has on consumer preferences are a bit cultural inclinations that can also establish such a perception of female children.

As a rule, the suggestion of the literature is that female foeticide issue can be addressed with the multi pronged approach where legal enforcement of the law, social awareness and community based interventions are integrated. Since the teachers are the frontline teachers in the municipal schools, they are in a strategic position of shaping the perception of the future generation, sponsor gender sensitization programmes and practice social work that will assist in curbing this vice. The articles discussed in this section have provided a decent justification to dwell empirical studies on the awareness, opinion, and engagement of educators and bridge the gaps in the fields of law, social consciousness, and effective intervention.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess teachers' awareness of the legal provisions against female foeticide (PCPNDT Act).
2. To examine teachers' perceptions of social and cultural factors contributing to female foeticide.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of social awareness initiatives conducted in schools.

Hypothesis (H₁): Teachers' perceptions of social and cultural factors significantly influence their awareness and preventive actions against female foeticide.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): Teachers' perceptions of social and cultural factors do not have a significant influence on their awareness and preventive actions against female foeticide.

Research Methodology

The empirical research design will be the basis of the current research in appraising the impacts of legal enforcement, social awareness, and social work intervention against female foeticide amongst teachers based on Nagpur Municipal Schools. The qualitative approach has been taken to know and analyze the knowledge of teachers, their perception about gender-sensitization initiatives, and their involvement in them qualitatively and analytically. The target population will include the teaching staff of the municipal schools in Nagpur who should be identified with the help of stratified random sample so that the population was represented on the primary level, secondary level, and higher level. The data collection has been carried out with a structured questionnaire, which incorporates closed-ended questions, questions in the form of Likert scale, to measure the degree of awareness of the PCPNDT Act, the gender bias attitude, and the participation in the programs of the creation of awareness or any social work. Furthermore, a subsample of teachers has been interviewed in a semi-structured study as an attempt to obtain the qualitative data about the situation and cultural variables that influenced the perception of the teachers. They have analyzed the data collected using statistical tools such as frequency distribution, percentage analysis, Means scores and correlation tests to establish the relationship between legal awareness and social perceptions and the relationship of legal awareness and intervention practices. The qualitative responses on the same have been analyzed using the thematic analysis so as to ascertain the recurring themes and nuances of experiences and attitudes that the teachers have. Virtuous statements like the informed consent, the confidentiality and the free participation have been strictly followed to ensure integrity and reliability of the findings. The methodology too should provide a holistic understanding of how female foeticide will be prevented with respect to legal knowledge, social awareness, active intercession flexibility resulting in a policy and school-based intercession programs which are supposed to contribute to the prevention of female foeticide.

Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Teachers' Perception of Social Factors	120	4.12	0.65	2	5
Teachers' Perception of Cultural Factors	120	3.95	0.72	1	5
Awareness of Legal Provisions (PCPNDT Act)	120	4.05	0.68	2	5
Preventive Actions Against Female Foeticide	120	3.88	0.70	1	5

The use of descriptive statistics gives the impression that there is relatively good knowledge of the legalization of the laws that regulate female foeticide where there is a mean score of 4.05 (SD = 0.68) which connotes that most of the teachers respondents are well versed in the PCPNDT Act and its practice. They rated higher their perceptions over the social conditions predisposing to female foeticide (including the economic factors and the family pressure) (Mean = 4.12, SD = 0.65) and lower perceptions over cultural ones (including traditional gender practices and preference towards boys in a family) (Mean = 3.95, SD = 0.72), which also means that they slightly ignored them. The preventive measures, i.e. attending awareness sessions, parent and student counseling sessions, or related gender-sensitization questions on the classroom curriculum, had the mean of 3.88 (SD = 0.70), which is proactive, but eclectic participation by teachers.

It was also discovered that in the case of the study, a significant positive correlation was realized between the perceptions of social and cultural factors of the teachers and the awareness of the legal provisions ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), and the perceptions and their preventive measures ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). This means that the more conscious teachers regarding the social and cultural issues that play a role in the risk of female foeticide would be better placed to make calls on legal provisions and the preventive measures in their respective schools. As it has been pointed out in the discussion, it is possible to consider teachers as not only resources of knowledge but social agents and actors capable of affecting the environment of any community and how students perceive gender equity.

These findings are also supported by the data of the semi-structured interviews (qualitative responses) with references to the fact that even in the presence of certain deep-rooted patriarchal cultures that negatively affect teachers, these teachers, however, accept the interventions with references to counseling, awareness sessions and social work programs. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data proves that the perception of social and cultural factors is a crucial predictor of the awareness and preventive measures, and proves the hypothesis of the research (H 1). The outcomes of these are that the special training, the ongoing sensitization campaigns, and the institutional reinforcement is required in order to allow the teachers to have a more prominent role in the combating of foeticide of females.

Table 1: Regression Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions on Awareness of Legal Provisions and Preventive Actions

Model	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t	Sig. (p)	R ²
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Model	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t	Sig. (p)	R ²
1	Awareness of Legal Provisions	0.68	0.08	0.62	8.50	0.000**	0.38
2	Preventive Actions	0.59	0.09	0.57	6.56	0.000**	0.33

The regression analysis reveals that the perceptions surrounding the social or cultural factor regarding the teachers are significant and positively impacted on their awareness of the legal provisions and their prevention of the female foeticide. In other words, the unstandardized and the standardized coefficient do not fall under the value of 0.68 and 0.62 in that order, indicating that the greater the increase in the perception of the teacher scores per unit, the higher the awareness of the PCPNDT Act becomes. Similarly, the predictive actions perceptions level is very high with $B = 0.59$, 0.57 , $p = 0.001$ meaning that more around about the social and cultural process of the female foeticide are also engaged in conducting interventions, awareness initiatives, and counselling programs within schools. The R^2 values mean that the proportion of variation in legal knowledge (38 percent) and the proportion of variation in preventative measures (33 percent) are both due to the perceptions of teachers which are moderate but significant. The findings confirm the research hypothesis (H_0) indicating that social and cultural processes interpretation, which the teachers possess, is a decisive variable of their knowledge of the law regulations alongside their engagement in the preventive actions. This points out the necessity to possess certain types of training activities and relentless sensitization activities in order to raise the intensity of capacity of the educators as proliferating agents against female foeticide in the municipal schools.

Overall Conclusion

The study substantiates the fact that female foeticide continues to be a colossal social predicament that is predetermined by the prevailing cultural beliefs, socio-economic strain and prejudices of gender. Teachers or social change agents to Nagpur Municipal Schools can be viewed as leaders to this problem and important actors in minimizing it. The outcomes of the presented empirical research point to the fact that the degree of the awareness of the teachers of the legal framework, i.e. the PCPNDT Act is quite high, and the social and cultural factors that lead to the preservation of female foeticide are recognized by the social workers. It is worth noting that the regression analysis forms that significant relevance of these perceptions in their legal awareness and taking action to deter criminal activities such as creating awareness programs in schools, counseling students and in community outreach.

The study also points out that, despite the laws being a mandatory requirement in so far as enforcement is concerned, this on its own cannot solve the female foeticide. It is noteworthy that complementary actions, interventions, or rather long-term social awareness campaigns or systematic social work interventions of the school ecosystem have an important role. The active participation of educators can introduce the attitudinal change among students and communities depending on the clear understanding of social and cultural relations and produce the distance between the policy and practice.

The implication of the study is that it is necessary to have a holistic approach having law implementation with continuous teacher training, community education and social work. Municipal

schools can be adopted as effective channels of bringing gender equity improvement and breaking patriarchal values into ruins and reducing the number of foeticide crimes among women to be ultimately translated into the overall change and impart gender justice to India.

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