Understanding perspectives on sex-selection in India: an intersectional study

Sonya Davey, Manisha Sharma

Abstract

Background Sex-selective abortion results in fewer girls than boys in India (914 girls:1000 boys). To understand perspectives about who is responsible for sex-selective abortion, our aim was to focus on narratives of vastly diverse stakeholders in Indian society.

Methods The qualitative study was undertaken in urban sectors of six northwestern Indian states. Ethnographic unstructured, conversation-style interviews with randomly selected participants were held for an unbiased study. To capture perceptions about sex-selection in Indian society, we recruited Indians across a wide cross-section of society. 32 women and 42 men, aged 20–80 years, from various social classes, professions, education, and income groups participated. Verbal or written consent was obtained from participants. Virginia Tech institutional review board approved the study.

Findings Participant perspectives on who is responsible for sex-selective abortion encompassed four broad categories: uneducated rural populations, educated urban populations, women, and technology. Most urban men and women blamed poor and uneducated rural populations. Most men blamed women for son preference. Women blamed technology misuse, society, family, and older women; very few blamed men.

Interpretation It is notable that even national policy makers are unaware of the situation (many incorrectly believed the problem only existed in villages). Policy makers and researchers should bridge this essential gap. Such intersectional studies help to elucidate local understandings of the situation, which is necessary for appropriate policy measures.

Funding None.

Copyright © Davey et al. Open Access article distributed under the terms of CC BY.

Contributors
Both authors equally contributed in research and writing phases. All authors have seen and approved the final version of the Abstract for publication.

Declaration of interests
We declare that we have no competing interests.