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Attitude of college students toward girl child

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ABSTRACT

The present study was aimed to assess the attitude of college students towards girl child in Kerala. A descriptive survey approach was used and the sample consisted of 300 students from three colleges of Kerala. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample and a 4-point likert scale was prepared to assess the attitude of students towards girl child. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Among the students, 225 students were girls and 75 were boys. Majority (97.3%) of the students were between the age group of 17-20 years. 60 % of the students were doing Information Technology course whereas 23.6% of students are from nursing course and 16.33 % of students are doing Pharmacy course. Findings of the study indicated that 96.7% of the students had positive attitude towards girl child and 3.3 % of them had neutral attitude and none of them had negative attitude. The comparison of attitude of boys and girls was done using 't' test and it shows statistical difference at 0.001 level. Girls are having more positive attitude towards girl child than boys

Keywords: Girl child, Attitude, College students, Kerala.

INTRODUCTION

The worth of a civilization can be judged by the place given to women in the society. *Jawaharlal Nehru said:* "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women"[1]. Girl child is the procreator and the mother of tomorrow. This beautiful creation of God has become the gravest concern today. She is murdered in her mother's womb. Birth of female child is perceived as a curse with economic and social liability [2]. Sex ratio is one of the widely used tool for cross sectional analysis to measure gender balance. Sex ratio is defined in the Census of India as the number of females per 1,000 males in the population [3]. The

census 2011 reveals that in India, the sex ratio in the 0-6 age group has been continually declining since 1961 but the fall from 927.31 in 2001 to 914.23 in 2011 is the worst since independence [4]. The United Nations has expressed serious concern about the situation [5].

Once in our lives, most of us must have heard that a child is a 'gift' from God. Though whatever biology may suggest, it is not an uncommon sight in India to see couples praying to be blessed with a child. But almost half of India, no longer considers it a blessing if that child happens to be a girl. The blessing soon becomes a curse and the 'precious gift' is done away with as soon as possible before extending another demand to God,

that of a 'male' child [6]. According to CBC news writer Jeremy Copeland, a proverb –“raising a girl is like watering the neighbor’s garden”, generally sums up the way girls in India are seen as an economic burden on their parents [7]. A study done in Punjab by Dr. Har surveying the attitudes of young couples regarding girl child. In this study, 3000 couples were interviewed across different villages in Punjab. The highlights of results of the study are as follows: 37% of the couples said they only wanted a male child and if they had one, they would not want to have a second child. 11% said they would have a second child if they had a daughter as their first child, but would not go for a second child if they have a son as their first child. 2% stated that they wanted only a male child at any cost'. The percentage of couples happy with having only a female child is 3%. Another interesting fact, which came to light, is that the rich were more interested having only a son compared to the poor. The result of this study concludes that the attitudes towards the girl child have not changed [8]. Now is the time to energize efforts to put gender equality at the top of international peace and develop the agenda. It is felt that unless immediate action is taken to change the mindset of the people, the girl child is on her way to utter deprivation, destitution and even extinction. There is urgent need to embark on a massive nationwide sensitization and advocacy campaign with specific focus on the importance of girl child to reinforce the view that she is an asset not a burden [9]. The present study was undertaken to assess the attitude of college students in selected colleges in Kerala, to compare the attitude towards girl child between boys and girls in selected colleges of Kerala and to observe the relationship between attitude towards girl child and selected socio demographic variables.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It is an Nonexperimental- descriptive study, conducted at St.James College of Nursing, St.James College of Pharmaceutical sciences and Nirmala College of Information technology, Kerala, India. The study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board for ethical issues in human research. Written informed consent from the volunteers was obtained.

Participants

300 college students (225 students were girls and 75 were boys) of either sex were a part for this research after obtaining written consent from them by Purposive sampling technique.

Methods

An appropriate, 4 – point Likert scale was prepared by the investigator to collect data for the present study. The Likert scale consists of two sections.

Section- 1

Structured questionnaire to asses the sociodemographic data of girls which include age, sex, religion, area of living and type of family, number of boys and girls in the family and likeness with regard to the sex of the person

Section – 2

A Likert scale to assess the attitude of students towards girl child, which consists of 38 statements, out of which 19 positive statements and 19 negative statements. The maximum score is 152 and minimum score is 38. The grading of attitude score is: -66% - 100% - positive attitude; 34% - 65% - Neutral attitude; 0–33% Negative attitudes, The self-administered questionnaire was given to the students during the leisure time in the college.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed by using SPSS 20.0. Data was expressed in mean \pm SD and student t test was applied to observe the significance of the difference. Probability value less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) was considered significant.

RESULTS

Majority (97.3%) of the students were between the age group of 17-20 years. 23.6% of students are from nursing course, 16.33 % of students are doing Pharmacy course and 60 % of sample were from Information Technology. Among the students, 57.33% were Christians, 34.66% were Hindus and only 8% of them were Muslims. 236 students were from rural area and 64 of them were from urban area. Most of them (92.33%) are from Nuclear family and only 7.66% are from joint family. Majority (96.7%) of the students has positive attitude towards girl child, only 3.3% of them has neutral attitude and none of them had negative attitude towards girl child figure no 1). The mean score of girls is 125.17 and that of boys is 113.57

and the ‘t’ test shows statistical difference at 0.001 levels. Hence girls are having more positive attitude towards girl child than boys (table no: 1). The highest mean score is regarding the attitude towards protection and physical health of girl child, followed by the rights of the girl child. And the lowest score is towards the birth of girl child (table

no: 2). Chi-square test was used to find out the relationship between attitude of students towards girl child and selected sociodemographic variables. There was no significant association between attitude and age, gender, religion, course, area of living and type of family.

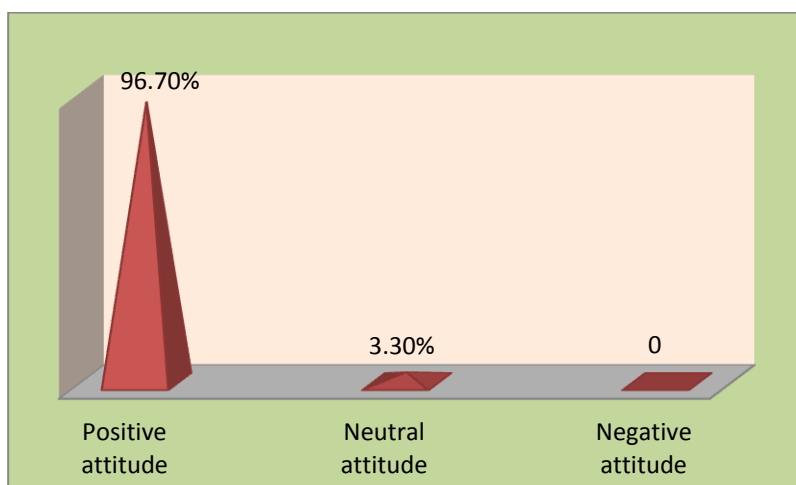


Figure.No.1. Attitude of students towards girl child (n=300)

Table 1: Comparison of boys and girls based on the attitude towards girl child (n=300) (Data expressed are Mean ± SD) (*P value <0.05,** P<0.01, ***P<0.001).

Gender	Mean ± SD	t Value	P value
Boys (n=75)	113.57 ± 4.68	10.72	0.001
Females (n=225)	125.17 ± 8.98		

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of different aspects of attitude towards girl child (n=300) (Data expressed are Mean ± SD) (*P value <0.05,** P<0.01, ***P<0.001).

Aspects	Max score	Mean ± SD	Mean %
General concepts regarding girl child	28	22.35±1.67	79.82
Rights of girl child	36	28.94±2.5	80.38
Protection and physical health of girl child	16	13.81±2.64	82.37
Education and marriage of girl child	32	25.57±3.4	79.9
Birth of girl child	40	31.53±1.72	78.82

DISCUSSION

Among the 300 students, 225 students were girls and 75 of them were boys. Majority (97.3%) of the students were between the age group of 17-20 years. 60 % of the students were doing Information Technology course whereas 23.6% of students are from nursing course, 16.33 % of students are doing Pharmacy course. Among the students, 57.33% were Christians, 34.66% were

Hindus and only 8% of them were Muslims. 236 students were from rural area and 64 of them were from urban area. Most of them (92.33%) are from Nuclear family and only 7.66% are from joint family. In the present study, 96.7% of the students had positive attitude towards girl child and 3.3 % of them had neutral attitude and none of them had negative attitude. The present study supports the sociological study done by Ms. Reshma M to assess the parent’s attitude towards girl child education.

The findings showed that the overall attitude of the respondents was positive towards schooling and education of their girl children [10]. The findings of the present study contradicts another study conducted in Punjab to assess the attitude of female respondents towards the practice of female foeticide. There were 240 female respondents from 3 districts of Punjab-Ludhiana, Bathinda and Ferozepur. 67.50% of respondents approved of female foeticide. In Bathinda, many respondents openly admitted to have undergone female foeticide. This finding indirectly points out that their attitude towards girls is negative [11] The mean score of girls is 125.17 and that of boys is 113.57 and the 't' test shows statistical difference at 0.001 level. Hence girls are having more positive attitude towards girl child than boys. Among the statements, the highest score was obtained for the statement no.28-'Girls need not send for higher education'. 97.5% of them disagreed the statement. It is clear from the result that the students are aware about the importance of higher education of girl child. And most of the students opposed the statement "Girl child is a burden for the family". This gives some hope in Kerala, that the status of women has improved a lot. The lowest score is for the statement no.5, i.e. "first child should be girl child". In the analysis of the level of attitude regarding different aspects of girl child, the lowest score belongs to the birth of girl child. Both of these findings show that though the overall attitude of college students towards girl child is positive in

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Kerala, they wish that a male child should be there in their family. The 2nd lowest score obtained for the statement no.12 "A woman suffers a lot after her marriage because of the sex of the baby". It is evident that directly or indirectly women suffer in relation to the sex of the baby. Among the students, 89.83% of them agreed the statement 'Girls are victims of the sexual violence compared to boys'. This fact is an eye opener for us as the incidence of sexual violence is increasing day by day in Kerala. Another significant finding is majority (88%) of the students accepted the statement 'Dowry is a social evil'.

CONCLUSION

Birth of female child is perceived as a curse with economic and social liability. In each corner of India, girls face discrimination, they often receive less food than boys, have less access to schooling and unlike boys they are made to do long hours of labor beginning at a tender age. Though there is decreased sex ratio and low status of women in India, the present study reveals that the attitude of coming generation towards girl child is positive. It may take time to change the mindset of the people completely, but with the intensive efforts of government as well as other associations at different levels of society, we can expect a better tomorrow for the girl child and thereby for the country. Hope good attitude will make change in the practical life also.

Conflicts of interest: Nil

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