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Submitter Information

Batol Mousavi
Email: mousavi.b@gmail.com

Abstract Information

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Gender preferences for children among Iranian Women

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Authors:

Karbaksh Mojgan, MD,MPH, Assistant Professor in community medicine, Tehran University medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran. Mousavi Batol, MD,MPH, Specialist in community medicine, Janbazan Medical and Engineering Research Center (JMERC), Tehran, Iran. Ganjparvar Zohreh, MA in Sociology, Janbazan Medical and Engineering Research Center (JMERC), Tehran, Iran.

Abstract:

Introduction: Preference for male children has been reported from a number of Asian countries. The aim of this study was to determine if there is such preference for sons among women in Tehran. **Methods:** This study was designed and developed in 2008. The inclusion criteria were married women of child bearing years (15-45 years). The calculated sample of 400 was recruited through proportional sampling across different areas of Tehran. Public and private recreational and fitness centers for women across all areas of Tehran were used as the sampling frame for the study. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by experts in the field of community medicine and epidemiology and was designed to show the presence of gender preference and contributing factors. **Results:** A total of 415 married female participated in the study. The mean age of the participants and marriage duration were 29.7 (SD equals 6.7) and 6.9 (SD equals 6.6, median equals 5) years, respectively. More than half of the subjects were housewives. Of 197 subjects who had any children, 35.5% had sons, 37.6% had daughters and 25.9% both sons and daughters. About 28.9% of the subjects believed that it's preferable that the first child be a girl, 21.4% preferred it to be a boy and 48% said that they did not have any gender preferences for the first child. The overall sex preference for children were 14% for those women who preferred to have "only daughters", 10.4% for "only sons", and 47.5% for both sexes. About 28.2% said that they did not have any gender preferences. There were not significant relationships between gender preference and age of women, marriage duration and economic status. **Discussion:** In contract to some neighboring countries and some Arab regions, no gender preference was observed among our subjects. This is expected as in Iran, gender equity is increasing regarding educational, economic and occupational opportunities for females. Meanwhile, believing or not believing in son preference has deep roots in cultural background of a family or nation and is not just determined by development status of the society and equity and welfare for women. This study was performed in Tehran (capital city of Iran). Further studies targeting different subgroups such as Iranian's male and female from different ethnicity, age groups, and provinces (urban and rural) can provide us with more complete profiles regarding gender preference in Iran.
