



A STUDY ON THE REASONS OF SON PREFERENCE IN PASHTUN FAMILIES OF QUETTA CITY

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ABSTRACT

Present study is based on qualitative research which was conducted in Quetta city the capital city of Baluchistan, and area wise the biggest province of Pakistan. The sample method of present research was purposive method which include 20 interviews and 2 FGDS comprising of 10 member each, all data were taken from mothers who come to Gynecology ward for delivery case and all mothers were belongs to Pashtun culture to know the reasons for the preference of son. The present study reveals that sons are preferred due to bringing up family name; only they can perform their late parent's rites, more sons means more strength of family and for not having son, mother is ignored by the other members of the family, present study data was taken by semi-structured interviews and from data different themes were drawn like impact on mother, family size and preference of son, which has sub-themes. Giving preference to son results in discriminatory practices against daughters. Present study recommend that girl child care policy should be promoted by different campaigns in Quetta city by Ngo's effort/ support and parents have to change their comportment for daughters and provide them equal care and value like sons, because if daughter grooming will be virtuous then she will be become good mother and if mother is good groomed the nation will be groomed and it is also suggest to promote girl education as well as, for minimizing the family size.

Keywords: Son Preference, Pashtun and Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

Preference of son is a universal phenomenon. In the Present study, main focus is on "son preference and its impact on mothers, in Pashtun families". So researcher firstly introduces Pashtun. Pashtuns are also termed themselves as Pathan and Pakhtuns. Pathan lives in different

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regions of the globe, In Pakistan mostly they are present in northwestern region and in Baluchistan, they are one of largest ethnic group. In Pakistan son preference is strongly noted due to the social as well as financial support to family and consider as a socially bias factor. Demand of son leads to discriminatory practices which are not in favor of girl child and has enormous socio- psychological effects on mother. Son preference is not a recent phenomenon. From the history it is noted that girl child is always ignored in past. Son preference has many varieties; the most intense form of son preference is sex selective abortions and female infanticide. In different culture especially Asian countries value and high prestige given to male child and female child is associated with financial liability. Female infant murder is illegal but still prevail with high ratio in India and along with it girl child also face malnutrition like she is wean off from breast feeding because mother get try to pregnant again for a chance to have a son. Gender preference socially, psychologically and economically affect the progress of society as well as affect individual. We live in Islamic country but our Socio-economic and cultural values and norms affect our attitude for family system and gender preference. The present study helps to understand why preference for male child is so strong in a Pashtun culture ,and for this it is important to recognize the social ,cultural factors in that particular society. Parents preference for son exerts significant impact on the fertility desire and family planning behavior which effects the fertility reduction, this study search the reasons of gender inclination in Pashtun families and how it effect mother. This study will help to awake mothers about their rights, who are force to give birth to son, face anxiety, frustration, distress and other psychological problems and realize them about the importance of daughters in society and eliminate discrimination in society. Female face many health issues due to having more children's till they don't get desired sex of their child and also helps to aware mother to manage gap between conceiving another child.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

To understand the reasons behind the son preference over daughter, in Pashtun families of Quetta.

RESEARCH QUESTSION

What are the main reasons that sons are preferred over daughters in Pashtun families of Quetta?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focal point of literature on son preference is to study the reasons why sons are preferred in society, what are its consequences in different regions and countries of the world. Such literatures are the significant element for the motivation and background of this study. The literature review will assist in knowing the research gaps of the area under discussion and needs for current subject. Many studies have discussed son preference acute in different counties of the world for instance in the study Raj (2014) Son preference especially in south Asian countries is highly valued. parents preference for children has great effect on fertility Rahman & DaVanzo (1993) finds that gender preference is related with high fertility in several Asian Countries. In Bangladesh fertility rate is relate with the use of contraception. he discover that gender preference is an obstacle for family planning in Bangladesh, if mother have only one daughter she again conceive for the chance of having son as well as the mother with no daughter taking chance for having at least one daughter these findings shows that there is also preference for daughters. So the desire for son is constant factor in both conditions but mother wants at least one daughter after having many sons. Clark (2000) discussed that the size of family is effected by the son preference in every society. Poor economic and small families crave to have more sons Hank (2007). Search many theories regarding to the gender preference in developing as well as in advanced countries and he discover that no theory give him satisfactory explanation for parental gender preference but it is in common view that parents desire at least one child either girl or boy. Murthi, Guio & Dreze (1995) talk about that there are two variables first is female and male literacy and other variable is socio-economic conditions (health amenities , urbanization and female employment etc). The previous factor helps to lessen intensity of fertility; female feticide and the socio-economic variables condense gender bias. The chance of female child survival is intensely low where poverty is on its high peak. The development and modernization show downbeat or weak impact on fertility and mortality levels. Arnold, Choe & Roy (1998) found that son preference has instance roots in India having the high girl child mortality in the world by national family health survey its examined that fertility behavior and girl child mortality is affected by family composition another study Barber (2000) discuss that childbearing is determined by preference of mother. The results of the

study shows that mother preference has a great influence on children even when they become parents and her socialization and social control guide them towards adulthood in different ways.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design of present study is explanatory as explanatory research find out the causes and reasons for occurrence of phenomenon and it is based on descriptive study. Via this study nature it allows the investigator to select the best methodology for conducting research and on that basis develop questions required for investigation.

Researcher selected Quetta city for her research. Researcher is interested to find out the impact of son preference in Pashtun families who are living in a bulk of numbers in Quetta. For Present study researcher selected qualitative method which for conducting research as this study is to find out the impact of giving preference to son on Pashtun mothers. Moreover in current study researcher observe the phenomenon by observation, in-depth interviews and FGDs.

SAMPLING

For sampling tool purposive sampling tool is selected for study as the population is unstructured and it's very difficult for the researcher to personally visit door to door to Pashtun families and collect personal data from Pashtun mothers so in that case Researcher personally visits government hospitals (Gynecology) wards to gather data. The element of sampling in this study is "Mothers", from whom the information regarding to the topic is gathered. The sample size of present study is 40 respondents, who all are mothers containing common characteristic of age from 15 to 45, residing in Quetta city. In present study only women (mothers) not males take under account for two reasons as there are many factors for not including males but researcher mention here only two particular reasons which researcher thinks, are more important than others: (1) giving birth is all concern with women and (2) mother suffer more for not having son or having more daughters than her husband in society, in her family specially in in-laws. This research is purely constructed on qualitative method, via one focus group comprising 10 respondents and 40 semi- structured interviews were taken in this research. In the present study two methods of data collection are applied one is semi-structured qualitative interviews and the second is FGDS.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research present traces out the themes which arose from the data of son preference and its impact on “Pashtun Mothers”. There were 2 FGDs comprising of 10 each and 20 interviews consisting of 57 Questions out of which following themes were traced out which include strong son preference, motives of son preference, impact on mother and family size.

STRONG SON PREFERENCE

Sons are preferred in every culture around the globe. Son preference or gender bias is not a matter for rich and nontraditional people but for scholar it is a matter of attention. Parents behaviors regarding to their children are under debate during previous 30 years, that fathers give more attention to their sons rather than daughter due to the reason that they are their old age support and become helping hand than daughters. Now economists also work on this and re-examine the fact that parental preference exist which affect family stability and structure. Most of the respondents asserted that sons are strongly preferred in Pashtun families for example respondent No.7 said that when she is interviewed *Sons are very important member of family it is like a light in the house without him family is empty. (Respondent # 7 age 30.* It can be seen from this statement of interview by respondent that this mother feels strong preference for son in her family. She feels that without son in family it is empty, she has no value for daughter. Even in our society the birth of daughter is kept silent it is not as celebrated as the birth of boy is celebrated in Pashtun families like fire short. As like when this question was raised during interviews with mother in FGDs one of them said that *Yes the news of baby boy make us joyous we feel very happy even if it is fourth or fifth baby boy news but the reaction is opposite towards daughter we become happy but not that much (FGD 1, respondent 5, age 22).* The stated words shows that mother feel pride to have son even if it is fifth or fourth time. Sons are the symbol of pride for family. Another respondent given the reply towards son preference she said. *In the globe every one desire for at least one son because by having it mother get strong value in family. Even after delivery of son I get confidence in myself and more respect than ever before in family (respondent # 8 age 24).* Another respondent stated that *When it is confirmed that this women is pregnant this news is kept secret until the birth of child. In*

our culture the news of girl baby is gone un-noticed but the birth of son is a great day for family because many sons shows the man power of that family and our tribal system also run by it. In our Pashtun culture sons get much value but it doesn't mean that our daughters are deprived. The one who bring the news of baby boy first is reward by cash. This represents that in Pashtun culture preference of son is very strong the one who pass the news called “zairay” means delivering the good news can get cash prize by family. joint family system is also one of the main source for son preference as it is noticed by interviews that most of respondents said that they live in joint family system in which their brother in laws have one or two more sons and if they had no son then they have strong desire to have at least one son. When it is asked that do you prefer son and if yes then mention why, one of the respondent said that *I prefer son because I have two daughters and my gitani has 3 sons (respondent # 15)* here Gitani means elder brother in laws wife. She desires for at least one son because she is feeling insecure for not having son. By giving important to sons or preferring them more than daughters ultimately affect the life of daughters as when it was asked one of the respondent answered that *yeah! Due to preferring son most of the time I neglect my daughter in most of the cases like if Amna my daughter ask me to check my homework, I neglect her because I'm engaged in give food to my son.* Most of the time daughters become deprived from mother's feeding because she again get pregnant for taking chance to have son Barber(2000) shows in his study that mothers stop giving breast feed to their elder baby girl because she takes chance to have son. Pashtun women are always in threaten condition if she has no son, as Islam Allow man for polygamy marriages, or she can confront with divorce case too but in the case of Pashtun family structure they are very rigid in this case they can do second marriage if they have no son because son is the status mark for them and they want it by all means. they strongly desire for son because their tribe, their family name is run by son during interview respondent # 10 confessed that *her husband's first wife had five daughters and his mother forced him for second marriage for having son so that his lineage can continue.* Short, Fengying, Siyuan, & Mingliang (2001). As suggests that son preference is feudal idea we blindly follow it and people only do gender preference for the reason that they saw their elderly people are doing so. Researcher also observed that we live in such society where discrimination against

daughter exists. In our society people give much importance to sons compared to our daughters, people do not give equal status and value to their daughters as they give to their sons. Especially Mothers do brain feeding of their daughters that you should give respect to you brother, even if he is younger brother of her and this represents the preference of son. Brother and sisters are equal for parents but parents make image for high status of brother for her sister, she has to obey her even though she is elder one. As one of participant said when asked about do you preferred son over daughter she replied *uh! yes I have two daughters and one son and I oblige my daughters to care and respect your little brother, now I am expecting again and if this time I give birth to son again (Insha Allah) his sisters should have to give love and respect to him too and he will too give respect to them because after all they are their elder sisters. Well sisters are elder or little they always give respect to their brothers and follow their instructions this is the norm of our society. Women are always Neath to men* (Respondent # 15 age 28). Another example of son preference from present study data is that when asked them that what they desire about their first child sex. In (FGD1respondent # 13, age 30) declared that: *if mother had previously daughters she definitely desire next child should be son or vice versa but it's true that 90% mothers desire for baby boy as first child. May be those who belong to elite class for them it is not a matter but for middle class they strongly desire for son because in future son become their earning hand.* As overhead statement declare that about most of the mothers desire son and expect son as their first child.

REASONS FOR SON PREFERENCE

In Pashtun culture sons are preferred, well son preference is a common wish of all people weather they belongs to any tribe, culture, society and community etc. there are many reasons for demanding sons which are common in all cultures and also present in Pashtun culture the intensity of some reasons in Pashtun culture are more strong than other culture Following are the main reasons which researcher discussed below point wise as it is earlier mentioned that this fact is present in every society of the globe and it is not something new to which researcher can explore in her study. Researcher gives explanation of this phenomenon and clarifies the intensity of such reasons that is exists in Pashtun culture, or not and at what kind of

intensity it exists and how son preference has an impact on Pashtun Mother.

SUPPORT IN OLD AGE

Mostly it is seen that sons are preferred over daughters because they support their parents in old age while daughters are considered as the property of her husbands, in our patriarchal society women are considered as weaker section who cannot supposed to take care of their parents in old time but her brother can do so and it is the foremost responsibility of son to support parents in their old period of life. Most of the respondents asserted that one of the main reasons for preferring son is that in our society sons are considered as a support for parents in old age. For instance (respondent # 3, age 27) said during interview that *In our culture sons have high value and position. We respect our elder brother most, because after father he has to hold the (gadi) place of father and all matters of family. Males especially sons are the important member in family. Without him family is incomplete.* It can be concluded from over cited data that for this mother son is much important. In other example respondent # 6, age 30 said *in family son must be present as he is the breadwinner who can take care of parents (walydain) in old age after all parents supported them in their young age now it is the duty of sons for the provision of parents in old age.* This claim of respondent shows that in Pashtun culture sons are preferred for this reason that they support their parents in old age and for this reason mothers are forced to give birth to son. Along with this reason most of the respondents indicate with it that not only old age support sons are demanded but in our patriarchal society deceased father rituals are also performed by only male or sons, daughters are not allowed to perform last rituals of her father. As (respondent # 8 and 11, age 20 and 29) mentioned when they were asked that why you prefer son over daughter then they said that *sons are not only needed for the support of parents but they also important for doing the last rites of the father which we cannot do so, because we are by Islamic way, not allowed to go in cemetery.* Above statement illustrate that sons are not only important for giving support to parents in old age but also do their deceased parent's rites which are equally important.

REVENGE (BADAL)

In Pashtun culture there is a code of conduct known as "BADAL" means to take revenge or pursue justice/fairness and for

taking revenge there is no time limit. Taking revenge is important aspect of Pashtun culture because if *badal* is not taken the wrongdoer thought to be has no self-respect and this become the matter of *Gairat* (*honor*) and this taking of revenge pass to generation to generations in this many people lost their lives and this bloodshed never stop until unless the *BADAL* was not occupied or faulty lob himself towards them for pity. A famous Pashtun personality, Khushal Khan Khattak, said that let the head, wealth and honor gone but never left your revenge because it relates to *gariat* which belongs to man's respect and honor (Aftab, 2013)

Another cause of liking or desiring son is to take revenge. Among tribal people there is always some kind of conflict exist. Pashtuns considered themselves as brave and warriors, and for that sake they desire for more sons. More sons mean more man power and for this other people have fear for them. Pashtun people are very humble, kind hearted and hospitable in nature but they can never leave there vengeance, they always pay back what they take from others. The respondent # 11, age 23) declared *that in our family sons are preferred over daughters because the more we have sons the more we have strength and other will hesitate to do battle with us, it's a matter of pride, honor and retribution for us*. This verdict clear that sons in Pashtun culture are important and shows the family strength so that other people hesitate to do any kind of misbehave with them. There is famous proverb that Pashtun never leave his revenge. As another respondent asserted (FGD1 respondent # 5 age 20) that *Pashtun people never leave their revenge, there conflicts goes to years, for which their father, sons and brother shed their blood. It is the demand of our culture to have more males. Even we do not in census shows our numbers of our males due to the fear of evil eye. We prefer more males in our culture*. Again above data presents that Pashtun desire for males so that other feel waver of people not be bad with them.

FAMILY STATUS AND LINEAGE

As stated above that majority of Pashtuns live in joint or extended type of family system, in their code of life one thing is very important that they give respect to their elders and obey their command if even they dislike doing so; there is a proverb for Pashtuns that *"under the feet of parents paradise lie"*. Taking any kind of decision in any matter elders are involve one of the reason is to get

blessings of them and securing themselves from their curses and huntress ultimately by this children's give honor and respect to their elders (Afridi, 2011). Pashtun family is patriarchal family where dominance is in the hands of elder male he may be grandfather, father, elder son or elder (paternal or maternal) uncle during interview when Question was raised that why mothers wish for sons and which sex they prefer to be their first child most of the mothers replied I want first child to be son and in its reason they replied that for continuing family name, and obvious they are social status mark for not only for family but also for mother (respondent # 18, age 20). *I am delivering first time and I wish it should be son so that he will become waris of my family but continue name of us.* this shows one of the main reason of preferring son by mothers that if she has first child is son so that family name will run obviously in future he can support his family and share the responsibilities of his father and also become earning source for family. Another example of son preference which presents family status is that when same question was put in front of mothers, one of them said that *this is the wish of Allah to give me son or not but we can pray for it and I desire to have son as my first baby as like other do, because it give me status in family that yes! I have son too people and will not say that oh only daughters, May Allah give you son too, well son is the prestige of family and give value to mother, to family and become earning source and yes run out the lineage as well, which I think daughters cannot do ,after marriage she became the part of others family, so son is responsible for overall things in family.* Again from the data reasons are emerged out that son is the mark of family status and bring out lineage. In Pashtun culture there is system of *Malik* means Waris which means that male like elder son who holds the responsibilities of elder male (father) after him or if father says that now I cannot hold the responsibilities in this case elder son become the Waris of family and property (FGD 2 respondent # 4). *Our culture is tribal base were only male has ownership and who run out all matters of tribe, for tribal conflict males are required. More males mean more authority and powers. Our culture likes more males (sons) over daughters.* This above sentence declare that Pashtun people wish for sons more than daughters due to having Waris in family and bring up status more sons shows more strength of family. More sons even mean free labor for family and most important sons can run family name. One of the respondent share her views during interview that *It is the*

demand of our society that in family male must be there, and to run family and its name son is needed. Again this statement emphasis that son is needed for running family name.

JOINT FAMILY STSTEM

Pashtuns lives in extended or joint family system, and in that system they have to obey the rules made by their elders. In such system competition also occur like in repent study data shows that one of the reasons for referencing son over daughter is joint family. One of respondent claimed that *in my family we live in joint family system where my little sister in-law (dawrani) has two daughters and one son, I am elder daughter in-law having one daughter now this is my family wish that this time I deliver son so that as like my little sister in law I have son too. This is the desire of my mother in-law and other family member, my husband is happy with my daughter.* We live in such society where comparison exists even for having son in family. In Pashtun family system there are many children in a family and all members of the family live together. Another respondent said *my family and husband force me to give birth to son this is my in laws expectation to deliver son. In family other brothers has sons so they same wish that by side.* Mothers some time feel inferior for not having son especially in joint family system. Like one respondent (# 19, age 31) asserted that *due to inferiority I do not appreciate to have daughter again.* Joint family system is one of the causes for preferring son over daughter.

FINDINGS

Present chapter deals with the findings/results which are drawn from interviews and FGDs and these results are related to present research questions based on study topic “*A study on son preference and its impact on mother in Pashtun families*”. Findings are those results which researcher bring outs from his study , same as here in the present study researcher finds out some basic facts about son preference which universal but researcher finds it in particularly in Pashtun families how son preference impact on mother. By these interviews different themes were appeared which defines the impact of son preference on Pashtun mothers. As stated earlier that for present study 40 interviews was conducted. In which 20 were based on in-depth interviews and 2 FGDs resides of 10 each. The first research

question deals with impact of son preference on mother, and following themes were emerged out from them are social and psychological pressure/impact on mother.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose or the task of Discussion section in research is to interpret the ideas or opinion of researcher, relate with other researcher views about related problem and make some recommendations for future inquiry. The present research asserts, Raj (2014) claims that Son preference especially in south Asian countries is highly valued and Parents' preference for children increases the rate of fertility, same thing is observed by researcher in present study that in Pashtun culture sons are more valued and prefer than daughter which ultimately increases the size of family and when the size of family enhance that means population grow, As on respondent shared her experience that she asserted that (respondent # 2, age 29). *I have three daughters and I intensely wish for son. For continuously giving birth to daughters my in-laws teased me and called me unfortunate, for this I give birth to two more daughters, in the chance that may be next baby will be boy which in due course increased my family size.* On the other hand Clark, (2000) discussed that the size of family is effected by the son preference in every society. Poor economic and small families crave to have more sons. This again shows that carving of sons increasing the volume of family. In Pashtun families 'it is observed that the intensity of carving for son is very strong due to different reasons which will be discussed earlier and will be discussed also in this section than Rahman & DaVanzo (1993) found that in many Asian countries fertility rate is high due to son preference. gender preference is a great barrier for family planning. As the son preference is strong in family formation in early or later stages, women also desire to have at least one daughter after having son or many sons So this example shows that few cases were that in which mother wish for daughters and for this reason the volume of family enhance. the size of family enhance when parents wish to have at least one son or daughter and in due cause unwanted baby sex takes birth and expending the ratio of family on of respondent said *I have three daughters and I intensely wish for son. For continuously giving birth to daughters my in-laws teased me and called me unfortunate, for this I give birth to two more daughters, in the chance that may be next*

baby will be a boy which in due course increased my family size. Sometime mother mistreated by in-laws for not giving birth to son. El-Gilany & Shady (2007) study discussed that main causes of son preference are psychological and social reasons, it reveals that son are more preferred by mothers whose husbands are uneducated as well as mother desire son who have only girls. This study reveals that education play vital role for demising this preference or discrimination against daughters; if parents are uneducated the ratio of desiring son is increased. Researcher observed that those respondents whose education level is below have intense desire for son. During interview the researcher saw a granny who was taking care of a granddaughter; it was the case of twins where the Pashtun mother left the daughter and owns the responsibility of her son, it again shows the preference of son among Pashtuns on the other side McCleary-Sills, McGonagle & Malhotra, A., (2012). Asserts that Gender preference is an important subject. Lots of girls are put to death as they are infants, newborn or fetuses and if survived they suffered inadequate nutrition, health care, early child marriage and lack of education. Religious practices are male dominated and cannot be performed by women which afflict women in India and such oppression of women in religion is regard as discrimination and inequality against women. And this is also observe red in Pashtuns families that religious rites are only performed by males, but girl child mortality is not found in them although the birth of daughter is un-noticed and un-welcomed by them but they do not take breathes of newly born girl, girls are the honor for them and the protection of her modesty and chesty is the responsibility of Pashtun male, her modest is belongs to Pashtun males honor (gariat). Yadava & Yadava (1999) finds that in terms of fertility the most essential component of son preference is the difference of class, caste, educational level and the status of women. It is also observed from present data that mother status is relates with sons, if have son she has values and position in family otherwise she is considered as misfortune for not giving birth to son. Mason (1987). Study outlines that the fertility is influenced by men in the third world. The status of women is related to the number of children's specially sons. Along with it there are many reasons for son preference in Pashtuns in which some are universal or common but few of them are only observed in Pashtuns like revenge as discussed before. One of respondent asserted that (FGD 2 respondent # 8). *In Our culture males (sons) are preferred*

over daughters because in Badal system our many innocent brothers are killed sometime this battle situation occur between tribes or sometimes with in family member and the cause may relate to women, personal honor or land. This is one of the reasons for preferring son over daughters in Pashtun culture.

CONCLUSION

Many people view that son preference is belongs to the past but present study reveals that it is not so old, such perception is still exist in our culture today. In such a modernized world daughters are still supposed to be burden on parents and did not get status in society as son have. From the collected data following conclusion has been drawn regarding to impact of son preference on mother in Pashtun families, in Pashtun families sons are valued, it is global fact that sons are valued over daughter and present finds also shows that sons are valued due to the reason that they run family name , secure inheritance, do deceased parents rites, are the status mark of family and specially for the mother. But on other hand due to this preference discrimination against daughter happens many times and the size of the family also enhances which effect the population of nation. When sons are treated over daughters it has adverse impact on mother and daughters firstly volume of population enhance , discrimination against daughter in health and education started as well as girl drop out also increase, they face early marriage due to which maternal deaths occur, they become victim of less self-esteem, confidence and domestic violence.

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