

# A Study to Identify Extent of Difference between Son and Daughter Preference, Gender Discrimination and its Socio Demographic Predictors among Currently Married Women of Reproductive Age Group in Selected Rural Community of West Bengal

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**Abstract:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to identify extent of difference between son and daughter preference, gender discrimination and its socio demographic predictors among currently married women of reproductive age group in selected rural community of West Bengal. The newly married couples were selected by multistage random sampling. Son and daughter preference and discrimination were identified by 'structured opinionaire'. The findings of the study showed that the son preference was present more than half of the eligible couples (60%). Very few couples had daughter preference. In case of gender discrimination, it was seen that among 60% of rural population had discriminating behaviour against daughter which was also an alarming sign for discrimination against daughter. There was a significant association between education, occupation of husband and family income with gender preference and gender discrimination in rural area at 0.05 level of significant. The study had implicated in the field of nursing practice, research, education and administration to take measures to reduce discrimination against daughter by reducing contributing factors and increase awareness about importance of girl child and facilities available for girl children.

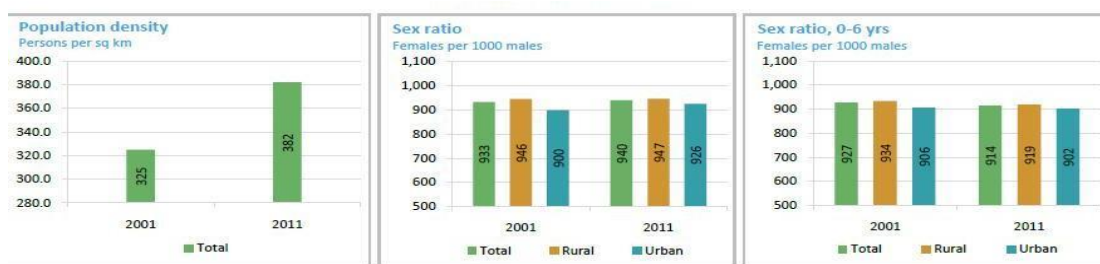
**Keywords:** Gender preference, Gender discrimination, socio demographic predictors, currently married women of reproductive age group

## 1. Introduction

Women continue to suffer from persistent inequalities in both poor and rich societies. In general, women carry most of the burden of caring for their children and domestic work. Both in rich and poor nations, women suffer various forms of institutionalized injustice and abuse. Many developing countries including India have displayed gender inequality in education, employment and health. There are vast differences

in education level of two sexes (According to the 2011 census literacy rate of rural men-78.57% and women- 58.75%)

With the availability of new technologies sufferings of female gender is extended from womb to tomb. Due to traditional preference for male child in India, it is not very surprising right from the first census in 1871; India has consistently shown an abnormal sex-ratio (940 women for every 1000 men according to census 2011).



**Figure 2:** Bar diagram shows the sex ratio of both urban and rural area according to the census of India

A steady decline in sex-ratio in recent years has been due to easy availability of ultra –sound machines.<sup>9,10</sup> About 70% of all abortions in Delhi is because the female fetus. Sex ratio is an important social indicator measuring status of equity between male and female prevailing in society.<sup>11</sup> As per Census 2001 prevailing sex ratio of India is 933, which still lags and lowest among the top 10 most populous countries of the world.<sup>11</sup> Desire for male child manifests so blatantly that parents have no botheration about repeated, closely spaced pregnancies, premature deaths and even terminating child

before it is born. In West Bengal adverse sex ratio and preference for male child are two indicators for gender discrimination. Data from Census 2001 depicts a decline in overall sex ratio from 934 (1991) to 920 (2001). This decline is more pronounced in children up to 6 years of age (45 points from 928 in 1991 to 883 in 2001) against the drop of 18 points (from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001) for entire nation.<sup>12</sup> Not only that it varies from 904 in rural areas and 891 in urban area. In West Bengal 932 in urban area and 951 in rural areas. From

this data it shows that there is also difference in sex ratio both urban and rural area.

Birth of a girl child is the cause of mothers crying. Not only that giving birth of a daughter is also a most common cause of domestic violence of her mother. A women's life is neglected throughout her growth and development physiologically and emotionally. Most of the girl children are not going to school after primary education. They do house hold work with mother and in the time of adolescence, marriage is the ultimate faith of their life. As a cause of that there is adolescence marriage and adolescence pregnancy. The cycle of deprivation is going on.

#### Objective:

- 1) To assess the preference of son and daughter among currently married women of reproductive age group of rural population.
- 2) To assess the gender discrimination among currently married women of reproductive age group of rural population.
- 3) To identify the factors associated with son and daughter preference and gender discrimination among currently married women of reproductive age group in rural area.
- 4) To find out the association between selected socio-demographic predictors, son and daughter preference and gender discrimination.

**Problem definition:** A descriptive study to identify extent of difference between son and daughter preference, gender discrimination and its socio demographic predictors among currently married women of reproductive age group in selected rural community of West Bengal.

## 2. Methodology

**Research approach:** Quantitative Research Approach

**Research design:** Descriptive research design

**Study Population:** It was a community based cross sectional descriptive study. Study population was currently married eligible couple in reproductive age group. The sample was selected by multistage random sampling method.

**Sample size and sampling procedure:** Probability sampling (cluster or multistage) technique was adopted to select the present study settings and random sampling technique was taken to select the subjects. Total 100 eligible couples were included in the study as a sample.

#### Data collection methods:

- 1) Total 100 eligible couples were interviewed by using structured opinionaire. For development of this tool reviewing of extensive research and non-research- based literature, peer group discussion, experts' guidance, establishing validity and reliability of the tool were done. The tool consisted with three parts 1. Part-I regarding demographic data.
- 2) Part II- Structured opinionaire contained 12 items on son and daughter preference
- 3) part -III Structured opinionaire contained 27 items on gender discrimination in terms of child rearing practice,

education, nutrition, friendship, home management, right of the individual.

- 4) Part IV: Structured interview schedule contained 5 items of multiple answers on socio demographic predictors of son and daughter preference and gender discrimination.

Rural area was selected by the multistage random sampling. After obtaining permission from concerning authorities separate eligible couple register was collected from each village- Baganbati subcenter of rural community. Sample was selected by random sampling (random table). The investigator visited door to door to collect data with the help of ASHA. The Eligible couples were informed before actual day of data collection. The data analysis was planned to include both descriptive & inferential statistics.

The eligible couple who were included in the study understand Bengali, within two year of marriage and willing to participate in the study. Couple who were mentally challenged, acutely ill were excluded from the study.

The demographic characteristics were computed in terms of frequency and percentage, bar diagram and pie diagram. Correlation & coefficient was used to determine the relationship of son and daughter preference, gender discrimination with selected demographic factors. Chi square was used to determine the association of gender preference & gender discrimination with selected factors (education of husband & wife, occupation of both couple, monthly family income)

#### Section I

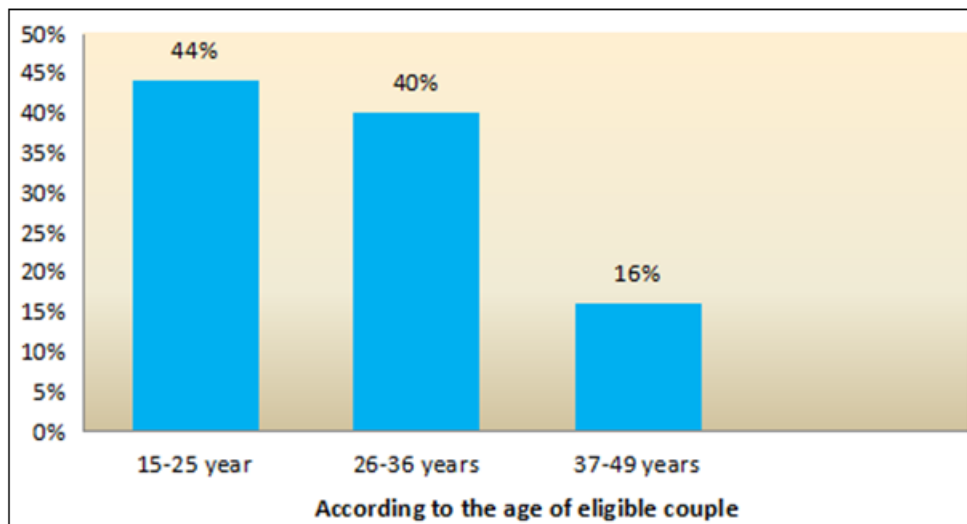
**Table 1:** Distribution of currently married women of reproductive age group according to the selected demographic variables, N=100

Demographic variables	Rural	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindu	56	56
Muslim	44	44
Christian	0	0
Others	0	0
<b>Caste</b>		
General	67	67
SC	18	18
ST	0	0
OBC	15	15
<b>Family type</b>		
Nuclear	45	45
joint	55	55

The data presented in table 1 depict that near about half of the women belongs to Hindu religion (56%) and other half are belongs to Muslim religion (44%).

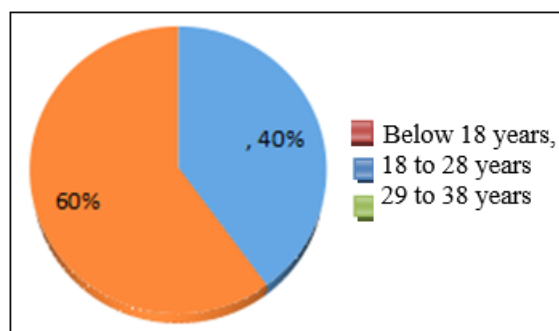
Majority of the women belongs to general cast (67%). In regards to 18% of women belongs to the schedule cast. Only 15 % of women belongs to other backwards cast.

Majority of the women belongs to joint family (55%) and less number of women belongs to nuclear family (45%).



**Figure 1:** Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of currently married women of reproductive age group according to the age, N=100

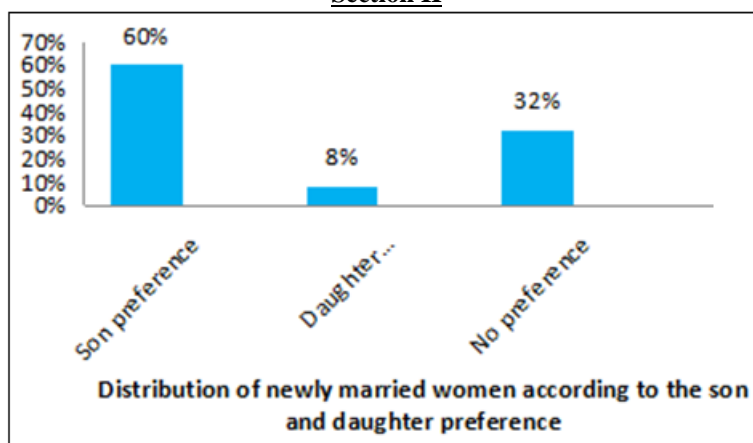
Data presented in figure 1, depict that majority of currently married women belongs to 15-25 years of age group (44%) and very less number of women (16%) belongs to 37-49 years of age group.



**Figure 2:** Pie diagram showing the percentage distribution of currently married women according to the age of marriage N=100

Data presented in figure 2, is most important to note that 60% of rural women married below 18 years of age

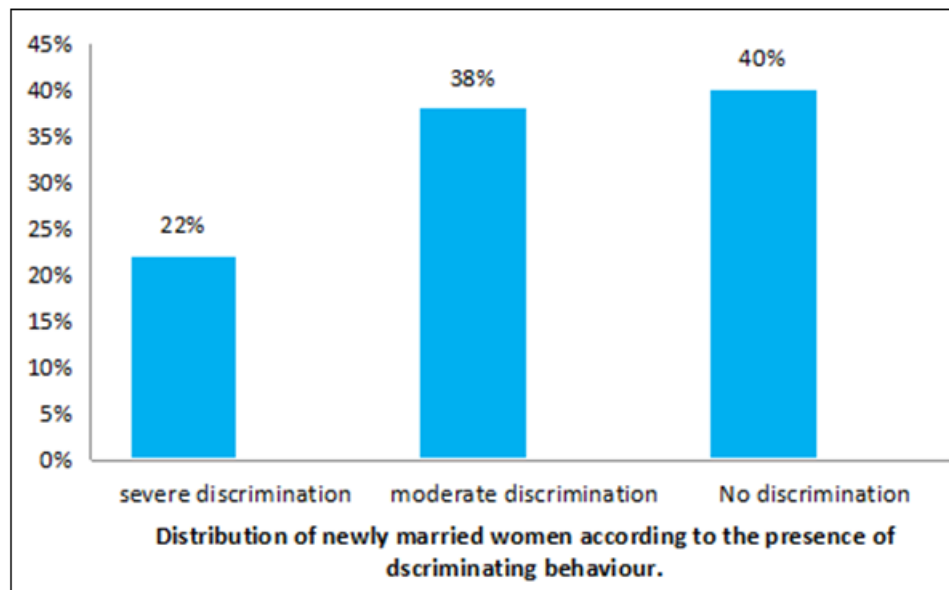
## Section II



**Figure 3:** Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of currently married women according to the presence of son and daughter preference, N=100

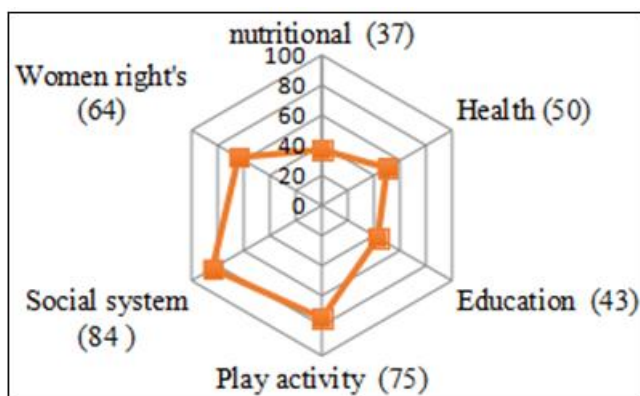
Data presented in figure 5, depict that majority of newly married women prefer son as a first child (60%). But it is reversed in case of daughter preference. That is only 8% of

women has daughter preference as a 1<sup>st</sup> child. No preference is seen among 32% of women.

**Section III**

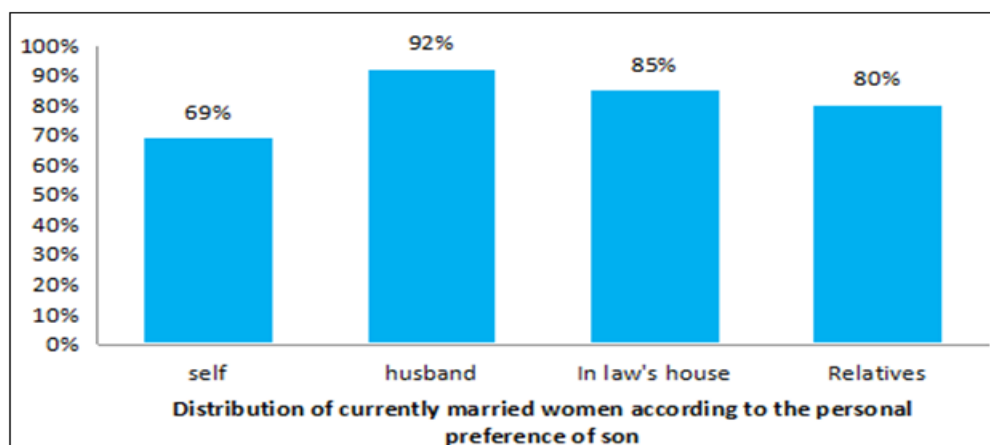
**Figure 4:** Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of newly married women according to the presence of Gender discrimination, N=100

Data presented in figure 6, show that 60% of rural eligible couples have gender discrimination where moderate level of discrimination is seen among 38% of eligible couple and less percentage of eligible couples seen severe level of discrimination (22%).



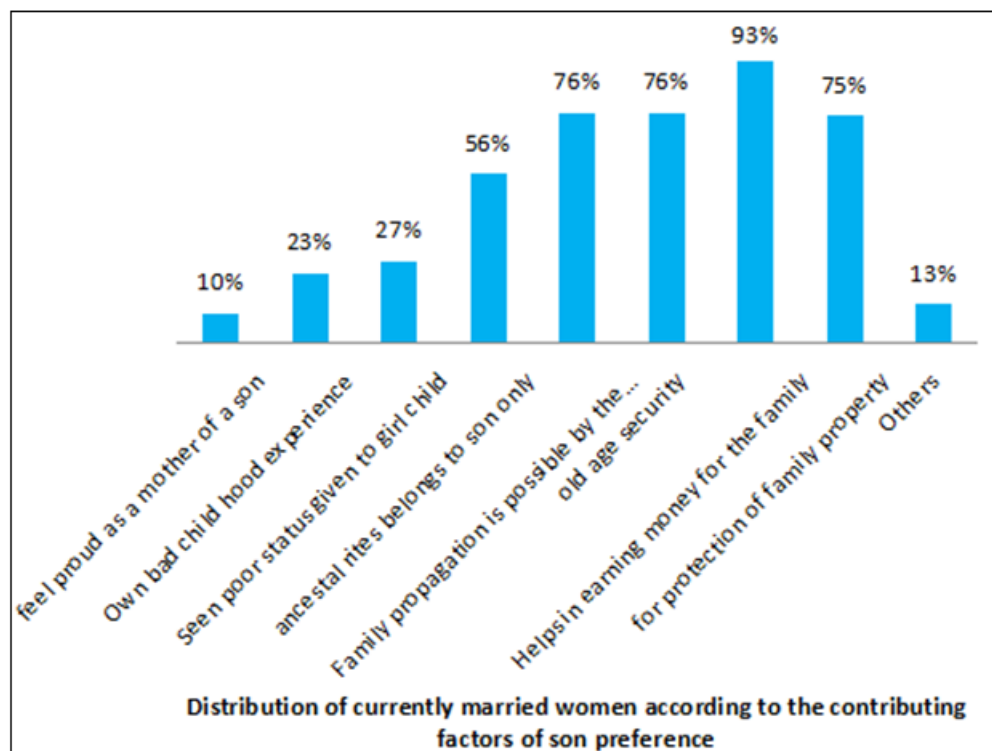
**Figure 5:** Rader diagram showing the frequency distribution of currently married women according to the areas of discriminating behaviour, N=100

Data presented in figure 7, show that most common areas of discrimination against daughter are seen related to the social systems (84). Discrimination related to the play activity (75) and women's right (64). Discrimination related to nutrition less among currently married women (37). It is also important that discriminating behaviour is shown in more than one area.

**Section IV****Contributing factors of gender preference & gender discrimination**

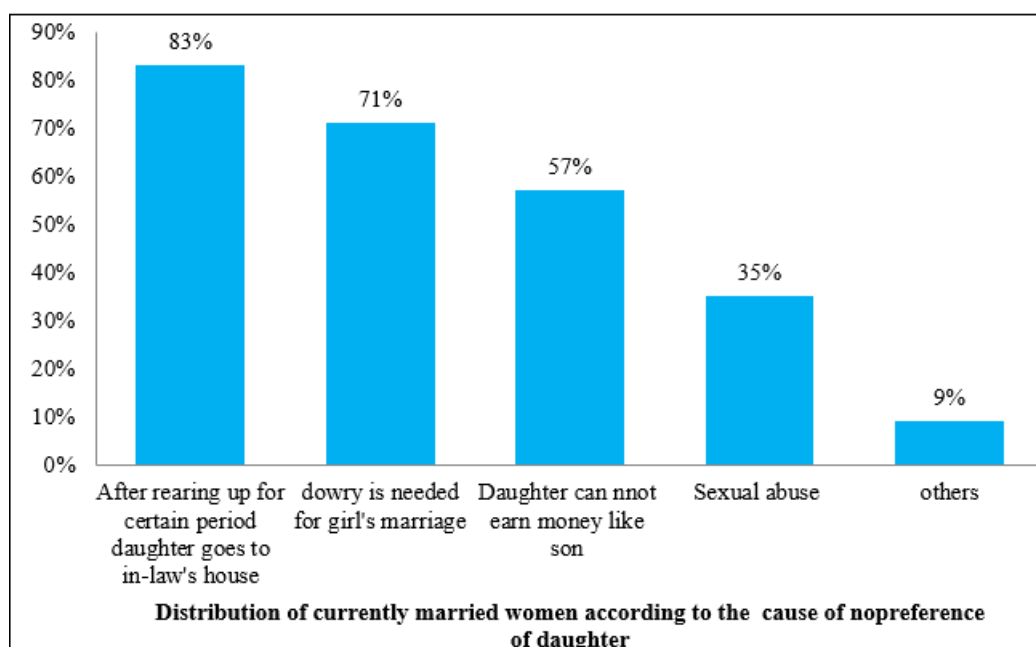
**Figure 6:** Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of currently married women according to the personal preference of son, N=100

Data presented in figure 8, depict that son preference was more among husband (92%). Among all preferences self- preference to son is less among currently married women (69%).



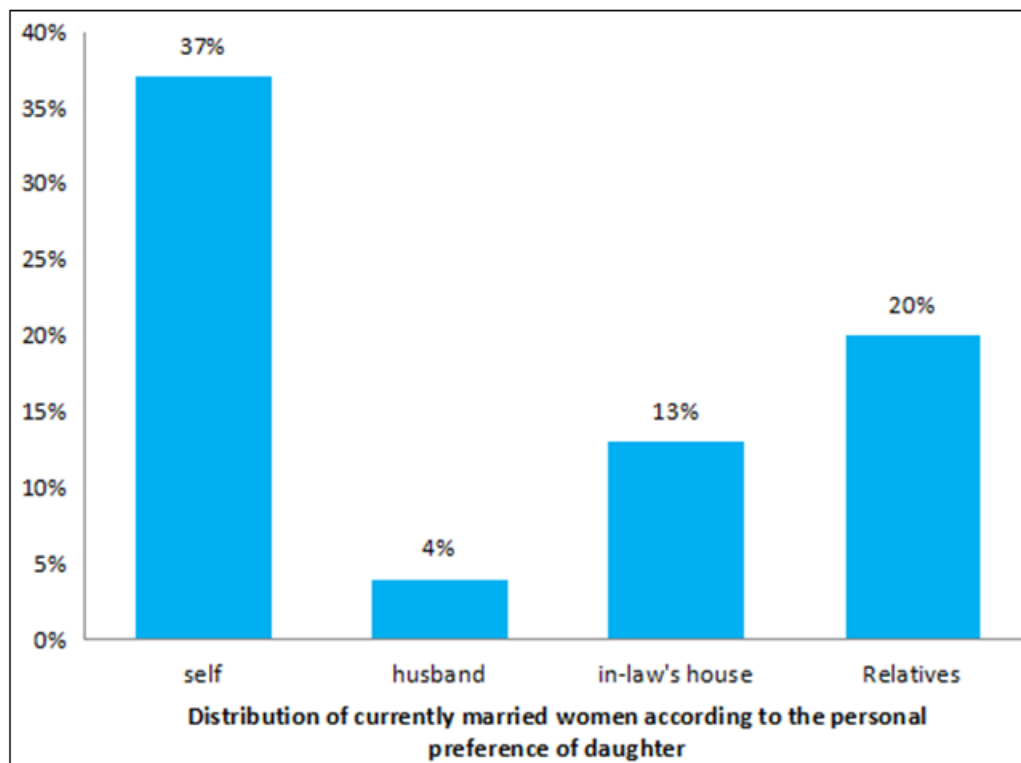
**Figure 7:** Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of currently married women according to the socio demographic factors of son preference N=100

Data presented in figure 9, depict that the most common reasons for son preference are helps in earning money for the family. That is 93%. Old age security is 76%, family propagation is possible by the son only 76%, ancestral rites belong to son only 56%, for protection of family property 75%



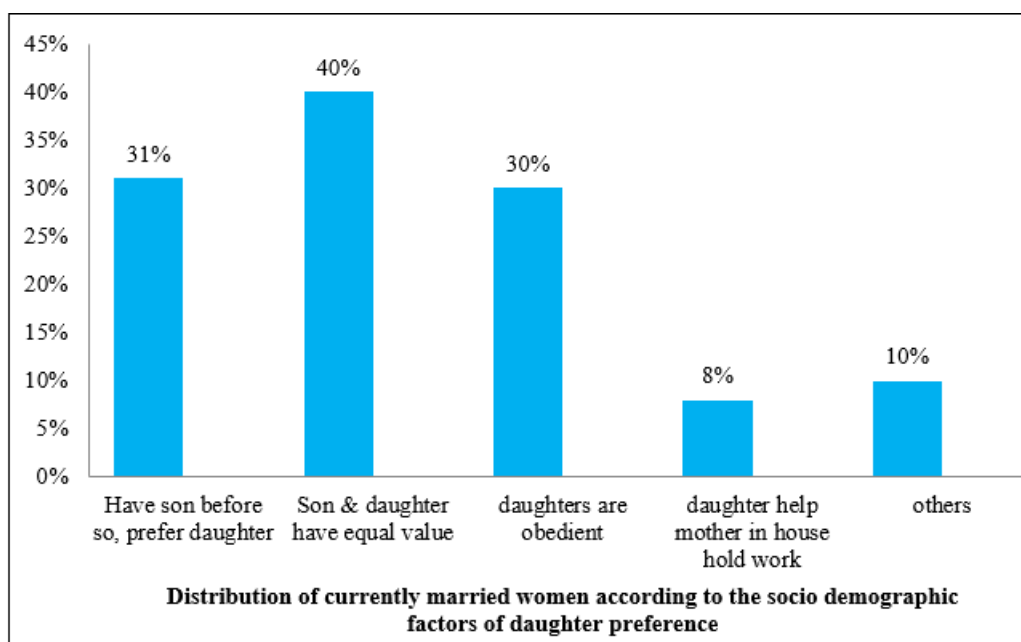
**Figure 8:** Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of currently married women according to the cause of no preference to daughter & daughter discrimination, N=100

Data presented in figure 10, depict that most common reasons for no preference to daughter are after rearing up for certain period daughter goes to in-law's house (83%) & dowry is needed for girl's marriage (71%). Less common cause for non-preference of daughter are daughter cannot earn money like son (57%), sexual abuse (35%) and others (9%).



**Figure 9:** Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of currently married women according to the personal preference of daughter, N=100

Data presented in figure 11, depict that most of the women self-prefer daughter (37%). Very small number of husband prefer daughter (4%).



**Figure 10:** Bar diagram showing the percentage distribution of currently married women according to the cause of daughter preference, N= 100

Data presented in figure 12, depict that most reasons for daughter preference are son & daughter have equal value (40%) & daughters are obedient (30%). Less number of reasons are daughter help's mother in house hold work (8%) & other (10%).



## Section V

**Table 2:** Association of gender preference with husband and wife's education in rural population, N=100

S. No.	Variables	Gender Preference			df	Chi-square
		Son	Other than Son	No		
1	<b>Education of husband</b>					
	Illiterate	20	5	2	2	26.92*
	Below secondary	12	5	12		
	At or above secondary	14	44	26		
2	<b>Education of wife</b>					
	Illiterate	20	6	1	2	20.38*
	Below secondary	14	11	4		
	At or above secondary	12	37	35		

Chi- square  $df(2)=5.99$ ,  $P<0.05$  Significant

The table 2 – consists of data related to the education of husband and education of wife.

Chi square is calculated among these demographic factors with preference of gender separately. It is seen that a statistical significant relationship between gender preference and education level of husband (26.92) and wife (20.38) at  $df$  2, 0.05 level

**Table 3:** Association of gender preference with selected demographic factors among currently married women of rural population, N=100

S. No.	Variables	Gender Preference			df	Chi-square
		Son	Daughter	No		
1	<b>Occupation of husband</b>					
	Service	3	6	4	2	30.59*
	Others	57	2	28		
2	<b>Occupation of wife</b>					
	Working women	8	2	5	2	0.76
	House wife	52	6	27		
3	<b>Family income</b>					
	Below 5000	23	1	9	2	9.27*
	At or above 5000	27	7	23		

Chi- square  $df(2)=5.99$ ,  $P<0.05$  Significant

The table 3 – consists of data related to the demographic factors of rural currently married women regarding occupation of husband, occupation of wife and family income. Chi square is calculated among these demographic factors with preference of gender separately. A statistical significant relationship is seen gender preference with occupation of husband (30.59 at  $df$  2) and family income (9.27 at  $df$  2) at 0.05 level. But gender preference is not affected by occupation of wife.

**Table 4:** Association of gender discrimination with selected demographic factors among currently married women of rural population, N=100

S. No.	Variables	Gender Description			df	Chi-square
		Severe	Moderate	No		
1	<b>Education of husband</b>					
	Illiterate	8	2	2	4	23.42*
	Below secondary	11	20	12		
	At or above secondary	3	16	26		
2	<b>Education of wife</b>					
	Illiterate	9	3	1	4	39.93*
	Below secondary	10	14	4		
	At or above secondary	3	21	35		

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3	<b>Occupation of husband</b>					
	Unskilled labour	12	19	10	4	31.77*
	Farmer	1	1	2		
	Others	9	18	28		
4	<b>Occupation of wife</b>					
	Working women	4	3	8	2	2.48
	House wife	18	35	32		
5	<b>Family income</b>					
	Below 5000	15	19	9	2	6.88*
	At or above 5000	7	19	31		

Chi- square  $df(2)=5.99$  and  $df(4)=9.49$ ,  $P<0.05$  Significant  
The table 4 – consists of data related to the demographic factors of rural newly married women regarding education of husband and wife, occupation of husband and wife and family income. A statistical significant association is seen gender discrimination with education of husband (23.42 at  $df$  4), education of wife (39.93 at  $df$  4), occupation of husband (31.77 at  $df$  4) and family income (6.88 at  $df$  2) at 0.05 level. But there is no significant association between gender discrimination and occupation of wife (2.48,  $df$  2)

### 3. Discussion

In present study it shows that son preference present among more than half of the currently married women (60%) which is associated with both husband and wife's education at 0.05 level of significant. Similar implication is reported by Mallika Chavada and A. Bhagyalaxmi<sup>21</sup> conducted a cross-sectional study among 385 married women in the reproductive age group.

In present study, discriminating behaviour against daughter regarding nutrition is seen near about half of the currently married women (37%). A study carried out by Dey I, Chaudhuri R.N<sup>20</sup>. also concluded 55.9%, 51.4% and 42.3% of the girls were underweight, stunted and wasted respectively compared to 46.6%, 40.5% and 35.3% of the boys. Our study also brings it to light that The major reasons for son preference are Helps in earning money for the family (93%), old age security (76%), Family propagation is possible by the son only (76%), for protection of family property (75%), ancestral rites belongs to son only (56%). Similar finding is seen in a study of Praveen M. D. <sup>22</sup> conducted a cross sectional study to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice regarding gender preference and female foeticide among pregnant women attending antenatal clinic of RIMS hospital Kadapa.

The study limitations are measures of the study taken only in the basis of quantity and only the behaviour pattern of eligible couple is observed but actual practice of gender discrimination towards daughter is not possible to see by researcher.

Though the Government is making tall claims regarding implementations of law and regulation for reducing female foeticide and women empowerment, but still the son preference and women discrimination is so strong that even educated women also prefer the son in rural area specially. Moreover, it is necessary to great efforts by women

empowerment and intensive information, education and communication campaigns.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study can be concluded on the basis of the study findings. Son preference and daughter discrimination were present among currently married eligible couple of rural area. The main contributing factors of son preference are helps in earning money for the family, old age security, family propagation is possible by the son only, ancestral rites belongs to son only, for protection of family property. The main cause of daughter preference was son & daughter have equal value & daughters are obedient. There is a significant association between educations, occupation of husband and family income with gender preference and gender discrimination in currently married eligible women of rural population at 0.05 level.

#### 5. Future Scope

- The study can be replicated in a large size.
- A study can be conducted as a qualitative method through focus group interview.
- A longitudinal study may be conducted on child rearing practice of girl children.
- A study can be conducted on quality of life of adolescence girls.
- A study may be conducted through direct observation method.
- Another study may be conducted retrospectively to identify contributing factors of gender discrimination.
- A study can be conducted by using various teaching strategies to aware importance of girl child in family as well as society.

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