

# Gender Preferences and Family Support of Postnatal mothers at Institute of Obstetrics and Gynecology in Chennai – A Mixed Method Study

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## Abstract

Postnatal mothers often experience a complex interplay of cultural expectations and family dynamics, particularly regarding gender preferences for their newborn. In many societies, the choice of a male child can influence the emotional and physical support mothers receive from family members. This research examines these gender biases and the varying levels of family support for mothers during the postpartum period.

**Title:** GENDER PREFERANCES AND FAMILY SUPPORT OF POSTNATALMOTHERSAT INSTITUTE OF OBSTETERICS AND GYNAECOLOGY IN CHENNAI” – A MIXED METHOD STUDY

**Aims:** this study aims is to explore the influence of gender preferences on family support dynamics among postnatal mothers in the postnatal ward. It seeks to understand how these preferences impact the emotional and practical support received during the postnatal period.

**Materials and Methods:** In present study, researcher adopted Mixed method design by quantitative 100 samples and qualitative 6 sample using non-probability purposive and convenient technique. The tools include Socio-Demographic Data and a semi-structured interview schedule, gender preferences-Coomb's scale, and family support scale.

**Results:** Quantitative findings revealed that among postnatal mothers, 50% preferred boys, 40% had balanced preferences and 10% preferred girls. Family support scores showed that 80% experienced moderate support, 20% high support, and none reported non-supportive environments. A weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.038$ ) indicated a negligible relationship between family support and gender preference scores. Education and family type significantly influenced both gender preference and family support levels, as determined by chi-square test analysis. Qualitative findings identified three themes: emotional responses to motherhood, family support mechanisms, and family dynamics. These insights demonstrate that sociodemographic factors, combined with emotional reflections, shape mothers' experiences,

illustrating the intricate interplay of family support, gender preferences, and personal emotions in motherhood.

**Conclusion:** This study highlights how gender preferences and family support shape postnatal mothers' experiences. Cultural biases, especially a preference for male children, influence the support mothers receive, affecting their well-being. The findings stress the need for culturally sensitive care and support systems to improve maternal outcomes, ensuring all mothers receive adequate support, regardless of the child's gender.

**Keywords:** Mixed analysis, Gender preferences, Family support, Postnatal mothers.

## INTRODUCTION:

The postpartum period is the period immediately after delivery. It is a very vulnerable period in terms of the new mother's psycho-social health. This vulnerability can impact the parenting of her child, leading to long-term consequences for the child. A family is the most fundamental unit in the human society. The household size and its composition are an important aspect of the family, and the society at large.

A balanced sex ratio plays a vital part in bringing out and maintaining a stable society. People in India exhibit a strong gender preference for male children and this discrimination or prejudice continues despite socio-economic development and higher growth rates. The preference for sons has been associated with preferential abortion of female fetuses and even female infanticide. This differential treatment given to the girls and the sex-selective illegal abortions has resulted in an estimated 30 to 70 million "missing" women in India.

Gender preferences are a well-known feature of human society. A couple's gender preference for children is usually influenced by their traditional background and cultural practices which have been handed over from generations. Wide differences in gender preferences exist in both developed as well as developing countries of the world.

An empirical review of standardized data from 17 European countries concerning their gender preference for children showed a strong tendency towards a mixed-sex composition. Interestingly, girl preference was seen in the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Portugal. All the countries in the review had similar socio-economic conditions and family policies. Individual studies from the UK and Turkey have also reported a strong preference for daughters.

In another review of data from 50 developing countries majority had a balanced gender preference i.e. a preference for an equal number of boys and girls. Latin America and the Caribbean (except Bolivia) along with several Southeast Asian countries showed a predominant daughter preference. Son preference was more prevalent in Southern Asia, Western Asia, and Northern Africa. Individual studies from Egypt, Nepal, and China have reported a strong preference for sons over daughters.

Postnatal mothers face a range of emotional, physical, and psychological changes, making family support critical during the postpartum period. The level and type of support provided can greatly influence maternal recovery, emotional well-being, and satisfaction with motherhood.

Exploring gender preferences and family support among postnatal mothers reveals how deeply cultural norms and familial expectations are embedded in maternal care. While some families may provide equal support regardless of a child's gender, others may unconsciously offer more assistance when the newborn is male, reinforcing long-standing societal biases. This imbalance can create stress for mothers and

influence their postpartum recovery and emotional health. By examining these complex relationships, this research seeks to uncover the role of gender preferences and family dynamics in shaping the well-being of postnatal mothers during a critical period in their lives.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS:

A Mixed Convergent parallel Design was used to assess the Gender Preferences and Family support among Postnatal Mothers conducted at the Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (IOG), Egmore, Chennai, over four weeks. The study Population comprised those whom the inclusion criteria, including Primi Normal vaginal delivery mother and Primi Mother who are willing to participate Mothers who are sick during the study period and Mothers who are under high risk were excluded. A Total of 100 Mothers were included in the study. Participant were selected using a Non-Probability Convenient and Purposive Sampling Technique to ensure feasibility and timely Data Collection. Tools used were Coomb's scale and family support scale and the ethical support principles were followed accordingly. The data was coded, tabulated and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

## Sample size calculation:

The sample size was calculated based on Archana M. et.al.

$$\text{The formula for Sample Calculation} = \frac{(Z)^2 X (1-p)}{(p) X (e)^2}$$

$$\begin{aligned} Z &= 1.96 = 95\% \text{ level} \\ P &= 49.00\% \\ e &= 20\% \\ \text{Sample size (N)} &= \frac{(1.96)^2 \times (1-0.49)}{0.49 \times (0.20)^2} \\ &= \frac{3.84(0.51)}{0.49 \times 0.04} \\ &= \frac{1.96}{0.0196} = 100 \text{ postnatal mothers} \end{aligned}$$

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

- Demographic variables in categorical/dichotomous were given in frequencies with their percentages.
- Gender preferences and family support scores among postnatal mothers were given in mean and standard deviation.

**The association between Gender preferences and family support score among postnatal mothers with demographic variables was analyzed using the Chi-square test**

- Multiple bar diagrams and simple bars were used to represent the data. A p-value of  $\leq 0.05$  was considered statistically significant, and two-tailed tests were used for testing significance.
- Statistical analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 22).

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee, Madras Medical College (IEC-MMCA) approval and permission was granted by the Director of IOG, Chennai. Informed consent was

obtained from all participants and the Rights and Confidentiality of Participants were safeguarded.

### **RESULTS: DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF THE POSTNATAL MOTHERS**

- 30% of mothers are in the 30-35 years age group.
- 30% have achieved graduate education.
- 40% are homemakers.
- 30% fall into the 10,001 - 20,000 rupees income bracket.
- 50% identify as Hindu.
- 50% live in nuclear families.
- 40% reside in rural areas.
- 80% are in non-consanguineous marriages.
- 40% have a non-vegetarian diet.
- 40% have one child. 50% belong to families with 4-6 members.

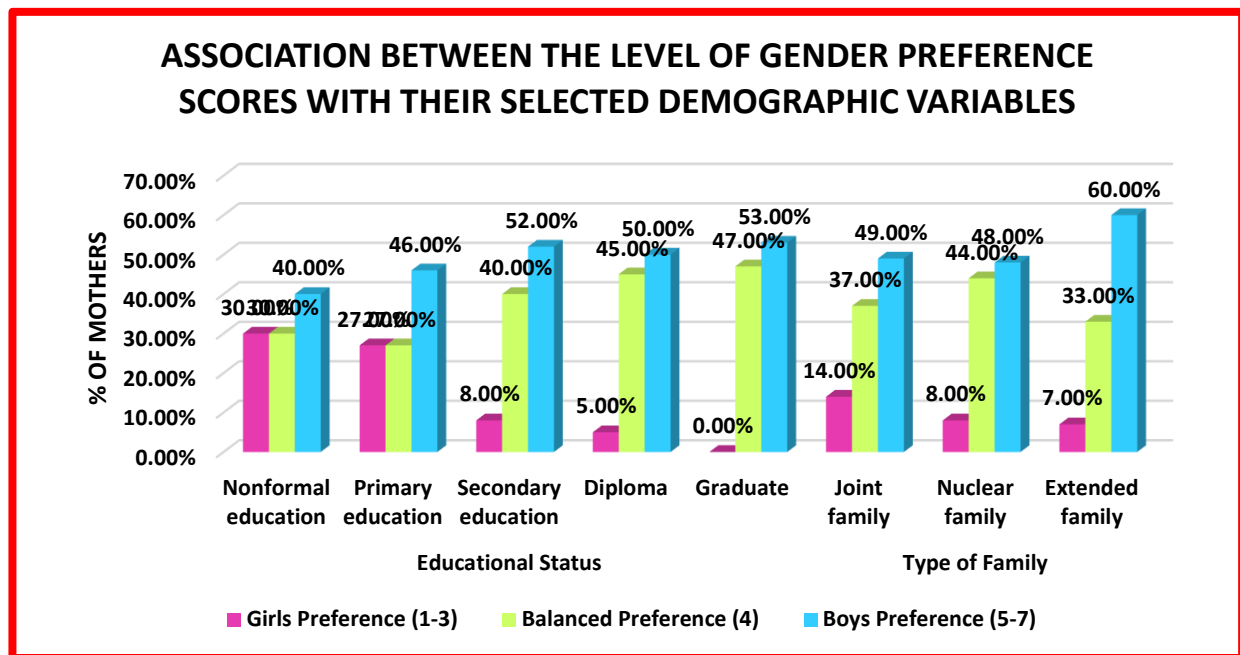
### **LEVEL OF GENDER PREFERENCES AND FAMILY SUPPORT AMONG POSTNATAL MOTHERS**

#### **LEVEL OF GENDER PREFERENCES SCORE**

<b>SCORE</b>	<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>01-03</b>	Girls Preference	10	10.00%
<b>4</b>	Balanced Preference	40	40.00%
<b>05-07</b>	Boys Preference	50	50.00%

#### **LEVEL OF FAMILY SUPPORT SCORE**

<b>SCORING</b>	<b>INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
8-10	Highly Supportive	20	20.00%
4-7	Moderately supportive	80	80.00%
0	Non-supportive	0	0.00%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>



## NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF GENDER PREFERENCES AND FAMILY SUPPORT AMONG POSTNATAL MOTHERS

### Theme 1: Emotional Responses to Motherhood

#### **Subtheme 1.1: Happiness and Joy**

Many postnatal mothers experience profound joy and happiness upon the arrival of their child. This sense of joy is often intertwined with a deep emotional connection, where mothers find fulfillment and purpose in their new roles.

#### **Subtheme 1.2: Personal Reflection**

This subtheme captures the introspective feelings many mothers have as they navigate their new roles. Reflections on identity, self-worth, and the challenges faced in motherhood often arise, highlighting that while motherhood is fulfilling, it can also bring about feelings of inadequacy.

### Theme 2: Family Support Mechanisms

#### **Subtheme 2.1: Reaction to Expressed Troubles**

This subtheme explores how family members respond when mothers share their struggles. The variations in support can greatly affect the emotional well-being of mothers, highlighting the complexities within familial relationships.

#### **Subtheme 2.2: Practical Support**

This subtheme highlights the practical assistance provided by families, which is essential for easing the burdens faced by new mothers. Such support encompasses a range of tasks, from childcare to emotional encouragement.

### Theme 3: Family Dynamics and Interactions

#### **Subtheme 3.1: Quality Time Together**

This subtheme reflects the importance of shared moments and quality time spent with family. Engaging in activities together fosters emotional connections, reinforcing family bonds and providing mothers with a sense of support.

## **DISCUSSION**

The present study Explored Gender Preferences and family support of Postnatal Mothers while Association with Socio Demographic Characteristics.

## **FINDINGS BASED ON LEVEL OF GENDER PREFERENCES AND FAMILY SUPPORT AMONG POSTNATAL MOTHERS**

### **Gender Preferences:**

- The level of gender preferences among postnatal mothers. In general, 50% of them had Boy preferences, 40% of them had balanced preferences, and 10.00% of them had girl preferences.

### **Family support:**

- The level of Family support score among 100 postnatal mothers. In general, 80% of them had moderate family support, 20% of them had high family support, and none of them had non-supportive.

## **FINDINGS BASED ON THE ASSOCIATION OF GENDER PREFERENCES AND FAMILY SUPPORT AMONG POSTNATAL MOTHERS WITH THEIR SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES.**

The association between the level of gender preference score and levels of family support among postnatal mothers' sociodemographic variables. The Education and type of family of the variables had more significance with Gender preference scores and family support scores than others. Statistical significance was analyzed using the chi-square test.

## **IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The findings underscore the vital concern in the field of Nursing practice, Nursing Administration, Nursing Education and Nursing Research. Conduct longitudinal studies to observe the long-term effects of interventions on patient outcomes, enabling a deeper understanding of trends over time. Utilize a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive view of patient experiences and care effectiveness.

This study provides valuable insights into the family support experienced by postnatal mothers. The quantitative findings indicate a notable preference for boys among mothers, coupled with a high level of moderate family support. The weak positive correlation between gender preferences and family support suggests that these two constructs may function independently. However, sociodemographic variables, particularly education and family type, play a significant role in shaping both gender preferences and the level of support received, highlighting the complex interplay of various factors in maternal experiences. Qualitative insights further enrich the understanding of mothers' emotional landscapes as they navigate the challenges of motherhood. Participants expressed a range of feelings, from joy and fulfillment to concerns about identity and the adequacy of familial support.

### **Conflict of Interest-None**

### **Source of funding-Self Funding**

**Authors Contribution:**

**SSJ**-Study design and Data Collection, **SSR**-Study Design, Concepts, Data Collection, **SSJ** and **SSR**-All Authors Contributed to writing the manuscript, thoroughly reviewed and verified all aspects and approved the final version

**SSJ**-Sharmila Samson jayaprakash, **SSR**-Shankar shanmugam Rajendran.

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