

‘SON PREFERENCE’ IN A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the issue of sex selection from a social point of view. It focuses on explaining the situation in the context of gender issue. Sex selection is the termination of a pregnancy based on the sex of the fetus. Lately, this issue is becoming of increasing concern in China, India, Pakistan, and in Albania.

This paper reviews the latest literature concerning sex-selection and the databases of major organizations dealing with female fetus abortion. Social literature is used to analyze theoretical perspective in terms of the women's perceptions after experiencing sex-selection. From the findings resulted that a woman can experience a range of often contradictory emotions after having a sex-selective abortion. The results show that social stigma has an impact on the lives of women. Another finding shows that as they are forced to abortion, they experience distress and feeling of guilt. It is necessary to gain more understanding into this issue and more research is needed on this point of view.

Keywords: Son preference, sex selection, stigma, gender discrimination

Sex selection due to son preference

Sex-selective abortion is an issue that is related to abortion rights, severe gender discrimination, and maternal healthcare. This issue occurs mostly in Asia, including India and China, which have the highest level of excess female child mortality, declining fertility rates, and strong son preference. To gain more understanding regarding this phenomenon, this paper will explore the issue first by explaining the situation in a global context, and then going further with the analysis of the policy implementation, and related factors that underlie the slow progress in reducing sex-selective abortion in the countries mostly affected.

Most abortions are caused because the pregnancy is unplanned and having a child causes a crisis for the woman. Sex-selective abortion is the practice of terminating a pregnancy based upon the predicted sex of the baby. The selective abortion of female fetus is most common in areas where cultural norms value male children over female children, especially in parts of the People's Republic of China, India, Pakistan, and the Caucasus. Sex selective abortion can affect the human sex ratio- the relative number of males to females. The preference for male children is part of the general inequality of women in some cultures. This is largely economic and due to a several reasons.

Despite comprehensive official prohibitions, sex-selective abortion has been widely practiced in China over the past two or three decades. This has directly resulted in a severe imbalance in the sex ratio at birth (SRB), which constitutes the most significant contributor to the phenomenon referred to as 'missing girls', 'female deficit' or 'shortage of girls'. Numerous challenging demographic, sociological, ethical and public policy questions have arisen from the use of sex-selective abortion. Sex-selective abortion is not specific to Asia. Christophe Guilmoto and Geraldine Duthé explain why European countries in the Western Balkans and

Southern Caucasus are affected too. Although the problem was described for the first time more than ten years ago, it is only now that the authorities in these countries and in Europe are starting to show concern. This is especially the case in the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) where it has sometimes exceeded to 115 boys per 100 girls (a normal sex ratio is 105), and to a lesser extent in the Western Balkans, around Albania, where it fluctuates around 110 (C. Guilmoto, 2013). The persistence of traditional patriarchal values is central to the son preference observed in these regions, but the fertility decline and the development of modern health care services under the new political and economic regimes have raised demand for prenatal sex selection. The sex ratio at birth is usually expressed as the number of boys born alive per 100 girls born alive (OECD, 2010).

A distorted SRB is not a new problem in China. According to the available historical data, China's SRB has been persistently much higher than normal (Jing-Bao Nie, 2011). It used to be widely held and is still assumed by many Chinese that son preference is a serious problem mainly in countryside where people are less educated, not in cities where living standard and education level are much better. However, the sex-selection is such a complex concern for several countries and Albania including, that makes it urgent for further researches to take place into this issue and that is the significance of this research as well.

Methodology

This article is oriented at examining the impact of sex-selection phenomenon in other countries and in particular an analysis will be made over the situation in Albania. Furthermore, this paper develops the issue in the context of literature review. In this regard, it will explore the sex selection impact in terms of both factors and results of it. The research question is related to the overall context of sex selection and son preference in our country and will compare it with with the Eastern countries.

During the selection of academic articles for this paper, we've taken care to choose peer reviewed journal articles that relay on theoretical constructions and/or utilize or engage in primary research that is conducted across various countries. Taken together, the articles reviewed and analyzed for the purpose of this paper, expose a critical feminist ideology and reflect interdisciplinary perspectives.

Meanwhile, this paper is unable to depict a multidimensional/integrated approach; it attempts to describe the phenomenon of sex-selection by focusing on the problem and its impact. This examination is not comprehensive, as it cannot possibly examine the implications of context specific socio-cultural variables i.e. in diverse regions, since there are no official data in Albania about this issue. It is significant that the paper's focus is the analysis of social relations and its alignment with the theoretical framework. The paper acknowledges the importance of an integrated approach that encompasses an investigation of social and institutional systems, as they mutually reinforce each other and inform expressions of son preference, (that furthers the objective of devising an integrated discourse) by engaging with several dynamics of sex-selection in Albania.

In terms of the organization of the article, at the beginning the paper draws on diverse frameworks to conceptualize the practice of sex-selective abortion. The first section of the paper details the widespread of the problem in different countries and highlights the Albanian context by analyzing the historical aspect until nowadays. The second section includes theoretical point of views, debates from different sociological viewpoints, from East countries' attitudes to West countries about this subject. And at the end of the paper there are presented the findings and conclusions.

The abovementioned analysis prescribes the model of particular expressions in patriarchal cultural norms and son preference in several countries, including Albania. More

importantly, it exercises an insular focus that does consider the contemporary characteristics of the issue. Thus, this article attempts to explain, beyond the dominant academic discourse, the son preference phenomenon.

In terms of clarifying some terms, utilized throughout the paper, it is important to note that both terms, sex-selective abortion and sex-selection, are used interchangeably and refer to the selective abortion of female fetuses. Overall, the current paper aims to present the social aspects of the problem, the role of the governments and non governmental institutions in informing the society, in order to make the problem better understood and to decrease its impact toward the community.

The significance of sex selection - son preference

Prenatal sex-selection against females (PNSSaF) has led to more than 100 million missing girls, mainly in Asia. Documented evidence in India (e.g. Das Gupta and Bhat, 1997) and China (e.g. Zeng et al. 1993), and more recent research in Vietnam (Guilmoto et al., 2009) and the Caucasus, (Mesle et al., 2007) reveal that PNSSaF is geographically more widespread than before (UNFPA, 2012). In recent years, research on the sex-ratio at birth (SRB) has provided accumulated evidence of PNSSaF among Asian Diasporas in Western Countries: in the UK (Dubuc and Coleman, 2007, Dubuc, 2009); in the USA and Canada (e.g. Abreyvaya, 2009; Almond and Edlund, 2008, Almond et al. 2009) and, since 2010, in other European countries (Greece, and possibly Norway, Italy). PNSSaF appears to add, or to some extent, substitute other forms of gender discrimination, including girl neglect, abandonment, and infanticide (Das Gupta, M. Bhat, 1997). Prenatal sex-selection against females (PNSSaF) is seen as a mean to increase the chance of having a son, especially when controlling for family size.

In traditional patriarchal societies, such as India and China, a son is viewed as paramount to fulfill exclusively male family roles, including patrilineal inheritance practices, and to provide economic support and care (through his wife) to parents in old age – whereas a daughter is viewed as an economic burden for her parents (e.g. Agarwal, 1994; Bossen, 2005, Dubuc, 2009). Bearing a son is the primary role of the young wife and a way to raise her status in her husband's family household (e.g. Das Gupta et al., 2003; Unnithan-Kumar, 2009). Women often resort to PNSS to escape abuse and multiple pregnancies, and to avoid having unwanted girls who are then at risk of being neglected (Goodkind, 1996; Dickens et al., 2005). This strategy to improve their well-being and potentially that of their (wanted) children (Unnithan-Kumar, 2009) is, however, seen as a route to perpetuating female discrimination and the devaluation of girls (Das Gupta et al., 2003).

To summarize, sex selective abortion occurs due to several reasons: in some societies the family continuity depends on the son; girls cannot hold property in some societies, so a male child is essential for a family to retain its wealth; girls are seen as transitory members of a family - they marry and leave home; the family may have to produce a dowry when a girl child marries (this could be regarded as a back door way of a woman getting to inherit some of the family wealth); boys bring in a dowry when they marry, adding to the family's wealth; a wife's status (and thus her economic security) is not consolidated until she produces a son; the trend in small families is that parents don't want to have several girl children before having a son. These factors underline the complexity of the ethical implications of PNSS, as well as the political challenges to it (Dubuc, 2012).

Literature review - Theoretical framework

Many studies have examined sex-selection based on a dual theoretical framework, i.e. social learning and self-determination theory. Social learning theory emphasizes two different methods of learning: learning through the consequences of response and learning through modeling (Flor, 1998). This theory asserts that "social learning is accomplished through observation and modeling of behavior" (Flor, 1998, p. 9). The component of self-motivation to change behavior is a key difference between social learning theory and other behavioral theories.

It is important to note, however, that social learning theory shows only the outside of ideologies and not the inside. Many values and behavioral regulations are neither spontaneous nor pleasant. Nonetheless, the acquisition of such behaviors is necessary for the socialization and integration of the individual in his community" (as cited in Simoneau & Bergeron, 2002, p. 1223). According to the self-determination theory, this occurs through the "process of internalization": Progressively, individuals learn to enact behaviors with contingencies more and more distal, and eventually removed. They then understand the importance of expressing a behavior in order to get the desired result. Finally, this identification with the results is integrated into the structure of the self. At that moment, social values are accepted as personal values. (Simoneau & Bergeron, 2002, p. 1223).

Self-determination theory divides motivations into categories along a continuum, ranging from extrinsic motivations to intrinsic (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Gagne & Forest, 2008; Roth, Assor, 2006). Extrinsic motivation "refers to doing an activity solely to obtain rewards or to avoid punishments" (Gagne & Forest, 2008). Based on this, possible extrinsic motivations for sex-selective abortion could involve a sense of obligation toward one's family or spouse to produce a male heir or a fear of punishment for producing a female child (Ryan & Connell, 1989). Examples of motivations that would fall under this category include: "*My husband wants to have a son; I will be treated badly in my family if I do not have a son; It is expected in my culture to have a son...*"

Just as social learning theory has been applied across cultures, self-determination theory has proven valid in diverse social settings. Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, and Kaplan's (2006) study of motivation's effect on academic performance among Eastern children, stresses the theory's applicability across cultures. All the studies involving self-determination theory examine the type of motivation on individual experiences, when conforming to an expected behavior in his or her social circle. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that one could apply self-determination theory to measure motivation for any behavior that is approved within a culture-regardless of how that behavior is viewed by the outside world. Sex-selective abortion would be an example of such a behavior. While it is not carried out in all societies, the practice is commonly accepted in large portions of the world.

In many studies, ethnicity has been shown to be a contributing factor in how social learning influences people. Houts and Kassab (1997) found that there is a relationship between social learning and fear of crime. As indicated in several previously-mentioned studies, culture and ethnicity play an important role in both social learning and the influence on behavioral motivation (O'Connor, Hoge, & Alexander, 2002). As such, populations whose traditions and norms differ significantly from those of previously-studied groups, leave room for future studies with potentially divergent results.

Additionally, religion has been identified as a factor in studies involving social learning. Lottes and Kuriloff's (1992) examined multiple demographic variables in relation to socially-learned sex-role ideologies. Of those variables, religion was identified as one of the most salient factors (O'Connor & Hoge, 2002).

Finally, this research integrates social learning theory and self-determination theory as a mean to explore both how individuals adopt the practice of sex-selective abortion and why they choose to engage in such behavior. Flor's (1998) dissertation combined these two theories to explain the transmission of religious behavior from parents to children.

However, little is known about individuals' motivation for performing acts that the larger society might consider unpleasant or objectionable- such as sex-selective abortion. More research is needed to determine the relationship between motivation and engagement in taboo behaviors.

To conclude the theoretical analysis of the sex-selective abortion, this paper essentially attempts to explore possible reasons for the pervasiveness of sex-selective abortion in the international perspective. The majority of the literature has shown that in the case of sex-selection there are complex reasons (Stone, 2011) that allow the accusation of the delegate responsibility complex system as a whole, in other words, it established that if the cause is in accordance with the public values, it becomes compelling and could be accepted, otherwise, it is not. The abovementioned practices explain this in correlation with cultural issues that show women's inferior position in the respective societies.

Albanian reality of the son preference

For better understanding of the problem of sex selection in our country, the analysis needs to begin from the period of the Communist regime till the recent years. In this context, it will focus on two periods: the period of communism during 1950-1990, and the period of socio-economic transition, from 1990 and onwards. At the time of the communist regime, Albania was a patriarchal and patrilineal society, ruled by feudal laws and traditions, where male superiority was expressed in every aspect of life (UNFPA, 2012). All civil and property rights belonged to men. Most marriages were arranged; women had no right to divorce, while a man could easily separate from his wife. An acceptable reason for divorce, for example, was the inability of the woman to bear a male child. In short, women and girls in Albania enjoyed almost none of the fundamental human rights.

The superiority of men over women was reflected in the strong preference for male children. This preference was rooted in the patrilineal nature of family relationships. Male offspring stayed in their parents' home long after childhood and often cohabited after their marriage in an extended family. The girl, however, left the home of birth after marriage, thus becoming part of the family of her husband. The contribution of the girl into her family of origin was brief. The status of women was particularly low in northern Albania, where the entire social and economic structure was governed by the Canon of Lek Dukagjini, a traditional set of unwritten, patriarchal-based laws, deriving from the Middle Ages. These laws bestowed upon men unquestioned authority over women. They furthermore gave the leading male of the family the authority over life and death. While the Canon was respected mainly in the mountains of northern Albania, patriarchal family was based everywhere, due to the traditional religious practice (Priest, 1978).

However, while the communist regime had some success in the "path of the emancipation of the Albanian women", in terms of labor force participation and education, secretly, the family life in Albania remained patriarchal in a large scale (UNFPA, 2012). Moreover, despite the general equality of economic activity, women remained subordinate and constituted a disproportionate percentage of workers in jobs with low pay and status, such as agriculture, trade, and social sectors of education and health. Women also remained underrepresented in the political mechanism; in 1967 they accounted for only 12 percent of party members. In other words, it seems reasonable to consider that the communist state transformed their position in ways that are related with the impact on fertility.

Fertility, with a high value of 7 children per woman in 1960, dropped to 3 children per woman in 1990, and 1.6 children per woman in 2010. Improvements in mortality values developed at the same dramatic rhythm and pattern. Life expectancy at birth improved from 51.6 years in 1950 to 70.6 years in 1990, for both sexes, and continued improving during the transition period to 76.3 years in 2005 (UNFPA, 2012).

The fall of communism caused some changes and transformations in society that would affect not only the role of women in society, but also in the family. Firstly, the collapse of communism brought two significant changes: a) in the economy, the destruction of industry caused high unemployment. Women were the first to be affected, and the high rate of unemployment among them is present even to this day. Thus, the average of unemployment rate for women is 50 percent higher than that of men, and has been constant since 1998 until nowadays (INSTAT, 2007). Overall, this reduces women's decision-making power in the family, and the society marks a regress into the past, when "the husband had to provide the bread in the family". b) More importantly, the fall of communism was accompanied by a "return" to traditional norms and values.

However, in the recent years, as a result of the economic and political stabilization, there are some positive signs. First, strengthening the rule of law has dramatically affected the implementation of the Canon. An increase in the number of girls in the school system, especially in secondary and higher education, has caused girls' numbers to surpass that of boys. It remains to be seen if this will be reflected equally in the labor market in this generation. However, gender imbalances already became a new indicator of gender inequality in Albania.

The period after the fall of communism was characterized by the adoption of many new laws and policies to regulate the transition to a more market-oriented society. In this context, one of the first changes in governmental legislation in 1991 was the legalization of abortion, which created the conditions for a rapid growth in the number of abortions, from near zero to about 200 thousand abortions in 2002. Law has undergone a number of changes and in 1995 there was drafted a more comprehensive legislation (MoH, 1995). By law, abortion can be performed before the twelfth week of pregnancy, and for various reasons, such as medical, psychological, or socio-economic. Abortion can be performed to save a woman's life, to preserve her physical and mental health, because of rape or incest, fetal damage, and economic and social reasons. Contraception became widely available, but the level of information and education on its use is still very low.

During 1990 a new environment in Albania was created, which changed fertility; there are means for birth control that were not presented before 1990. The contrast between the traditional values of a patriarchal society, on the one hand, and modern values implied by family planning policies that have just started, on the other, are reflected in the use of means for birth control. While abortion is rapidly increasing, the use of modern contraceptives is still very low in the country, due to lack of knowledge. Sex education has just been introduced in classes of the middle school system, but they are only represented by a lecture, and apply only to secondary schools of major cities. In a society where the abortion rate is very high, and the environment is conventional in terms of values and norms, there is not expected a balanced ratio of births as a result of sex-selective abortion. It is no accident that the SRB values totaled 114 during the period after the fall of communism (UNFPA, 2012), with higher levels in some municipalities.

The Albanian population has undergone profound transformations during the past 20 years since the fall of communism. As mentioned earlier, the main determinant of population change during this period has been migration, at the country level (immigration) and locally (internal migration). During 12 years, from 1989 to 2001, about a quarter of the Albanian population has migrated abroad (24 percent). This is the most dramatic migration that Europe has ever known in its modern history. Another very important issue of immigration is its impact on marriage

and fertility patterns during the reproductive years. A place where the sex ratio of births for a long period of time is skewed in favor of men, ends with more men than women, as it is the case of South Korea, China, and India. One would believe that this would have happened with Albania if the SRB had not been balanced for a long time and the level of fertility had been low. During 1990 and 2000, the birth rate has been low and the imbalance has started to show more clearly. However, it seems that migration has worked in the opposite direction by reducing the number of men in the reproductive age group.

The general report on child sex ratio in the period 1997-2001 is higher in urban areas (112) than in rural areas (107). Compared with changes in preference for boys between rural and urban areas identified above, it appears that urban parents are often driven by sex selection, while rural parents have preferred more children. Although, so far in Albania, there are no quantitative data about abortion based on the sex of the child, (as mentioned in the UNFPA report) abortions based on sex have been dominant in the period 1995-2000. In this period, this perceived increase of abortions, is a consequence of the introduction of more and more ultrasound examinations. It is reported that this phenomenon has decreased in the past decade, but this trend that is not confirmed by the demographic analysis presented earlier, since SRB levels have remained very high over the last decade.

According to Guilmoto, C.Z. (2009), the reduction of the fertility rate is one of the main factors that contributes to prenatal sex selection. By reducing the number of children per family, the possibility to perform a sex selection is more likely because the couple would abort female fetuses until they give birth to a son. During the years 1990-2010, the fertility rate in Albania has decreased to 1.5 children per woman (INSTAT, 2012). In accordance with these studies and data, it is shown that there is a difference between the ideal number of children per family and the couple's real possibilities. While couples today prefer to have two children, ideal number of children is four. The main reasons are largely economic.

In this regard, it is noted that there are several factors which create preconditions for prenatal sex selection, such as: a) the preference for boys in Albanian patriarchal society; b) low fertility rate that reduces the probability of having a son in small families; c) sex determination technology; and d) legal changes and lack of legal consequences in case of selective abortion based on sex.

The difference in the SRB level has to do with the birth order (number of births). While parents do not mind the gender of the first child, in the second pregnancy, it becomes more important; especially in cases where there is already a male child, preference for girls is never mentioned. In the past, parents were ready to have children until they had a son, but the likelihood of contraceptive use and rapid decrease of fertility has completely changed their strategies. Parents can avoid pregnancy after reaching the proper composition of their family and may even want to reduce family size by limiting the number of unwanted female children.

Thus, it is assumed that the factors driving the phenomenon of sons' preference in patriarchal and patrilineal society are: (a) cultural factors, (b) socioeconomic factors and (c) factors related to community norms and pressure (UNFPA, 2012). Cultural factors are related to the fact that the need for boys stems from the importance of conveying the family's last name and identity to subsequent generations, and because boys have an obligation to protect the family from the dangers and to manage the family honor. Socio-economic factors are related with the perception that boys have more economic advantages than girls, because they can work and migrate, keeping parents and the whole family financially secure. On the other hand, girls barely have a say in the use and distribution of household wealth. The study also found that fewer boys than girls contribute to creating positive emotional climate of the family. Girls are considered emotionally more intelligent and are expected to communicate more with parents and to give them emotional support. In regard to the factors related to community norms and

pressures, the pressure from the community about the number of children and family composition, indirectly affects the preferences or necessity of having a son in the family.

To conclude, Albanian society remains patriarchal; there is a separation of gender roles in public and private life as well as gender discrimination, despite new trends in terms of lifestyle and gender relations (also due to exposure to new patterns of living, as it is reported by UNFPA, 2012). However, these social changes seem to be insufficient, at least so far, to change the preference for boys.

Sociological debate

Certain cultural minorities have a cultural preference for sons. Based on this preference, they may desire sex-selective abortion. SSA involves the identification of the fetus' sex during pregnancy using prenatal diagnosis, followed by abortion of the fetus if it turns out to be of the undesired sex. If SSA is to be applied, the sex of the fetus has first to be determined. SSA is thus closely related to the rise of prenatal diagnosis (PND) in genetics, amniocentesis or ultrasound. In general, prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion are driven by the desire to prevent illness. As some illnesses are sex-linked, the debate in medical ethics concerns what genetic diseases or congenital anomalies are so serious that they justify PND and sex selective abortion. The prenatal diagnostic techniques that are required for sex determination of the fetus are also available in other European countries and the abortion legislation in most European countries is such that it makes SSA possible.

For example, we are able to name countries where abortion is only permitted if there is risk to the mother's life or health, or if the woman is in a critical situation which cannot be resolved in any other way. Because the law does not define what constitutes a critical situation, ultimately it is the woman who decides, thus making SSA legally possible. In most European countries women have, as in the Netherlands, a legal right to decide on the termination of pregnancy, or the abortion laws in these countries recognize rather broad grounds for permitting abortion, including socio-medical reasons, like the UK (except Northern Ireland) (Outshoorn, 1996). As the Netherlands is, compared with other European countries, rather reluctant in offering PND to pregnant women, it follows that SSA is legally possible in most European countries (Hui, 2003).

In this regard, if a woman does not want a child because she is unemployed and will have to take care of the child entirely by herself, then these are critical situations experienced as such by the individual (Saharso, 2005). The situation is different, in the case of a Muslim woman, who does not want any more girls. In that case 'it is not a matter of an individual desire, but of a culturally imposed demand: desire for males, and according to Saharso, we should not sympathize with it. The non-representative data on cultural minorities suggest that certain cultural minorities do have a cultural preference for sons, and that women are condemned if they have not (yet) produced a boy. But it is unclear whether they are prepared to accept the SSA (Veldkamp Marktonderzoek, 1996).

In countries where SSA is a widespread phenomenon, such as India and China, it is the expression of a cultural view in which women are of less value than men (see Warren, 1985; Parikh, 1990; Arora, 1996). According to this argument, it is assumed that western women are fully autonomous in their decision-making, while women from non-western cultures, as victims of their culture, are not.

Conclusions

Sex-selective abortion is practiced, although probably only on a very small scale, by immigrant minorities in the European countries. Whether SSA is practiced in other European countries, and on what scale, we do not know, as it is not registered. We do know, however, that in other western countries with minorities from countries where SSA is prevalent, some of those immigrants desire the SSA (for the USA see Weiss, 1996, for Canada, see Minister of Government Services Canada, 1993).

When a western woman says she is too poor to have a child, her decision to abort has clearly been made under constrained conditions but, by contrast, when a non-western woman says the importance attached to boys in her culture means that she cannot afford to have a girl child, her decision to abort is more commonly regarded as subservience to ‘a culturally imposed demand. There seems to be a presumption here that people can act autonomously when they are bowing to economic necessity, but not when bowing to cultural expectations; and one of the central points of Saharso’s argument is that this feeds, in worrying ways, into a hierarchy of western versus non-western culture. This edges far too close to saying we will not believe a woman is ‘choosing’ if what she chooses is at odds with majority beliefs.

The practice of SSA in India showed some of the intricacies of culture, modernity, and gender inequality. SSA is possible, firstly, because of the existence of modern PND techniques, and practiced not by the poorest, most backward part of the population, but by the urban middle class. Secondly, the dowry system plays an important role in the motives of Indian women to choose a SSA. Yet dowries have become so expensive because an increasingly market-dominated modern economy led to the commercialization of the dowry system (Narayan, 1997: 110–11). If we take into consideration the wider context in which Indian women choose a SSA, their motives appear clearly cultural. SSA is morally wrong, yet individuals that choose SSA are not necessarily morally inferior to those who do not (have to) make that choice.

In general, different academics support the official Chinese as well as international mainstream position—that sex-selective abortion has negative impact on society and should be banned by legislation and that the existing comprehensive prohibition should be rigorously implemented to reverse, or at least slow down the process.

From the findings it is obviously shown that in our country this phenomenon is due to cultural factors and due to the absence of the appropriate social policies in this regard. Much further researches on the ethical and social policy implications of sex-selective abortion in Albania—in the context of its impact towards family and society, are needed to be done. It is recommended that the international debate on sex-selective abortion ought to be regarded as an important area of related interest in Asia, China etc., as well as an area of related interest even in Albania. Regarding sex-selective abortion in Albania there is only one report done by UNFPA 2012 for the “Sex unbalanced at birth in Albania”. This study contributed to extent the knowledge and describe the situation of SSA in Albania. In this context, this issue is urged to be followed by many other studies, and in that way the recommendations for governmental and non-governmental Albanian institution can be addressed with ethical and social policy issues, for the cases in Western and many other countries.

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