

Highlights

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Introduction

The phrase 'crime against women' implies direct or indirect physical or mental cruelty to women. It points to crimes aimed particularly towards women in which only women are victims. Such crimes include rape, sexual assault, kidnapping, abduction, cruelty by intimate partner or relatives, trafficking, persecution for dowry, dowry deaths, etc. Crimes against women have more than doubled over the past few years. In this chapter we will focus on two social problems based on gender namely, female foeticide and domestic violence.

Female Foeticide

Women have been the most vulnerable group for centuries and till date they are vulnerable to various forms of deprivations and discriminations. Discrimination against the girl child begins in the womb of the mother itself, with the female foetus facing the peril of pre-birth elimination. Female foeticide is a violation of human rights. The female children in the wombs are not only denied the right to live but also robbed of their right to born. There is no question that female foeticide is not just unethical but it is downright cruel as well. Historically, female infanticide has existed for a long time because of social attitudes based on certain erroneous notions, male-centric traditions, distorted societal norms and social discrimination against the female child. Besides, undue importance is given to male child in Indian society and despite modernisation, westernisation, globalisation and modern education system the female child is unwelcome even today.

Meaning of Female Foeticide

The term female foeticide means aborting a female foetus after sex determination test or pre natal diagnostic test. Female foeticide is a process of aborting female foetuses after about 18 weeks of gestation. In other words, it implies murdering a female child in the womb of the mother.

Sex Ratio: Sex ratio is an important social indicator to measure the equity between males and females at a given point of time, It defined as the number of females per 1000 males.

Indian Scenario

India/State	Year	Sex Ratio (Total)	Sex Ratio (0-6 Years)
India	1961	941	976
	1971	930	964
	1981	934	962
	1991	927	945
	2001	933	927
	2011	943	914
Punjab	1961	854	901
	1971	865	901
	1981	879	908
	1991	882	875
	2001	876	798
	2011	895	846

Source: Director Census Operations, Punjab

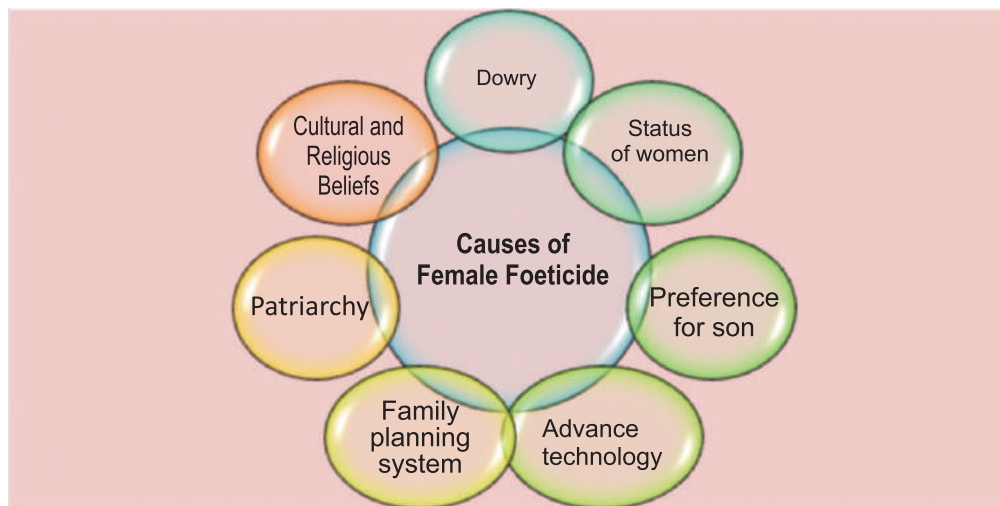
The Census 2001 indicates that while there is an increase in the overall sex ratio of the country (927 females per 1000 males in 1991; 933 females per 1000 males in 2001 and 943 females per 1000 males in 2011), the child sex ratio (in the 0-6 age group) has

shown a decline in almost all the States. Sex ratio as depicted in the above table shows that in the year 1991 Census, it was 945 in 1991; 927 in 2001; 933 and 943 in 2011 respectively. In the state of Punjab the overall sex ratio is 895 in 2011 while Sex ratio (0-6 years) is 846.

Box 1

Child sex ratio is defined as the number of females per thousand males in the age group of 0-6 years in a human population.

Districtwise Sex Ratio (2011) in Punjab has shown that Bathinda has lowest sex ratio i.e., 869; followed by Fatehgarh Sahib with 871 while Hoshiarpur has the highest sex ratio in the state of Punjab i.e., 961.



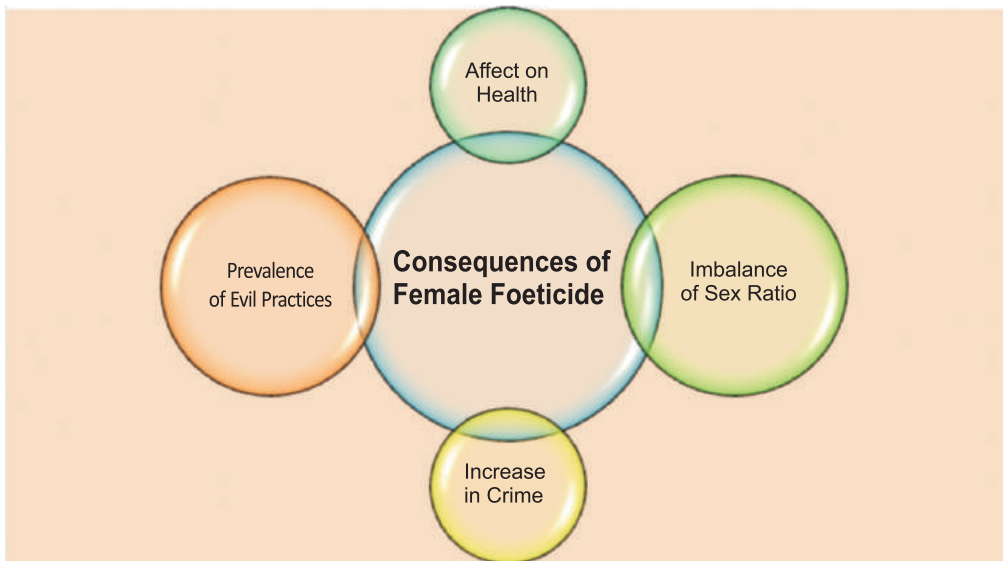
Causes of Female Foeticide

1. **Dowry:** Dowry demands are growing with rise in consumerism. The dowry trap pushes many families into debt. Rural families are forced to sell land while the urban poor resort to selling their houses or getting into huge debts. Female foeticide is not only common among the poor families but also among the rich. Dowry demand is one of the main reasons for female foeticide. In India, the age old custom of dowry system puts a lot of pressure on the parents and thus, they think that it is better to get rid of the burden of a girl child with just a fraction of the amount.

2. **Lower status of women:** The poor status of women has made them inferior as compared to men. They willingly embrace the roles of the meek, submissive, docile wife, sister and daughter. Sometimes female foeticide happens with the explicit consent of the mother and most mothers agree to this misdeed out of a sense of duty towards the family.
3. **Preference for son:** In, Indian society, birth of a son is perceived as an opportunity for upward mobility while daughter is considered as a cause of downward economic mobility. Preference for son, is an important cause behind this brutal act. Son is considered important for performing various rituals like cremation. In other words, it is only the son who can perform the last rites, perpetuate the family lineage, inheritance and so on. Further, male children are preferred because they provide manual labour. Female foeticide is most common in the areas where cultural norms value male child over female child for social and economic reasons.
4. **Advanced Technology:** The advanced technology in medical field leading to the mushrooming of a variety of sex selection services such as sonography, genetic clinics, ultrasonic clinics in almost all parts of the country, paved the way for an easy access to medical ultrasound and abortion.
5. **Patriarchy:** In the patriarchal mind-set, females are always treated as a liability. It is considered that the amount spent on their upbringing is a waste for the family they are born in and benefits only the families into which they are married.
6. **Cultural and Religious Beliefs:** Various factors along with a plethora of cultural and religious beliefs constitute the root causes for why sons are preferred and why daughters are not desired. Attaining *moksha* is considered to be an ideal end of life cycle. Salvation could be possible only through sons who are accorded the privilege of performing last rites of deceased parents.

Consequences of Female Foeticide

1. **Effect on Health:** Women, who undergo sex selective abortions, may end up with aborting the foetus till they give birth to a son. With the result, they may become barren and it may also affect their health badly.
2. **Imbalance of Sex Ratio:** Female foeticide gives rise to imbalance of sex ratio. Due to decline in sex-ratio numerous social problems arise such as forced abduction of girls, bride burning, forced polyandry, swap marriages, gang rapes, child prostitution, deviant behaviour, HIV/AIDS, gay culture etc.



3. **Increase in Crime:** Sexual violence has been progressively rising in the contemporary times. Besides, violence has aggravated against the females. Crimes such as rape, molestation, sexual harassment, eve-teasing, acid-attack, trafficking, flesh trade etc. are very common.
4. **Prevalence of Evil Practices:** Due to female foeticide, fraternal polyandry is happening, and many families are engaged in bride swapping and selling and buying of females from backward areas. Female foeticide has adversely affected many parts of India.

If the female ratio keeps declining, then the day is not far, when there will be no female species, no brides. People will wander for females in order to perpetuate their generation or to save the society at large.

Strategies to Combat Female Foeticide

In order to stop this evil practice, the Government has enacted certain laws which are the Indian Penal Code, 1860; the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 and the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection Act) 1994.

- The Indian Penal Code contained provisions under sections 312 to 316 for prohibiting miscarriage. These sections penalise violent or forced abortions.
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 liberalised law and allowed termination of pregnancy on medical grounds, humanitarian grounds and eugenic grounds.

- The efforts on behalf of legislature to curb the evil practice of female foeticide started with the passing of the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994. The Act was amended in 2002 and renamed as the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994. In order to prevent female foeticide, the PC & PNDT Act, 1994 provide provisions under which Supervisory Board, appropriate authorities and advisory committees are to be constituted by the Central Government as well as by the State Government.

Until Indian society grants women a status equal to men and values them as human beings, practices like female foeticide will continue. But it is difficult to check this evil practice without fundamental change in social attitudes.



The social evils such as dowry, poverty, women's unemployment and exploitation, lack of proper education to girl child and their dropping out early marriage etc. should be dealt with sternly by enacting proper laws. The need of the hour is to implement them strictly. In order to make the females independent, women should be imparted skill and training through various vocational programs. Free and compulsory education should be provided to female children so that they can support themselves during emergency. Hence, it would help in changing the attitude of people. Girls should be sensitised to grow up to be as good as boys. They can be good citizens, earners, providers for their family and for their parents.

Domestic Violence

Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women and is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position as compared to men. History of domestic violence dates back to the pre-historic period. One of the most important reasons for domestic violence is the traditional and centuries-old mind set of the people that women are physically and emotionally weaker than men. The domestic abuses that are perpetrated within the four walls are targeted particularly against women as they are physically weaker and are treated as second class citizens in the society.

Meaning

Domestic Violence is defined as socially unacceptable and abusive behaviour by one or the other or both the members in a close and intimate relationship like marriage. It is anything that is experienced as fearful, controlling and threatening when used by those with power (invariably men) against those without power (mainly women and children).

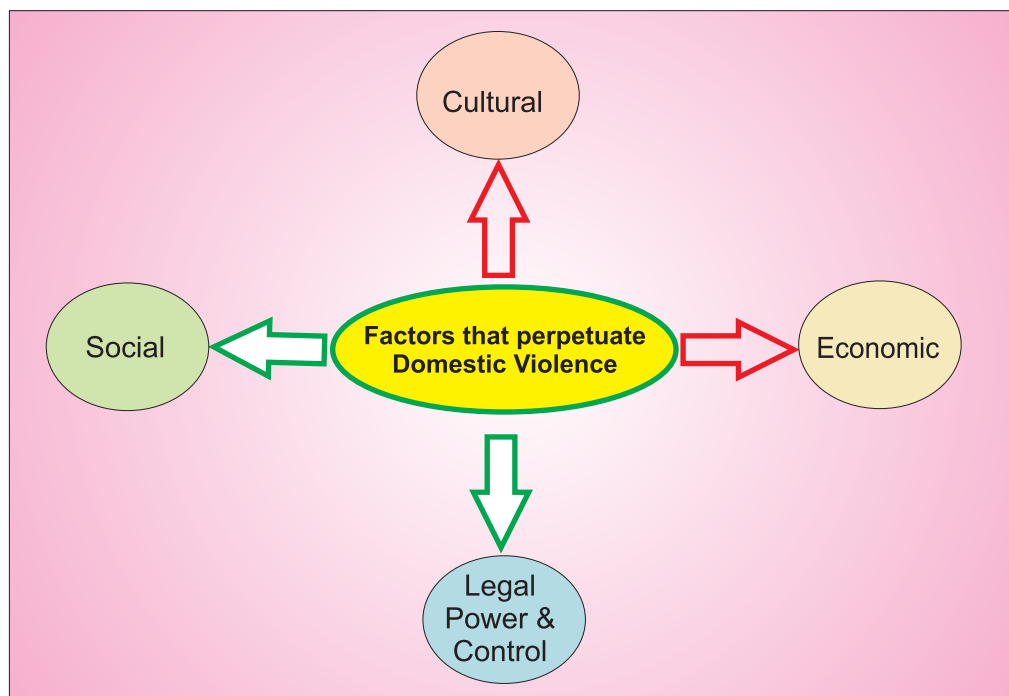
Domestic violence includes harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty and even the threat of assault (intimidation). It includes physical injury, as well as wilfully or knowingly placing the spouse in fear of injury and compelling the spouse by force or threat to engage in any conduct/act from which the spouse has a right to abstain. Confining or detaining the spouse against one's will or damaging property are also considered as acts of violence.

Forms of Domestic Violence

- 1. Physical Abuse:** In this form of domestic violence a physical contact is involved to cause injury, pain or other bodily harm and suffering. Physical abuse may be inflicted in many ways such as hitting, slapping, punching, pushing and other form of physical contact resulting in bodily suffering to the victim.
- 2. Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse occurs when one of the partners is made to participate in unwanted sexual activity by force or threat. Threatening a person or using force to obtain participation in sex, against her/his will, even if she/he is spouse, is an act of aggression and violence.
- 3. Emotional abuse:** The emotional abuse or psychological abuse occurs when the victim is subjected to humiliation by perpetrator privately or in public. The perpetrator exercises control over the victim's freedom and access to

information. The victim is subjected to harassment and isolation from the family and friends. The perpetrator even resorts to harming others who are closer to the victim. In other cases of emotional abuse the victim is deprived of basic necessities of life by the perpetrator.

- 5. Verbal abuse:** The abuse wherein the abuser uses language and words to cause humiliation, disrespect or to criticise the victim is called the verbal abuse. Verbal threat to cause physical harm to the victim, name-calling humiliation and blaming are some other forms of verbal abuse. There can be some mild ways of verbal abuse such as false accusation, humiliation, misleading to submit to undesirable behaviour and the isolation of the victim.



- 6. Economic abuse:** Domestic violence that prevents victims attaining economic self sufficiency by restricting his/her access to economic resources is called economic abuse. The abuser controls victims' finances to prevent him/her from gaining and maintaining a control of earnings to achieve self-sufficiency or gain financial independence. Economic dependence is most commonly cited reason by the victims for staying in abusive relationships.

Factors that perpetuate Domestic Violence

There are many factors that perpetuate domestic violence which can be discussed under the following sub-headings such as cultural, economic, legal and social.

1. Cultural

- a) Gender-specific socialisation
- b) Definitions of appropriate sex roles
- c) Expectations of roles within relationships
- d) Belief in the inherent superiority of males
- e) Values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls
- f) Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control
- g) Customs of marriage (bride price/dowry)
- h) Acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict.

2. Economic

- a) Women's economic dependence on men
- b) Limited access to cash and credit
- c) Discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of communal lands, and maintenance after divorce or widowhood
- d) Limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors
- e) Limited access to education and training for women

3. Legal

- a) Lesser legal status of women either by written law and/or by practice
- b) Laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance though favouring women but not in actual practice due to strong patriarchy.
- c) Low levels of legal literacy among women
- d) Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary
- e) Political under-representation of women in power, politics, the media and in the legal and medical professions
- f) Domestic violence not taken seriously
- g) Notions of family being private and beyond control of the state
- h) Limited organisation of women as a political force

4. Social Stresses

Families and couples in poverty are more likely to experience domestic violence, due to increased pressure of financial and other resources necessary for life and conflicts resulting there from. Poverty may hinder a man's ability to live up to his idea of "successful manhood", thus he fears losing honour and respect. When a man fails to economically support his family and have control over the spouse, he may turn to substance abuse, and violence to express masculinity.

Activity 11.1

Watch and note down the behaviour of male members towards the females members in your family for three successive days and discuss it in the class.

Domestic Violence against Women in India

This form of domestic violence is most common of all. One of the reasons for it being so prevalent is the orthodox mindset of the society that women are physically and emotionally weaker than the males. Though women today have proved themselves in almost every field of life affirming that they are no less than men, the reports of violence against them are much larger in number than against men. The possible reasons are many and are diversified over the length and breadth of the country. According to United Nation Population Fund Report, around two-third of married Indian women are victims of domestic violence and as many as 70 per cent of married women in India between the age of 15 and 49 are victims of beating, rape or forced sex. In India, more than 55 percent of the women suffer from domestic violence, especially in the states of Bihar, U.P., M.P. and other northern states.

Causes of Domestic Violence in India

1. The most common causes for women battering include dissatisfaction with the dowry and exploiting women for more of it, arguing with the partner, refusing to have sex with him, neglecting children, going out of home without telling the partner, not cooking properly or on time, indulging in extra marital affairs, not looking after in-laws etc.
2. In some cases infertility in females also leads to their assault by the family members.

3. Women in India also admit to being hit or beaten because of their suspicion about the husband's sexual involvement with other women.
4. In urban areas there are many other factors such as higher income of a working woman than her partner, her absence in the house till late night, abusing and neglecting in-laws, being more forward socially etc.

Effects of Domestic Violence:

1. It has adverse effect on the health and wealth of the victim woman. It creates a lot of stress for the woman and the stress converts into mental and physical problems for the woman that creates problems in her education and healthy family atmosphere.
2. The spousal domestic violence also affects the children of the family. They do not get proper attention on their daily schedule, such as education, playing or other creative activities. On seeing a domestic violence towards the mother, the children begin to hate their father and other relatives, and that creates a negative attitude in the children regarding the marriage life cycle.
3. Women victims of violence generally remain quiet, depressed and emotionally disturbed after the occurrence of the violence. The trauma of domestic violence has a negative and disturbing impact on women's productivity in all shades of her life. The suicide tendency in such victimised women is also a deadly consequence and the number of which is on the rise.

Remedies for Domestic Violence

Following are some remedies to control the problem of Domestic Violence:

1. **Fighting the 'Domestic Violence' Evil**
Domestic violence is now being viewed as a public health problem of epidemic proportion all over the world. Many public, private and governmental agencies are seen making huge efforts to control it. There are several organisations all over the world, government and non government, actively working to fight the problems generated by domestic violence to the human community.
2. **Need for Stringent Laws**
The Government of India passed a Domestic Violence Bill, 2001, "To protect the rights of women who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto".

3. Role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

The role of non-governmental organisations in controlling the domestic violence and curbing its worse consequences is crucial. There are many NGOs which are active in big cities such as Sakshi (Delhi), Women's Rights Initiative (Delhi) and Gulabi Gang (Bombay). These NGOs continue to spread awareness among people regarding the legal rights they have in hand for fighting against the atrocities they are subjected to. They are encouraging more and more people to report any case of domestic violence so that proper action may be taken against the culprits. There is a need for such organisations in small towns and rural areas.

4. Role of Police Force

Police plays a major role in tackling the domestic violence cases. They need to be sensitised to treat domestic violence cases as seriously as any other crime. Special training to handle domestic violence cases should be imparted to police force. Gender training should be made mandatory in the trainings of the police officers. There should be a separate wing of police dealing with women's issues.

5. Introduction of a Comprehensive Law against Domestic Violence

There should be a comprehensive law that incorporates a broader definition of domestic violence. The definition should encompass all acts of physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse that, in effect, hurt or degrade the woman or take away her ability to control contact with another individual.

6. Address Domestic Violence through Education

Prevention of domestic violence ultimately depends upon changing the norms of society regarding violence as a means of conflict resolution and regarding traditional attitudes about gender. To achieve this, the concept of gender and human rights must be introduced in the curricula of schools, universities, professional colleges, and other training settings. Along with this, there must be recognition and commitment to the principle of free compulsory primary and secondary education for girls.

7. Increase Outreach to Rural Areas

Coverage of services and programmes needs to be expanded to rural areas. Apart from interventions such as Lok Adalats and Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats, grievance redressal mechanisms for women facing domestic violence in rural areas are few or simply absent. In addition, All Women Police Stations are primarily located in urban areas. The voluntary sector has attempted

interventions in rural areas successfully but their efforts are hampered by the non-availability or limited access to referral, health, and police.

Conclusion

Thus, both female foeticide and domestic violence are forms of crime against women. Violence against women and girls is a problem of epidemic magnitude. It can be carried out by individuals and families. It is a matter of concern that despite many years of efforts and involvement of the state and many feminist activist organisations, the issue of crimes against women still remains one of the most persistent forms of human rights abuse universally.

Glossary

- **Female Foeticide:** Killing the female foetus in mother's womb.
- **Female Infanticide:** Killing of female after birth.
- **Patriarchy:** Father figure exercise authority over women and children
- **Sex ratio:** The number of females per 1000 males.



I. Objective type questions

A. Multiple choice questions

1. According to 2011 census, the sex ratio in India is:
(a) 939 (b) 940
(c) 943 (d) 942.
2. Sex ratio can be defined as:
(a) Number of females per 100 males (b) Number of males per 100 females
(c) Number of females per 1000 males (d) None of the above.
3. In the state of Punjab, district with highest sex ratio is:
(a) Ferozepur (b) Bathinda
(c) Ludhiana (d) Amritsar.

4. Female foeticide test includes:
 - (a) Ultra sound (b) MRI
 - (c) X-rays (d) Weighing Machines.
5. The main cause of female foeticide:
 - (a) Increased sex ratio (b) Patriarchal mind set
 - (c) Preference for girls (d) None
6. Which is a form of Domestic Violence?
 - (a) Legal (b) Physical abuse
 - (c) Society (d) Economic
7. Which factor does not perpetuate Domestic Violence?
 - (a) Cultural (b) Economic
 - (c) Social (d) Pedagogy
8. The act, according to which a daughter has an equal share in the property of her parents is:
 - (a) Legal property act (b) Hindu Property Act
 - (c) Civil act (d) Divine act

B. Fill in the blanks

1. Sex determination test includes.....
2.is one of the reasons for female foeticide.
3. The evil practice of is responsible for female foeticide in Indian society.
4. keeps declining in India while a bit is improved in.....State.
5. should be implemented properly in order to combat female foeticide.
6.abuse may be inflicted in many ways such as hitting, slapping, punching, pushing and other form of physical contact resulting in bodily sufferings to the victim.
7. The couples living alone or with children, or an individual parent with children are called households.

8. studies must be made compulsory as part of school, college and university syllabus.
9. is defined as socially unacceptable and abusive behaviour by one or other or both the members in a close and intimate relationship like marriage or a family.

C. True/False

1. Ultra sound is the pre diagnostic test for the determination of sex. ☐
2. Law does not help to generate awareness about female foeticide. ☐
3. Sex ratio has improved in Punjab according to census 2011. ☐
4. Awareness programmes can sensitise about the ill effects of female foeticide. ☐
5. Cultural and rituals norms have no effect on female foeticide. ☐
6. Newly married couples must be made aware that a small family need not only include male children. ☐
7. The greed for dowry, desire for a male child and alcoholism of the spouse are major factors of domestic violence against women in rural areas. ☐
8. Wife Beating does not reflects Domestic Violence. ☐
9. History of domestic violence dates back to the pre-historic period. ☐
10. The spousal domestic violence also affects the children of the family. ☐

D. Match the Columns.

Column A

Female Foeticide
Sex Ratio
Patriarchy

Female Infanticide
Form of Domestic Violence

Column B

Killing of the girl child
Marital Rape
Killing of female foetus in the womb
Females per 1000 males
Male dominance

II. Very short answer type questions

1. What is the sex ratio of India as per the census 2011?
2. What is the sex ratio of Punjab as per the census 2011?
3. Which districts in Punjab have the highest and lowest sex ratio?
4. Describe full form of PNDT?
5. What is meant by domestic violence?
6. List any two factors of domestic violence.
7. What do you mean by female foeticide?
8. List the causes of wife battering.

III. Short answer type questions

1. Define female foeticide.
2. Define sex ratio.
3. What are the two causes of female foeticide?
4. What is the status of female in India?
5. Why male child is preferred in India?
6. Write down three causes of domestic violence.
7. What is difference between domestic violence and violence?
8. What is wife battering?
9. What are the consequences of female foeticide?
10. List cultural factors of domestic violence.

III. Long answer type questions

1. Write a short note on female foeticide.
2. Discuss any two measures to combat female foeticide.
3. Discuss any two consequences of female foeticide.
4. Why sex ratio is declining in India? Explain.
5. Name two social problems that give rise to female foeticide.
6. Write causes of domestic violence.
7. Write remedies for wife battering.
8. List the legal reforms to curb female foeticide.
9. What are the effects of domestic violence?
10. What is scenario of domestic violence against women in India?

IV. Very long answer type questions

1. Write a detailed note on sex ratio.
2. What do you understand by female foeticide? Describe its causes and consequences.

3. Explain the role of government in combating the problem of female foeticide.
4. Write a detail note on female foeticide.
5. What do you understand by female foeticide? Explain various measures to combat this problem.
6. Write a detailed note on domestic violence.
7. What are the causes of domestic violence?
8. Write a note about control of domestic violence.



PROJECT

Make a collage of campaigns against Female Foeticide and Domestic Violence.