

Abortion and Sex Selection

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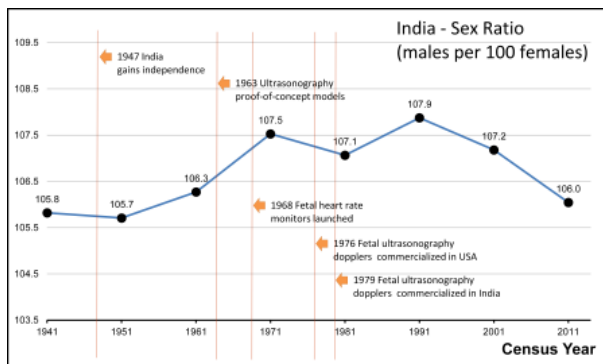
Abstract:

It is no longer a secret that in many societies is set a value much higher for boys than for females. It happens in societies such as China, India, Kosovo, Albania, etc., in many other countries of the East where young boys are being hailed as a "great happiness" and the girl child to the contrary. In this paper I will dwell in the Albanian context in which this phenomenon is very vulnerable. Albanian traditional bridal blessing says, "May you have baby boys'. Boys are seen as an asset because they guarantee the household; parents will not be poor and above all not abandoned in their old age. On the other hand, girls are considered to have many obligations, because they require dowries and leave the family to care for their spouses and children. Prejudice against women in these societies is extremely widespread. In many cases, women have to endure certain conditions, unheard of in the West. The result of this approach is fairly predictable. For this reason abortion of girls has exploded. The research emerge factors fueling the phenomenon of preference for boys in the Albanian context, factors that are closely linked to the community norms and pressure. The study has divided the groups in three categories: cultural factors, socio-economic factors and factors related to community norms and pressure. Selecting the sex of the child is a typical action, seen by people as in the best interests of their immediate, but in fact is a violation of human rights and as such may leave serious lasting consequences in the social level.

Key words: abortion, selective, gender, Albania, context.

A BIT OF HISTORY TO THE PHENOMENON

India is a strongly patriarchal society where men have traditionally been more valued than women. In general, the only male child carries the surname of the family. India is a country with a poor system of social insurance, leaving the boys responsible for the care of their parents in old age. If a family arise females, parents have nowhere to rely while boys remain with the family forever. According to them, the girls are temporary, given that leave to the husband's family after marriage. Also, the power earned by a male can often be twice as a woman in India. In rural areas, men are seen as physically stronger and more capable to contribute to agricultural work. Only one male is seen as suitable to take over a family business or trade. The desire for a son has deep cultural roots in India. For many people, the birth of a boy is seen as the ultimate achievement of a woman. Though biologically is the male contribution that determines the sex of the child, many women blaming themselves when they cannot give birth to a son. Her family can drive her away if it is not able to bear male. Consequently there is a large-scale murder of female fetuses.



¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex-selective_abortion

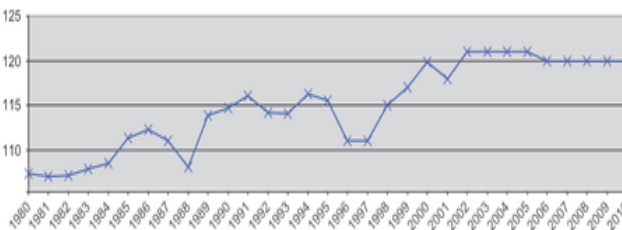
The male to female sex ratio for India based on its official census data from 1941 through to 2011. The data suggests the existence of high sex ratios before and after the arrival of ultrasounds-based prenatal care and sex screening technologies in India.

Even in some countries in the Balkans and the Caucasus give birth to more boys than girls. The figures are similar to those of India and China, where the balance between the sexes has long been broken, because the female embryos intentionally are aborted. Fathers in these countries want male heirs and must do everything not to raise girls. While this phenomenon has arrived in Europe and the Caucasus, where an unborn deficiency can be deadly if it is female. Armenia and Azerbaijan give birth for 100 girls and 115 boys, figures similar to India.

CHINA

A tendency of high ratio of sex ratio is predicted in China by 2020. It is predicted 55 million to increase the number of men more than women. According to Chu Junhong, many men between the ages of 28 and 49 have not been able to find a partner and thus remain unmarried. Families in China are aware of the critical shortage of female children and its implications on the prospect of marriage in the future; More parents are beginning to work extra when their boys are young, so they will be able to pay for a bride for him.

The sex ratio of birth in China, according to a 2012 report to the press, decline in 117 male births for every 100 females.



¹ Birth sex ratios have dramatically changed in China since the implementation of the One-Child Policy. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex-selective_abortion
Albania

"With a son." This has been the most benevolent congratulation for generations after an Albanian wedding. Manly pride fades as if the young couple did not bring to life an infant male sex. In remote regions of the unwritten laws allow the return of bride if it was not able to do guys. Even reached as far as, to not reduce the pride of their fathers, the male mantle worn by women "burrnesha" and swear to god to protect their home. Entire families tried endlessly in the hope of an heir. Some, after five or six girls, finally reached their goal. But there are those fathers who could not shoot on target and late after they surrendered. Until the 90s it was a dominant psychology.

In a study of Mr. Christophe Guilmoto and Géraldine Duthé is pointed out that:

In two regions of Eastern Europe - the South Caucasus and

Western Balkans around

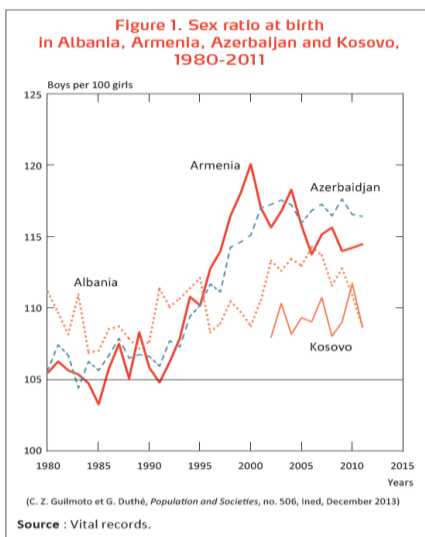
Albania - sex ratio at birth is between 110 and 117 (Table).

For the three countries of the Caucasus it has increased during the 1990s (Figure 1, Table) [3, 4, 5] to achieve even higher levels than

current estimates for the whole of India. It is higher in Azerbaijan (close to 117),

which now ranks second in the world after China among

the countries with the largest sex ratio imbalance.³



³ **Figure 1 Sex ratio at birth in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Kosovo**

ABORTIONS AND TRANSITION IN ALBANIA

Albania until the 90s, with the desire of women to abort they had been forbidden and only carried out in the country illegally. Often these interventions were performed provoked, in inadequate conditions in apartments or other of ordinary, and the reasons were different. Absence of conditions and the provoking of abortion and also lead to the death of the woman. Also it was not offered any method of contraception from health services due to prenatalist policies. After 1993 with the liberalization of abortions in Albania it was noticed a significant increase in the number of abortions.

So all abortions in Albania increased from 234,000 in 1989 to 334,000 in 1993, and further digits of the Ministry of Health show a gradual decrease of them along with the number of births (in 2007, the number of abortions reported by public health institutions is 9058) Albanian Center for Population and Development (QSHPHZ)

For this reason in 1995 the law was passed which clearly stated that "termination of pregnancy shall not be considered in any case as a method of family planning" and that woman until at week 12 will have the freedom and opportunity to decide on the termination of the pregnancy.

In a joint study of UNFPA and World Vision ranks Albania as the first in the Balkans, followed by Macedonia northwest, Montenegro and Kosovo, the selective abortion of babies when they are women and especially when you are second or third in the family.

Albania: 111.7 males per 100 females

Kosovo: 109.7 males per 100 females

Macedonia: 110.9 males per 100 females

Montenegro: 109 males per 100 females

Concerns over gender asymmetrical ratios at birth are made present at the Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (October 2011), through the resolution of

"prenatal sex selection". But even in this regard are partial studies, bringing their approximate figures, but no precise data. The study "unbalanced ratio between the sexes at birth in Albania" in the country showed that arise more men than women and that the ratio of male-female birth has gone to 100 female births, compared to 111 men. "The sexual ratio at birth has reached around 112 by the year 2000-2010. This high level shows a deficit of 15,000 female births, which represents more than 7% of births to women during these eleven years, "says the study UNFPA and World Vision, the report of unbalanced between the sexes in the east in Albania. According to the detailed analysis of data from the census of 2001, the increase in births of males in Albania became apparent after 1995.

The study said, "The preference of sons is translated in the past 15 years in an elimination of births to women through prenatal sex selection, selective abortion". The main factor of decrease in the number of births to women is a high degree of preference to boys in Albania. "Most families nationwide insist on having a male heir," said the study UNFPA and World Vision.

What is the reason? A fatal combination between traditional preference for male children, lowering the level of fertility and the spread of modern technologies, which makes it possible to see the sex of the baby before birth. Albanian society remains a patriarchal society that prefers baby boys. The study noted a preference for boys in the entire country.

SELECTIVE ABORTION ON BABY GIRLS IN ALBANIA

As we mentioned above Albanian families have traditionally favored boys over girls for two main reasons: the legacy of family and hope that boys grow up to become providers of income "In a conservative society like ours, families wish male heirs.

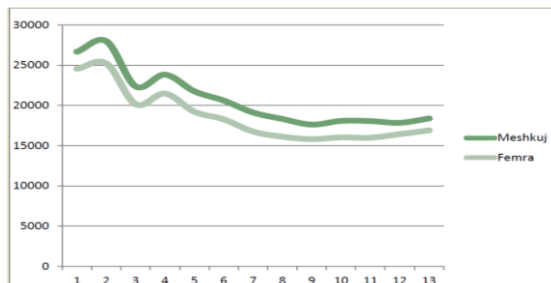
Unlike the communist regime legislation banning abortion, the new law on reproductive health, designed in 2002,

prohibits the use of reproductive technology to provide abortions due to sex selection. The law foresees the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, the mother's request up to 12 weeks of pregnancy period in which there is not distinguished the sex of the child. However, despite this law, media and doctors report that sex selection abortions are a widespread phenomenon and that the number of selective abortions is great.

In the Resolution of 1829 of the Council of Europe in 2011, the Parliamentary Assembly lifted public for the first times its concern that the use of selective abortion in countries like Albania will create a natural lack of gender balance. According to the report in Albania among children born ratio is 112 boys to 100 girls, which does not correspond with the gender natural population balance.

This is confirmed by the data of the 2011 Census in Albania, where the difference between births boys-girls is evident starting from 2000 and onwards. The table below shows births by sex from 2000 to 2012.4.

Vitet	Meshkuj	Femra
2000	26,686	24,556
2001	27,986	25,219
2002	22,369	20,158
2003	23,834	21,479
2004	21,765	19,224
2005	20,616	18,282
2006	19,130	16,761
2007	18,327	16,121
2008	17,625	15,820
2009	18,080	16,034
2010	18,063	15,998
2011	17,849	16,436
2012	18,384	16,911



4 INSTAT official page

From the table above (the official data obtained from INSTAT) we see that every year the number of births of guys is several times greater than that of girls, what can lead us to the conclusion that the preference for having boys in the albanian families is greater than for the girl child. This in itself is a concern both in terms of child protection of girls as well as policies of implementation of a legislation to effectively bann selective abortion.

According to doctor Rovena Moisiu "Selective abortion is a hotspot for which many colleagues were against. Many of my colleagues, or representatives of the Ministry of Health did not accept, because it is a phenomenon that has not received significant numbers and is not accepted like an idea. But then there were some studies, which indirectly lead to selective abortion. One of these is the male female ratio at birth ".

In any normal population, according to her, this ratio is 105 males per 100 females. This report is one in every country regardless of ethnicity, race, etc., against the Albanian population and does not constitute discrimination. This relationship began deteriorating in Asian countries, but this is a familiar phenomenon and have been declared by the ancestors, then started the breaks and in some European countries, where one of the countries with high numbers is Albania. "In 2010, the ratio went 112 boys to 100 girls, then based on the last census 116 males per 100 females, a report that is not normal, not natural and that means that the man has put his his hand on it" states Moisiu.

ALBANIAN LAW ON ABORTION

Unlike the communist regime legislation that prohibited abortion and the doctor who performed it, if discovered, he was sentenced to 5 years in prison. The new law, drafted in 1991, allows abortion but puts some limitations. In Albania the law allows voluntary abortion until the 12th week of gestation, when it is not yet possible to determine the sex of the fetus in

terms of the equipment used in Albania. After 12 weeks the voluntary abortion is illegal and a criminal offense. It can be medical and until week 22 of pregnancy to preserve the health of the mother and to prevent the birth of children with inherited genetic diseases that make their birth incompatible with life. In this case, abortion is made by the decision of a committee composed of three doctors of different specialties.

Determining the sex of the baby usually is detected in the second month of pregnancy, or at week 16, and the decision is taken at this time to terminate a pregnancy in cases of selective abortion. Meanwhile, the intervention at the moment is illegal, as the Albanian law as mentioned above allows up to 12 weeks and therefore it is not carried out in public institutions, what leads to the conclusion that is performed in private clinics. And selective abortion is one of the reasons that abortion was banned to be performed in the latter. Meanwhile, the intervention at the moment is illegal, as the Albanian law as mentioned above allows up to 12 weeks and therefore not carried out in public institutions, what leads to the conclusion that is performed in private clinics. And selective abortion is one of the reasons that banned abortion be performed in the latter. While the public has a committee system, where it takes a woman with such age pregnancy to abort and must have compelling reasons that are the life of the mother and abnormalities incompatible with life of the baby.

FACTORS THAT ENCOURAGE THE PHENOMENON OF PREFERENCE FOR BOYS IN THE ALBANIAN CONTEXT

Factors related to community norms and pressure. These factors are grouped into three categories: cultural factors, socio-economic factors and factors related to community norms and pressure.

Cultural factors

-The need for boys stems from the importance of the transmission of the family surname and identity the

subsequent generations, as well as boys have an obligation to protect the family from the dangers and stand up to honor the family.

- The factors socioeconomic

According to perception, boys have more economic opportunities than girls, because they can work and migrate, keeping parents and entire family financially. In addition, boys have the right to inherit family land and property, especially in small rural communities.

- Community Pressure

There is pressure on the number of children and family composition, which has an indirect impact on the preference or the need to have a son in the family. Albanian society remains patriarchal. It exists the division of gender roles in public and private life as well as gender discrimination, despite new trends in terms of lifestyle and gender relations.

The new Life - old in the city

Selective abortion is not a new problem in our society. In traditional patriarchal system, girls are thought to be born to leave the house. There exists an expression that is routinely heard in Albanian families, “the girl is born in a foreign house and leaves to her own home” and therefore is somehow outside the family. Traditionally they do not carry the surname of the family as a result if a family has only daughters, means that the family will disappear.

Experts in the sector say that for many years during communism, the problem was no longer an issue. But now with the extension of the transition period, the existence of a legal vacuum on abortion, and institutional weakness - selective abortion seems to be back in use.

Albanian society is characterized by a growing polarization, when this subject is mentioned: Many Albanians living in larger cities tend to classify the case as a typical speed

of the north of the country, which is considered the most backward.

Most abortions are performed in cities, where most of the population lives, especially in the capital, Tirana. Mass migration, resulting in a chaotic lack of cohesion and formation of parallel current social groups that have little contact with each other. Mostly women who tend to have an abortion when they hear that they are expecting a baby female usually come from the north of the country. Although living in the city now, they continue to act as if they were still in their mountain villages. According to reports on corruption in Albania, doctors seem to be the most corrupt of the categories in the country.

CONSEQUENCES IN A SOCIETY THAT PREFERS BABY BOYS

What are the short and long term effects of prenatal sex selection?

The current "not proportional" in the gender ratio at birth leads to a surplus of adult men, which can provoke contraction of marriages due to lack of women. "The situation can be aggravated more as say digits. This is because the stock of marriages is also sensitive to changes in demographic structures. If men fail to get married during a period, they try to get married in the next period, thus creating a 'stock' single, that is will exacerbate the imbalances in the marriage market. High demand for bride caused by the surplus of young men, can bring the "return of early marriages" that were prevalent in traditional Albanian past. The current imbalance in the gender ratio of reproductive age may encourage emigration, Albania may be deprived of a significant percentage of the male population of working age, and may not be able to fully utilize demographic bonus resulting from demographic transition. There are negative implications for women and girls. The experience of China and India shows that the absence of women may be associated with increased gender violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation. "

The study recommends to the authorities and civil society in Albania the beginning of a broader dialogue on the implementation of policies to reduce gender discrimination before birth.

A.Gjonça demographer, says, "Currently, the ratio of male-female birth has gone to 100 female births against 111 men. If we continue at this pace, it is expected that in the next 20 years to have over 11 per cent more men than women "

Normal sex ratio at birth is 100 to 105. The greatest natural amount of boys born is later balanced with the biggest deaths of male babies and children. But if the numbers of boys is so great, then demographics are out of balance. In India, there live seven million more boys than girls. In Asia, says the population expert Christophe, from the Institute for Development at the University Paris-Descartes, 117 million women are missing. They are not allowed to arise, or are neglected with deadly consequences after birth. Worldwide, there is a lack of 160 million girls and women. The focus of demographers, besides Albania, are placed three other Balkan countries, Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo. Guilmoto says the report of 100 girls' 112 boys in Albania is at the top, followed by Kosovo and Montenegro with 110 or 109 boys. Macedonia birth ratio is 100 girls and 106 boys, close to natural relations, but in some municipalities this ratio is different. These are countries with high proportion of the Albanian population continues Guilmoto. "The desire of parents to have male descendants is definitely the biggest Albanian cultural in the districts," says the demographer from Paris. This common desire is not only to Muslims, but also to Orthodox and Catholics in the country. It's sad, but you know, that abortion of unborn women is a cultural phenomenon, rooted in archaic worldview family. Boys retain the name, which is left when girls get married and leave their family. Traditionally, boys are taking care for parents.

It's a paradox, but medical advances have meant that parents fulfill traditional wishes for boys and girls are

discriminated against. Developments in the Balkans are alarming, says Christophe Guilmoto. The consequences of the lack of gender balance are dramatic, most women do not find husbands, violence, prostitution and the white meat trade is growing. The European Union should take over abortion problems in the Balkans, stationery German newspaper concludes.

ALTHOUGH PRENATAL SEX SELECTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE VIOLATION OF GENDER EQUALITY

Abortion because of the sex of the child selection, namely to non-medical reasons is discrimination of girls and violates the right to equality. State laws and policies are against the discrimination of Albanian girls. Prenatal sex selection adds discriminatory practices in child rearing. The process of socialization, how we grow and discriminatory cultural practices we have learned, often affect our belief systems and decision-making. Our country is characterized by a patriarchal family system where boys are considered necessary to perpetuate family. In contrast, girls are seen as a transitional member of their birth families because they will leave after the wedding.

Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, organized in Cairo (ICPD), advised to eliminate "all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root that causes the preference for baby boy, which leads in practice harmful and unethical for baby girls and selection of sex before birth. "(Paragraph 4:16). The agreement by consensus also says that" leaders at all levels of our society must express and act forcefully against patterns of gender discrimination within the family, based on preference for sons. One aim should be to eliminate artificial mortality of girls, wherever such a pattern exists. "5

CONCLUSIONS

Selecting the sex of the child is a typical action, seen by people as in the best interests of their immediate, but in fact is a violation of human rights and as such may leave lasting consequences in serious social levels. Although the term sounds like outdated the figures are increasingly growing. It seems that in some cases, to grow boys is not only a matter that has to do with pride, but also a matter of family honor and dignity. In most cases the pregnancy terminated are only girls. Although it is not visible on the surface, underneath exists this phenomenon. The ties of the Albanian family remain strong. This decision often comes from the husband, her mother in law, sisters in law or relatives. Selective abortion is made at a greater age than the ordinary, when the fetus has passed in the third and this has high-risk for mothers and is inconsistent with the national law. The one that aborts uses other ways, not legitimate, because abortion in this age it is not lawful as we said, it skips the hospital, despite the fact that may remain sterile. It is difficult to perform it in a public hospital and that is why we have not many statistics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Before the introduction of any regulation is necessary to widely spread information and knowledge on the extent of discriminatory behavior, their future consequences for the demographic composition of society.
- Awareness of the people and the development of advocacy campaigns towards greater gender equality
- The role of the media is indispensable for this phenomenon.
- According to doctors the baby's sex until the 12th week is 20% accurate so the baby's sex has nothing to show for as long as parents allegedly are committing a selective abortion
- Most of these abortions are not performed in public clinics (as from data). If they happen, they are carried out in private

clinics. So care must be taken to intervene to improve the service offered by these clinics.

- campaign to make young couples more aware that the chance of having a female child would be accepted with as much joy as that thought for a guy.
- Establishment of a task force group in order, to monitor the abortion.

STORIES OF WOMEN ABOUT THEIR PREGNANCY

• *I have two daughters. When I found out I was pregnant I decided to make a visit to see what it was - says Monda- because my husband wanted to be a son. There they told me it was a baby girl and that my mother in law decided to perform an abortion because it was not good to have three daughters. I told her it was a bad thing to do, but she was concerned about what my husband and relatives would say. In conclusion, even why the doctors disagreed, I performed the abortion - tells the woman in a television transmission.*

• *A woman in an aggravated psychological condition wanted to abort the daughter, because "they do not accept me at home, they call me unable to have sons. My father in law said to me that I am not capable, we have only sons, I have four boys" ...*

• *Three years ago I was hospitalized. I was pregnant. In the room came a woman who only cried. We asked her what was wrong and she had told us: "I have three girls at home and I am still waiting another girl. This is not the problem, but my husband says that I should abort her or I shouldn't go back at home". She did as much as she could, but the doctors carried out her baby, even why she was at her 7th moth of pregnancy. She told her experience at "PASDITE" in " Top Channel" (national Albanian television channel)*

• *My sister in law had two daughters and remained pregnant for the third time, but had an abortion when she was four months after she was expecting a girl. She did it due to the pressure of her husband, as he said: "If you do not make me with*

sons, get back to your parents" - says a woman from Dibra (detached from the study of "the unbalanced report of sex ratios at birth in Albania" 2012) . A congratulation that is common when a young couple was married was "Have a son now." The manly pride fades as if the young couple did not bring to life an infant male sex.

- "My husband's family was upset ... I felt inferior and withdrawn because I was giving birth to daughters," says a mother from Bathorja (outside of Tirana).

- Tirana, cold autumn day, I was in the waiting room in the gynecological clinic which is the largest in the country - shows Esmeralda (incorrect name for purposes of confidentiality) - waiting in line. A woman dressed in plain clothes with too much color with a strong emphasis on Geg dialect, asked me what I'm doing at the clinic and then she told that she is pregnant. "Let's hope it's a boy because a boy brings the entire family luck. A girl is not good. "I ask why, but she briefly answers." So it is, this is our tradition. Here in Tirana, with all these foreign influences, people claim that they do not understand some things. "I asked what she would do if she was a girl." I do not know, is a decision of the family . This is not a tragedy for me, but it is clear that this is a family decision. These things are important. "If the fetus is female, it is very likely that Esmeralda will have to abort.

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