Supplementary File 1 – Gender-based discrimination and son preference in Punjabi-Canadian families: a community-based participatory qualitative research study.

Additional Methods & Results

Table 1: Focus Group Discussion Guide (for mothers)

<table>
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<th>Section 1 – Demographics and Family Dynamics associated with family planning</th>
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| **1. Why are you/did you decide to have children?**  
(Examine societal/cultural/family expectations vs. individual choice)  
**Probes**  
- Did you always want to have children?  
- Why do you want children now? Why do you want to keep having children (if applicable)? |
| **2. To what extent were family members involved in family planning?**  
**Prompt** - These family members could be your husband, husband’s family, mother, extended family etc.  
- Which family members? Why?  
  *Definitely ask about Husband? Mother-in-law? (If time permits, also ask about Mother? Father-in-law? Father? Extended family?)*  
  - What do/did these family members say or do?  
    - What opinions did they share with you? These opinions could include:  
      - When to have children (e.g., certain age, how long after marriage)?  
      - How many to have?  
      - How many girls?  
      - How many boys?  
      - Boys/girls in any particular order?  
    - Where do you think their opinions come from?  
    - What do you think about their opinions?  
    - To what extent do their opinions differ from yours? If opinions differ, why?  
  - Do you find it helpful to talk with these family members? Why or why not?  
  - How do these conversations occur?  
    - Are these formal conversations or opinions that are expressed casually/in-passing?  
    - Do you initiate these talks or does the family member?  
    - Why do you want to talk to this person or why does this person want to talk to you?  
  - To what extent do you feel the need to do what family members suggest? Do you do what is suggested? Why or why not?  
  - Have/do any members of your family accompany you to medical appointments related to family planning or pregnancy? |
| **3. Is there one instance in particular that you remember having a conversation about family planning?**  
*Definitely ask about Husband? Mother-in-law?*  
*If time permits, also ask about Mother? Father-in-law? Father? Extended family?* |
Section 2: Son Preference

4. What is your understanding of Lohri?
   - Is this practice important to you? Your family? Extended family?
   - For those of you with a son, did you have a Lohri? Can you tell us about it?
   - How has this practice changed since the time you were growing up to now?

5. Have you heard of “The Pink Ladoo Project” and “Lohri for Her”?
   - If you have, can you share what you know about them?
   - What do you think of these events?
   - Have you participated?
   Facilitator actions:
   - Show campaign branding and local media for these events.
   - Pink Ladoo Project (Toronto Star); Lohri for Her (Brampton Guardian)

6. Each of you has at least one daughter, how did you feel when you found out you were having her?
   - Would you have felt differently if you had a son? If yes, why?

7. How did your family react when they found out you were having a daughter?
   Definitely ask about Husband? Mother-in-law?
   If time permits, also ask about Mother? Father-in-law? Father? Extended family?
   - Why do you think they reacted this way?
   - Would they have felt differently if you had a son? If yes, why?
   - To what extent was the reaction of your parents different from that of your in-laws?
   - How did your family’s reactions impact you?
   - Did any of your family members attend doctor’s appointments with you? Who?

8. Is there a preference for sons in the community?
   - If yes, why does it exist?
   - When did you first become aware of son preference? (age, specific event?)
   - Who benefits from son preference?
   - What do you think about son preference? (okay with it, complacent or do you object to it?)
   - How has son preference impacted your life? (probe for specific events/realizations)
   - Are daughters within families treated differently than sons?
   - Are families with no sons treated differently within the community?
   - In what family circumstances would having a son be more important?

9. To your knowledge, are there specific ways in which families within the community try to have sons (instead of daughters)?
   - Are there cultural or spiritual practices (e.g., praying) that are done within the community? What are the practices/customs and who does them? Do you think they work? Why or why not?
   - Are there medications or traditional remedies used in the community to try to have a son? Where does the medication come from? Do you think they work? Why or why not?
   - Are there particular medical practices or technologies that people use to try to have a son?
** If not brought up by participants- ask whether:
  o Is abortion or sex-selective technology being used in the community?
  o Where do people go to use these services? If not in Ontario – where is it done and who
    arranges it? How do participants know about this? Does anyone accompany the mother?
  ● Are some ways of having a son more popular than others?
  ● How do people hear about these ways to try to have a son?
  ● Generally, who is the most knowledgeable about these methods?

### Section 3: Education Content

10. **To what extent should son preference change in the community?**
    ● Why or why not?
    ● How do you think change could happen?
    If widely different responses to the above question– Facilitator shall preface remaining questions
    with - “I recognize that there are varying opinions present in the room with respect to son-
    preference and it is not expected that all of you contribute to the remainder of the discussion.
    However, even if you do not think views on son preference in the community should be changed,
    we welcome you to help us by thinking about the following questions and sharing your
    thoughts.”

11. **What is the most important thing that should/should not be done or said to create change
    about son preference and gender equity in the Punjabi community?**
    ● Who would be involved? (Mothers? Fathers? Grandmothers? Grandfathers? Extended
      family?)
    ● What would be the effect or outcome? (e.g., more open communication between
      husband and wife, husband being more active in family planning discussions)
    ● How would this happen? What conditions need to be in place for this change to occur
      (within families or within the community)?
    ● Why would this be an effective approach?
    ● What impact would such changes have on the community? Both positive and negative?
    Facilitator actions: Read suggestions aloud for who, what, why and how (Q11).

12. **Of all these suggestions, with a show of hands, which one do you think would be most
    successful in creating change about son-preference?**

13. **The research team is thinking of developing a brochure for the community with the goal of
    changing the community’s mind about son preference. We will incorporate any suggestions you
    provide as best we can.**
    ● Do you think a brochure is an effective method to reach people in the community? Is
      there a different method that would be more effective?
      Probe: For those of who have heard of Lohri for her and the Pink Ladoo Project, how did you
      hear about them? Were their methods of reaching you effective or not and why?
    ● Who is the target audience for the brochure (or other method)?
    ● Do you have any advice/suggestions about how to best deliver this information? (e.g.,
      text, graphic, story-telling vs. factual)
    Facilitator action: review the purpose of the study and then ask.
    Have we missed anything or is there anything else you’d like to add?
    On behalf of the research team, we’d like thank you very much for sharing your thoughts with us
today.
Additional Results:

Focus Group Discussion Themes

(2) Experiences of pressure to bear sons- CONTINUED

2b) Personal and family reactions to the birth of a girl - the importance of birth order and the sex of previous children

Grandmothers reactions to the birth of granddaughters appeared to be more nuanced. In addition to birth order, reactions differed slightly if the granddaughter was born on the son or the daughter’s side. A granddaughter on the son’s side interfered with notions related to lineage and old age security for the grandmother, while a granddaughter on the daughter’s side appeared to have less personal impact but concern was expressed for the daughter since it would lower her standing in her in-laws house. There appeared to be a tendency for grandmothers who had no daughters of their own to have more positive reactions to granddaughters, even when no grandson was present on the son’s side. Grandmother 301, 304, 307 and 308 had no daughters, but all expressed positive feelings about having a granddaughter.

“...I wish I had another daughter. When I had my granddaughter, I felt my [deceased] daughter come back” (307)

“I was so happy when I had my first granddaughter. I wasn’t even this happy when I had my first son” (308)

(4) Knowledge of methods for sex selection - CONTINUED

(4c) Distancing self from methods of sex selection.

Grandmothers in one focus group (residing in an area of Toronto with more established immigrants) alluded to sex-selective practices occurring elsewhere, namely among “uneducated people”, “poor people” or in communities in the Greater Toronto Area with more recent Punjabi immigrants. Similarly, no participants stated knowing anyone who had an abortion done in Canada, but several participants
alluded to these practices occurring in India. No participants admitted to personally encouraging or forcing women they knew to participate in these methods.

(6) Reproductive decision-making and family planning.

Several mothers suggested that formal discussions around reproductive decision-making were not routine because there was a societal and cultural expectation to have children soon after marriage. Only one mother explicitly mentioned that her husband gave input about family planning.

All fathers indicated that they wanted to have children but only one of the four fathers indicated formal discussions with his wife about family planning.

A few of the grandmothers mentioned having discussions with their husbands, but many had unplanned pregnancies. One grandmother mentioned there was no such thing as family planning after she got married in India, and another suggested that people were shy to discuss family planning in her time. Grandmothers were asked if and how they were involved in family planning with their daughters or daughter-in-laws. According to grandmothers, there wasn’t a need to have such discussions or that they were not asked their opinions.

(7) Individual and community efforts to resist son preference.

One mother described her effort to resist the pressures and break the cycle of son preference.

“I’ve always faced lots of comments [from my family] that ‘boys are boys’ and I can’t compete with them. I can’t change my husband but I started teaching my son housework now and my mother-in-law hates it”. (110).

Focus group participants were also specifically asked about their participation in a growing social movement within the Punjabi-Canadian community started in Toronto, Canada in 2011 called “Lohri for Her” which celebrates the birth of daughters. Lohri for Her holds a joint event for parents with newborn

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baby girls and encourages them to celebrate their births collectively. Lohris are traditionally reserved for
the birth of sons and celebrated with a bonfire in January of every year. Only one mother indicated having
a Lohri for the birth of her daughter but this may be because the majority of mothers gave birth to their
daughters before 2011. No fathers had heard about it but all thought it was a good idea and one indicated
that he would do it. Two grandmothers noted taking part in Lohri celebrations for their granddaughters.
Educational infoposter development

Supplementary Figure 1: Truths about son preference – English infoposter (full format)
Supplementary Figure 3: Truths about son preference – Hindi translation infoposter (full format)

सत्य 1
भारतीय-मैनिल क्षेत्र में कुछ लोगों के लिए ही प्राथमिकता प्रदान करते हैं।

सत्य 2
भारतीय-मैनिल क्षेत्र में कुछ लोग, पिता और पुत्र को लेकर घर वाली लड़ाई कर रहे हैं।

सत्य 3
महिलाओं और उनके पिताओं को व्यक्तिगत रूप से अपना उत्तर करने के लिए निम्नलिखित जरूरी है।

आदेश पूर्ववर्ती संस्कृति के साथ इसका संबंध है।

आदेश हम अपनी पूर्वजों को उनकी कई योग्यताओं और तात्कालिक लिए सम्मान और जश्न मनाएँ।

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