

## Card 6: Gender Expectations of Unborn Child in Pregnancy

Having constant pressure from oneself, family or society to have a male child can often make a woman feel very stressed during pregnancy and result in postpartum mental health problems.

The pressure to have a male infant causes stress or a girl child's birth may lead to disappointment. Therefore, it is important to understand and identify unrealistic/problematic expectations related to the sex of the baby during pregnancy.



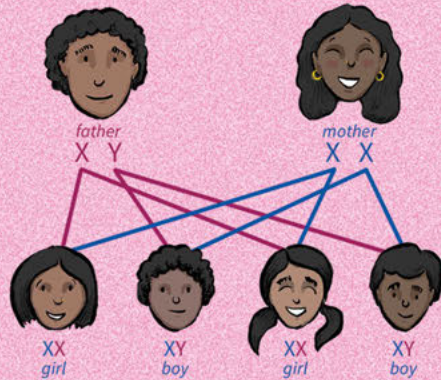
Assess by asking the following questions:

- How often do you worry about whether you will have a male baby or a female baby?
- How much do you feel pressurised by your husband or family to give birth to a male child?
- Do you feel having a male baby is more valued/advantageous? If yes, then ask to elaborate (explore what the perceived advantages are like? For examples:
  - Males are considered superior, easier to safeguard than girls.
  - It is believed that raising girls could contribute to financial burden later in life - marriage or dowry.
  - Males will take care of parents later in life, family/community expects an heir to the family.
- Check if there has been domestic violence related to gender preference.



If you find that there is no gender preference, appreciate the woman and her family. Offer the following helpful suggestions to all.

## Helpful Suggestions



Educate the family about how the gender of a baby is determined. It is the father's chromosomes that have a role in determining whether the baby is a boy or a girl.



Encourage the mother to discuss these issues with her husband

In this era, girls are taking on more roles in fields of education, finance, household responsibilities and hence are considered assets rather than liabilities.



Encourage them to discuss whether they were disappointed with the baby's gender in the past and how neglecting that can affect the baby's wellbeing.



Try making a home visit if you think gender preference maybe a problem in the postpartum so that you can create a better environment at home. Inform about programs by the government to ensure protection and benefits for girl children such as:

In the case of ancestral property, a daughter can acquire, hold, and dispose of, Property at par with any other man.

There are multiple scholarships and schemes for health and education of a girl child that are organised by the Government of India.

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act: To ensure that girl children survive, the government has laws to prevent sex determination. Sex determination of the unborn fetus is prohibited under this law.