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# **A CRITICAL STUDY OF GENDER REVEAL PRACTICES: IMPACTS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND GLOBAL GENDER EQUITY**

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## **Abstract**

The "gender reveal party," a cultural fad that began in the US in the late 00s, has quickly transformed from a low-key family gathering into a high-profile, media-driven extravaganza. This article offers a critical examination of this tradition from an expert's perspective, stating that it is a manifestation of deeply ingrained patriarchal standards and gender preferences around the world, rather than a harmless celebration. The main argument put forth is that when gender reveal culture becomes more popular, it more closely ties biological sex to socially constructed gender. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of maternal mental health morbidities (MMHM) like Postpartum Depression (PPD), worsens prenatal stress, and leads to clearly biased allocation of resources for prenatal care and nutritional investment, especially in areas where there is a strong preference for sons. The study concludes with a thorough gender-transformative policy framework that addresses systemic inequalities instead of relying on ineffectual, restrictive bans to mitigate the social, public health, and ethical repercussions.

## **I. Introduction**

Thanks to the broad availability of prenatal sex discernment technology, the gender reveal party has become a relatively modern practice. It is essentially a gathering held during pregnancy to announce the foetal sex to family and friends. Having begun in the US in the late 00s with more subdued methods of proclamation (such as slicing into a coloured cake), the trend has since expanded to include more extravagant, imaginative, and frequently ridiculous methods. The use of pyrotechnics, coloured smoke, piñatas that explode, or a large discharge of coloured balloons is common in modern displays.

There is a direct correlation between the phenomenon's quick spread and intensification and the opportunities presented by social media. Sites like Reddit and TikTok are powerful technical tools that let people express themselves freely and reach an endless audience while

also making money off of it. The demand for spectacle is being fuelled by digital amplification, leading to increasingly risky and weird exploits in pursuit of viral fame. At the same time as social media has enabled a sexuality and gender diversity explosion, it has also given rise to a cultural backlash. This conflict emphasises how gender reveals, which are inherently performance-based, draw on authenticity narratives to uphold a traditional understanding of masculinity and family in the face of changing social standards<sup>1</sup>.

## II. Defining the Misnomer: Sex vs. Gender

A thorough analysis of gender reveal practices needs to start with fixing the naming convention's fundamental problem: the mixing of biological and social gender. The term "biological sex" describes the variation in human physiology that arises from variances in hormones, DNA, and anatomy. Gender, on the other hand, describes the psychological, cultural, and behavioural characteristics that are mostly linked with a person's sex and are thus socially constructed. Some critics have more appropriately called it a "genital reveal party" since all the parents learn is about the foetal anatomy and chromosomes, which is technically a disclosure of biological sex.

When society and expecting parents use the term "gender reveal party," they are immediately projecting a web of socially built expectations onto the child. The pink or blue dichotomy, sometimes shown in overly stereotyped themes like "Touchdowns or Tutus," sets prenatal expectations about the child's identity, name, bedroom decor, and social interactions. Gender norm-conforming parents put their children at danger of internalising toxic gender stereotypes and detrimental gender roles, which can impact their health, development, and sense of self in the long run. Disentangling sex from gender reinforces an antiquated, inflexible binary system and restricts children's agency.

### The Adaptive Mechanism of Prenatal Binarism

The gender reveal ritual's institutionalisation shows how patriarchy may adapt to modern times and still have an impact. Before a kid is even born, it allows the life process to be reduced to a simplified binary of genders. A tight "script of welcome" that confirms rigid gender standards is created when identities are assigned too early.

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<sup>1</sup> Carver, Terrell. "Gender." *Political Concepts*, edited by Richard Bellamy and Andrew Mason, Manchester University Press, 2003, pp. 169–81. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt155jbcx.18>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2025.

Its fast growth into a massive consumerist enterprise and the cultural framework around the revelation both point to the existence of a substantial underlying cultural function beyond simple celebration. Performance of the binary is now not only socially convenient but also economically viable, thanks to the reveal's growth into an expressive act that is monetised inside a system that is coextensive with digital technology. Due to the intense market pressure caused by the commercialisation of normativity, the reveal industry has rendered any form of expression that goes against the conventional pink/blue structure monetarily unfeasible.

Additionally, under-represented groups will feel the effects of this enforced binarism the most acutely. The ceremony greatly aids in the establishment of a transphobic culture by institutionalising the belief that one's biological sex determines one's social value and conduct. Because transgender people are more likely to commit suicide or be victims of violent crimes than the general population, the significance of this affective violence is immense. The gender reveal rite frequently treats the two revelations as completely different, honouring the foetal sex and ignoring the disability status, even though prenatal diagnostic technologies can reveal both. Through this mechanism, the cultural belief that children are only truly valued when they adhere to a specific "script of welcome" is perpetuated, leading to a framework of exclusion in society and causing long-term systemic harm<sup>2</sup>.

### **III. Societal and Environmental Consequences of Performative Reveals**

Gender reveal parties have evolved into extreme spectacle events that cause bodily harm and environmental damage due to the obsession with viral videos and extreme spectacle. There have been numerous reported occurrences of externalised aggression due to the growing use of dangerous stunts like pyrotechnics, inadvertent explosives, and exploding targets. These incidents have caused wildfires, substantial pollution, and, tragically, deaths.

In particular, there is a heavy price to pay for the environment. There have been numerous wildfires started by gender reveal devices, causing irreparable harm to the ecosystems in the area. In addition to the devastating fires, the massive quantities of pollutants caused by these events, such as confetti, gender-themed clothing, coloured smoke, and party trash, significantly add to environmental pollution and deterioration. These ostentatious, self-centred displays

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<sup>2</sup> Stoilescu, Dorian, and Douglas McDougall. "Gender Digital Divide and Challenges in Undergraduate Computer Science Programs." *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne de l'éducation*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2011, pp. 308–33. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/canajeducrevucan.34.1.308>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2025.

reveal a more fundamental problem with our culture's carelessness. In order to gain widespread attention, the stakes for validation need to be unnaturally high, and the extreme actions that are necessary to achieve this goal highlight a cultural desperateness to affirm old gender norms. A societal disregard for the physical world and the intricacies of gender is on full display in the necessity of a catastrophic disclosure.

### **The Cultural Backlash and Exclusionary Discipline**

Even the lady generally acknowledged as starting the fad has spoken out against it, citing the obvious ethical blowback. She stressed that the transgender and non-binary communities have suffered greatly as a result of these tragic acts.

The gender binary is reinforced by these acts, which in turn contribute to larger social patterns of exclusion. By praising gender while downplaying other forms of diversity, such as disability, a strict "script of welcome" is created, which in turn perpetuates preexisting prejudices in society. As in other social contexts, this form of predetermination is based on demographics (e.g., gender, race, and disability status) and serves to impose and enforce restricted, predefined standards. Gender reveal rituals have far-reaching effects beyond the home, normalising discrimination and limiting freedoms according to assigned traits<sup>3</sup>.

## **IV. Prenatal Gender Bias and Health Resource Allocation Disparity**

The effects on maternal health practices, distribution of resources, and nutritional status are the most important results of gender preference, which is emphasised and magnified by gender reveal cultures. Globally, women's health is impacted by profound structural gender disparities, which are at the heart of the celebration of one sex and the implied disillusionment with the other.

### **The Global Epidemiology of Son Preference**

There is widespread agreement that patriarchal societies have always favoured sons over daughters as a means of passing wealth down through generations, ensuring financial stability, protecting the family name, and providing for the elderly. Large portions of Asia, including China, India, and the Republic of Korea, as well as countries in the South Caucasus

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<sup>3</sup> Brenner, Alletta. "GAD and Gender Mainstreaming: A Pathway to Sustainable Development?" *Consilience*, no. 2, 2009, pp. 1–22. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26167774>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2025.

(Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, and Albania), have extremely skewed sex ratios at birth (SRBs), with more than 115 males for every 100 females, as opposed to the typical range of around 105. This is mostly due to this preference. Prenatal abortion, infanticide, and postnatal neglect are all forms of sex-selective elimination that contributed to the estimated 100 million women lost in Asia by 1990, contributing to the region's already-present population imbalance.

Socioeconomic factors are multifaceted and correlated with poverty; low-income families are more likely to prioritise having a son. Higher rates of polygyny, divorce, and separation are among the negative social outcomes associated with a mother's infertility in certain societies. Different regions have different views on the importance of a child's gender; for instance, the Dominican Republic shows a preference for daughters, but much of Africa does not have strong or consistent preferences. Similarly, Latin America and the Caribbean tend not to prioritise the child's sex.

### **Bias in Maternal Health Behaviors and Nutritional Investment**

Gender reveal rituals, which recognise pregnant women's awareness or expectation of their foetal sex, may lead to a quantitative bias in the distribution of resources. Studies conducted in countries where the preference is for sons is stronger, like Jordan, show that pregnant women who are expecting a boy have much more frequent prenatal care appointments than those who are expecting a girl. The health of the mother and child, as well as the growth of the foetus, are directly impacted by these variations in how people seek therapy. This provides more evidence that a woman's valuation of her unborn child may influence her reproductive decisions and health behaviours, such as whether or not she seeks out prenatal care.

Concerning the foetal sex, researchers have also examined the mother's nutritional status. A higher caloric and macronutrient intake was associated with a higher birth weight for male infants compared to female infants, according to studies that tracked maternal diets before conception. This lends credence to the ecological theory that states families with plenty of maternal resources are more likely to invest in what may be considered "costly" male offspring. Conversely, certain maternal diets (such as low sodium and high calcium) have been purposefully followed due to the wish to produce a girl<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Higginbotham, Jennifer. "Roaring Girls and Unruly Women: Producing Femininities." *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Sisters: Gender, Transgression, Adolescence*, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, pp. 62–103. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt20q22dc.7>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2025.

This prejudice continues even after the baby is born. Even in the modern day, one of the most pressing public health concerns is the unequal treatment of girls in areas such as education, nutrition, and vaccination programs. Gender bias worsens global inequities in maternal health concerns and dietary issues, as this intergenerational loop shows. Low levels of prenatal care and postnatal support have a negative impact on girls' human capital, which includes their educational attainment and economic potential. These daughters are more prone to experience patriarchal influences that benefit sons since they lack economic power as adults. As a result, gender inequality perpetuates the vicious cycle of poverty and starvation.

### **Contraception and Methodological Challenges**

Even in methods of birth control, there is a constant push to reach a certain sex ratio. Women in nations like Egypt, Nepal, and India who have exclusively sons are five times more likely to use birth control than women in countries where there are no sons at all, indicating a strong desire for sons. In example, waiting to decide on sterilisation until one has a "adequate" number of sons shows how the expectation of sex composition limits reproductive liberty.

Recognising the methodological challenge of completely assessing prenatal resource bias is critical. Families with strong gender preferences may have chosen to have abortions based on their choices, therefore researchers investigating full-term pregnancies may not include them. The current findings might not fully reflect the real disparity in prenatal investment between male and female foetuses due to this selection bias<sup>5</sup>.

## **V. Policy and Ethical Interventions: A Shift to Gender-Transformative Approaches**

By shifting attention away from the gender reveal party as a public spectacle and towards systemic policy measures that address the underlying reasons of gender inequality, we can lessen the impact of prenatal gender bias on women's health and society.

### **Critique of Restrictive Bans**

Bans on the use of modern technologies for sex selection have often been established as an instant response by governments in nations with severely skewed sex ratios at birth. Such

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<sup>5</sup> ELY, ROBIN J., et al. "Taking Gender Into Account: Theory and Design for Women's Leadership Development Programs." *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2011, pp. 474–93. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41318068>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2025.

prohibitions are costly and time-consuming to implement, and they have no effect on reducing the SRB in the long run, according to data from South Korea, China, and India.

Importantly, stringent regulations frequently result in major negative unforeseen effects. While prohibitions do little to combat the systemic factors that devalue females, research shows that they can make unwanted girls and their mothers even more vulnerable to abuse and neglect at home. Even if the goal of financial reward schemes for having a girl is to decrease preference, the message that is ironically sent is that the daughter is not valuable in and of herself.<sup>6</sup>

### **Ethical Guidelines for Healthcare Professionals**

If healthcare systems are serious about preventing medical technology from perpetuating gender discrimination, they must adhere to stringent ethical standards. Disclosure of foetal sex should be medically approved only in countries with a marked sex ratio imbalance, according to the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO). Preventing negative public health and social effects from sex imbalances is an ethical problem, as is striking a balance between a woman's "procreative liberty" and the societal need to safeguard women and children. The promotion and facilitation of gender equality should be a top priority for all health professionals.

### **Gender-Transformative (GT) Policy Frameworks**

By changing social norms and tackling structural inequities, Gender-Transformative (GT) treatments can alleviate son preference and the health concerns it brings. This strategy is both successful and compassionate. Moving forward, we must prioritise promoting gender equality above outright banning technology.

Successful GT interventions include:

- 1. Socio-Economic Safety Nets:** Reducing parental reliance on sons for old-age security and support can be achieved by broader financial initiatives, such as improved health coverage, scholarship programs, and direct subsidies or subsidies for girls. Additionally, the economic strain associated with son preference can be alleviated by empowering women economically and providing them with career opportunities outside of agriculture.

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<sup>6</sup> EVELINE, JOAN, and PATRICIA TODD. "Gender Mainstreaming: The Answer to the Gender Pay Gap?" *Mainstreaming Politics: Gendering Practices and Feminist Theory*, edited by JOAN EVELINE and CAROL BACCHI, University of Adelaide Press, 2010, pp. 163–90. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.20851/j.ctt1t30564.15>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2025.

2. **Norm Change and Education:** To change cultural value systems and get families to see daughters and sons as having equal worth, we need policies that use mass messaging, comprehensive sexual health education (CSE), and legislative measures (such as equitable inheritance laws).
3. **Engaging Fathers and Partners:** In order to improve maternal mental health outcomes, GT therapies frequently employ couple-based techniques and discussion groups. These methods encourage men to take responsibility, provide social support, and decrease gender-based limitations such as domestic violence.

These all-encompassing methods can improve girls' life-chances while simultaneously reducing son preference.

### **Addressing Structural Discrimination Beyond the Clinic**

Discrimination based on a woman's gender affects her in ways that extend beyond her reproductive health and into her professional life. "Maybe Baby Bias" (MBB) is a way of describing the systemic bias that women face in the workplace because of their reproductive responsibilities. The assumption that young, childless women will conceive gives rise to discrimination against them in the job. Anger, discriminatory questions about "breeding plans" at employment interviews (which go against the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978), and higher intentions to leave the workforce among women without children highlight the substantial societal costs associated with a woman's ability to bear children. Strict enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and equitable maternity and paternity leave regulations are necessary policies to dispel the myth that women's professional worth decreases when they become mothers<sup>7</sup>.

Finally, we should investigate the possibility that online spaces amplify gender stereotypes in both their visibility and their negative impacts. Ethical responsibility is required of social media for enabling dangerous gender reveal pranks and for helping spread regressive ideas that threaten gender diversity. Victims of real-life violence against women and minorities may choose to avoid the internet altogether if they encounter harmful gender-based information. To protect users from harmful information and to stop the spread of harmful gender-based norms that promote discrimination, lawmakers should think about making social media sites

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<sup>7</sup> Kitterød, Ragni Hege, and Marjan Nadim. "Embracing Gender Equality: Gender-Role Attitudes among Second-Generation Immigrants in Norway." *Demographic Research*, vol. 42, 2020, pp. 411–40. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26936794>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2025.

use tailored content moderation procedures<sup>8</sup>.

## VI. Conclusion

Despite its superficiality as a consumerist ritual, the contemporary gender reveal party serves as a potent cultural instrument that upholds the stifling gender binary. By highlighting the foetal sex, this approach normalises and strengthens deeply ingrained gender preferences. The research shows that there is a direct causal relationship between the cultural performance and major reproductive health issues for women. Specific mother mental health morbidities, such as anxiety, acute antenatal stress, and heightened risk of postpartum depression, are further exacerbated by guilt and shame, and are directly linked to the pressures associated with prenatal gender expectation. In addition, situations where there is a strong desire for sons lead to measurable health disparities, such as a lack of adherence to prenatal care and unequal distribution of resources for female foetuses.

Importantly, sex-selection restrictions that are both punitive and ineffectual do not solve the problem; in fact, they make undesired girls and their mothers more vulnerable to abuse. A dedication to all-encompassing Gender-Transformative (GT) policy frameworks is necessary to lessen the negative effects on nutrition and health. To eliminate the structural disparities that make a woman's socioeconomic status, access to resources, and health experience dependent on her foetal sex, these initiatives must function on various levels, including clinical, socioeconomic, legislative, and technical. True gender equity, in which a child's worth is not contingent on their sex, and the protection of a mother's health and autonomy in making reproductive decisions despite cultural pressures, must be the ultimate aim.

## VII. Suggestions (Recommendations)

This paper proposes an integrated framework of suggestions based on a critical analysis of gender reveal practices and their demonstrated association with bad health outcomes and resource disparities:

### Clinical and Public Health Recommendations

#### 1. Mandatory Integration of Gender-Transformative Antenatal Care (ANC):

Standardized ANC models incorporating couple-based interventions and support

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<sup>8</sup> Young, Marisa C. "Gender Differences in Precarious Work Settings." *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2010, pp. 74–97. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23078260>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2025.

groups should be implemented by health systems. Major risk factors for MMHM include inadequate social support and intimate partner abuse; these interventions should screen for these issues and work to encourage shared parental duties and actively challenge traditional gender norms.

- 2. Standardized Screening and Management of Gender Disappointment (GD):** All pregnant women should be required to undergo screenings for GD and related prenatal stress by perinatal mental health services. Professionals in the medical field need to know that GD is a major risk factor for postpartum depression (PPD), so they can validate patients' feelings and help them get the help they need to deal with their grief and guilt without feeling judged.
- 3. Strict Enforcement of Ethical Disclosure Guidelines:** The disclosure of foetal sex for non-medical reasons should be heavily regulated and restricted by healthcare professionals and professional societies (such as FIGO) in areas with a high sex ratio imbalance. This will help protect people from sex-selective practices and the health risks they pose.

#### **Policy and Legislative Recommendations**

- 1. Prioritization of Economic Empowerment and Social Security:** Financial assistance programs (such as subsidies or scholarships) aimed at families with daughters, as well as health coverage and state-level old-age pensions, should be expanded by governments. These measures mitigate the economic precarity that has long supported the traditional reliance on sons as a source of safety. In addition, there has to be a redoubling of efforts to get women working in fields other than agriculture.
- 2. Strengthening Gender Equity in the Workplace:** In order to eradicate "Maybe Baby Bias" and safeguard women from discrimination in the workplace based on their reproductive potential, legislative bodies should tighten the enforcement of anti-discrimination statutes like the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. To fairly disperse the perceived cost of reproduction and to decrease structural constraints associated with women's responsibilities, it is vital that policy parity in parental leave (including maternity and paternity) be maintained.
- 3. Investment in Long-Term Normative Change:** Permanent, all-encompassing media and educational initiatives to change long-established gender norms should be supported by policy. In order to empower teenagers, these campaigns should promote

good gender norms, advocate for girls' and boys' equal value, and help fund life skills training and comprehensive sexual health education.

### **Societal and Technological Recommendations**

- 1. Technological Accountability and Content Moderation:** The encouragement of harmful or ecologically disastrous gender reveal pranks must be explicitly prohibited by social media networks' content moderation policies. Equally important is the need for action to combat the widespread dissemination of damaging gender stereotypes and anti-equality ideology, which fuel both virtual and physical forms of violence against women.
- 2. Promoting Non-Binary Welcome Narratives:** Community and cultural leaders ought to push for new "scripts of welcome" that joyfully celebrate the baby's arrival regardless of their biological sex. A more inclusive and less restrictive environment is created from the moment of birth onwards as the emphasis moves from gender assignment to human development. This shift acknowledges neurodiversity, disability status, and the eventual self-determination of gender identity.

