INDIAN FAMILIES

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IN FAMILY RESEARCH
VOLUME 26

INDIAN FAMILIES: CONTEMPORARY FAMILY STRUCTURES AND DYNAMICS

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Megha Jacob is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Economics from the TERI School of Advanced Studies, Delhi. Her areas of specialization are development and health economics, public finance, macroeconomics, and environmental economics. Her research interests include the economics of health, education, gender, tourism, climate change, MSMEs, and local governance. She is the recipient of the SAARC Education Award for her outstanding contribution in the areas of environmental education. She has worked on several Indian government-funded projects for NHRC, Ministry of Labour, NIEPA, Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation,

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Barani Kanth is currently an Associate Professor at the Department of Applied Psychology, Pondicherry University, India. He was a recipient of Raman post-doctoral fellowship awarded by University Grants Commission, India, and worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Psychological Sciences, Kent State University, Ohio, USA. His areas of interest include family psychology and counseling, psychology of interpersonal relationships, and quantitative methods in psychology. He has published works in the area of couple and family relationships, premarital romantic relationships, cross-cultural validation of measurement instruments and dyadic data analysis. He is the lead author of an upcoming book published by Springer Nature titled *Measuring Couples and Family Dynamics in India: Cultural Adaptations and Validations*, which is a source book of 19 culturally validated measurement instruments in family psychology. Recently, he and his team of researchers have developed and validated a curriculum-based training module namely *Personal Relationship Education Programs for Young Adults* that aims at improving interpersonal skills among youth for better mental health and relationship outcomes. He is an active member of International Association of Relationship Research and an invited member of the Scientific Committee for Cross-Cultural Research, Division-52 (International Division) of American Psychological Association. He serves on the editorial board of leading journals such as *Marriage and Family Review* and *Interpersona*. Besides teaching at the university, he also conducts regular training programs and workshops for industrial organizations on mental health, relationships at work, and work–life balance. Apart from psychology and relationship research, he is interested in mindfulness meditation, Indian mythology, and astrology.

Shivani Katara has always been driven to understand the forces that shape our existence within the society and influence the way we think, feel, and act. Structural dynamics of society, such as values, norms, religion, culture, gender, ethnicity, social and political institutions, and legislation, have always intrigued her. While pursuing her bachelors in Dental Surgery, she got interested in the social and personal aspects of health, illness, and utilization of care. She realized that every person is responding to their social or local worlds in which there is some kind of organization that shapes their everyday behavior and choices. She explored for an academic course dovetailed to this interest. Sociology as an interdisciplinary field has provided her a lens to look at these crucial areas objectively and framed her understanding about the world.

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FOREWORD

With a rich and diverse cultural history dating back over 4,000 years, India is a unique society, by any measure. In 2023, its population of over 1.4 billion people surpassed its neighbor, China, and became the most populated country in the world. Although it is a collectivistic culture, there are over 120 languages spoken in India, across over 700 ethnic groups. Many religious groups exist in India, but the vast majority of the population adheres to the Hindu faith. Its long history of caste stratification, wherein there are approximately 3,000 distinct castes, further underscores the complexity of Indian culture. Yet, like other societies around the globe, Indian society and its culture revolve around its central social institution – the family.

Familial norms in India have a considerably long history, and understandably, many of the qualities of family structures and relationships have existed for many centuries. Indian families are often noted for their size, as its pronatalist culture has resulted in relatively high fertility rates, coupled with a strong tendency toward the maintenance of strong intergenerational ties. Hence, families with multiple children and a broad assortment of kin from multiple generations are common. The strength of familial bonds among Indian families is also seen in one of its more common family structures, the joint family, wherein it is common for adult siblings to live together, along with their respective spouses and children, in the same home. Such traits are viewed as providing greater stability and loyalty within families and providing an enduring strength to the family, itself. Indian culture has a long history of patriarchy, and this is readily evident within families, as patriarchal families have long been the norm, as is patrilineal lineage. With a firm hierarchy of authority across generations, parents tend to exercise considerable control over the lives of their children, who are expected to quickly comply with parental requests. The common practice of arranged marriage in India is evidence of the extent to which parents retain control. With its history of patriarchy, there is a strong preference among couples to bear sons. This preference, however, has resulted in a variety of practices, including female infanticide, that has led to a skewed sex ratio, with substantially more males than females in the adult population. Nonetheless, the expectation of marriage, childbearing, and the maintenance of the family has always been core norms within Indian culture.

On the one hand, India, along with its families, has an incredibly long history. However, like many other societies, it has also experienced substantial change over recent decades. The combinations of economic, political, social, and cultural changes have led to notable variations in many of the aforementioned attributes. In some parts of the country, particularly in urban areas, individual nuclear family units are becoming more commonplace. Arranged marriages remain common, yet many young adults openly prefer to choose intimate partners without

parental influence. Egalitarian gender roles within marriage, with wives wielding equal authority, are also increasing in prominence. Even fertility rates have fallen substantially, resulting in smaller numbers of children and, of course, smaller generations within families. Simply, Indian families are changing, and in ways which absolutely require the attention of researchers.

In this volume of Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research, a variety of researchers attempt to delve into many of the contemporary family structures and relationship dynamics among Indian families. In doing so, a number of fascinating discoveries are revealed, and the tremendous diversity across families in India is also demonstrated. In "No Preference? An Examination of Child Sex Preferences in Rural South India," Ashley Larsen Gibby, Tiffany Fox Okeke, Nancy Luke, Melissa Alcaraz, and Mikaela Dufur explore the nature of sex preference among childbearing couples, along with the consequences of such preferences for the resulting children. Using a large sample from Southern India, they demonstrate that approximately one-fourth of couples expressed no preference for sons (nor daughters), and that children of these couples tended to have fewer mental or emotional issues, during adolescence. Shivani Katara also examines fertility in India, with a focus upon fertility aspirations. In "Fertility Aspirations and Family Planning Behavior: A Qualitative Study in a Small Town of Uttar Pradesh," Katara uses data from a set of qualitative interviews of both women and men, noting that fertility aspirations are readily influenced by a combination of personal, family, and societal factors. Prospective parents are aware of cultural expectations, yet also recognize the outcomes which their fertility choices may have for their children.

In "Exploring the Transitions in Family Structure of Vaddera Community Through a Deconstructive Lens," Sonal Mobar Roy and G. V. Snigdha Raj examine the transitions in family structure among the Vadderas (an indigenous group) in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. While the Vadderas are quite traditional, many of the aspects of family structure and relationships have undergone considerable change as a result of modernization and the many aspects of how their lives have changed, as a result of external forces. Vinod Chandra details the more macro-level changes which Indian families are experiencing in "Changing Landscape of Indian Family." Structural changes in regard to the number of children and the size of the household, along with behavioral and relationship changes, such as in mate selection and childrearing, are slowly, but surely, leading to a new form of Indian family life. In "Menstrual Hygienic Disparity in India: An Inter-State Analysis Using NFHS-5 Indicators," Megha Jacob and Japjot Kaur Saggu explore the usage of hygienic menstrual products, as these patterns of usage are influenced by various factors and differ across regions. Socioeconomic factors are shown to be strongly associated, and the researchers propose that the rural–urban differences in women's health need to be better addressed by existing policies, so as to improve and ensure women's well-being.

Sunil K Verma et al digs deeper into the nuances of intergenerational relationships and family dynamics in changing patterns of family systems in interdependent society. The researchers made special emphasis on Indian perspectives focusing on urban and rural backdrop with 720 participants exploring cultural

attitude, socio economic variables and coping strategies within family. Findings highlighted complex interplay of ambivalence, solidarity, affection and association among family in featuring newer trends in family dynamics.

In "Family Dynamics and Intergenerational Relation in Interdependent Society - An Indian Perspective," Sunil K. Verma, Saswati Bhattacharya, Tushar Singh examine how family relationships, both within and across generations, have changed over time. Using a sample of both urban and rural members of joint families, they note that there are a multitude of factors, including changing cultural norms, urbanization, economic growth, and others which have brought about substantial change in intergenerational relationships. Y. Gunjan Ramraj uses a mixed-methods approach to examine how online matchmaking sites are changing the ways in which young adults find partners and also how this new approach works within the context of traditions and norms concerning mate selection. In "Intermediating Individual and the Community: Indian Family in Online Matchmaking," Gunjan Ramraj finds that young people do seek to have more control over their selection of a partner and make use of the internet to both seek more autonomy, while at the same time respecting the wishes of their elders. In "Premarital Romance, Dating, and Arranged Marriages in India: The Intersection of Tradition and Globalization," Barani Kanth, Ananda Krishnan, and Debasmita Sen also address the changing nature of mate selection in India, as they explore how young adults are increasingly seeking more autonomy and freedom of choice. They note that while young people do engage in romantic and sexual relationships, they frequently face an array of challenges from their families and the larger culture.

B. Devi Prasad and Shivangi Deshwal offer a range of recommendations concerning the changing attributes of Indian family life in their chapter, "My Family: Classroom Exercises on Unlearning and Learning about Families." The exercises which they present address a range of issues, including the myth of a normative family, nature of family change, and multigenerational extended kin relationships. These teaching techniques provide numerous possible usages by researchers, teachers, and practitioners. Finally, Jyoti Sidana addresses the various aspects of change which are impacting the family in "Towards a Sociology of 'New Family' in India." The family, in terms of its prevailing structures and norms, is being affected by a multitude of forces, including economic change and increasing materialism, increases in the elderly population, changing gender ideologies, and the growing presence of technology in family life. All of these are having a substantial impact upon families, along with the very definition of what constitutes a family.

This volume of Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research has presented an excellent collection of studies focusing upon families in India. A prominent theme across the enclosed chapters is that of change. Indian family life is built upon thousands of years of cultural norms, practices, and traditions, yet many of the long-standing traits of Indian families are clearly changing. The changes in structure, such as the growing presence of single nuclear family units, and the changes in norms, such as the increasing desire of young adults to choose their own partners, signal a fundamental shift in how the concept of family is to be

defined in India. Like many societies around the globe, forces such as modernization and urbanization have slowly led families to adapt to the larger societal changes. There is no doubt, whatsoever, that Indian family life will change in coming decades. More importantly, there is also no doubt that they will retain much of the qualities which make them so unique. Researchers of all varieties should focus more attention upon Indian families.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all of the authors for their important contributions to this volume, to all of the anonymous reviewers who provided thoughtful and detailed reviews, and to the invaluable assistance of the members of the editorial board.

Vinod Chandra
Sampson Lee Blair

CHAPTER 1

NO PREFERENCE? AN EXAMINATION OF CHILD SEX PREFERENCES IN RURAL SOUTH INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Much research has explored high levels of son preference in India, finding that parents often report a desire for more sons than daughters. While scholars have noted that a nontrivial portion of respondents claim to have no sex preference*, little is known about (1) the characteristics of this group and (2) how such parental preferences relate to child outcomes. We use data from a representative study of rural South Indian households (n = 7,891 adults) to address these gaps. Descriptive results show that a sizable portion of respondents – one in four – indicated that, at the start of their marriage, they had no preference for the number of daughters or sons they wanted. Further, multinomial regression results show that those who reported no sex preference at the time of marriage were more likely to be female, older, and less likely to be sterilized than those who reported equal or son preference, with additional distinctions across educational attainment and religion. Turning to child-level outcomes, we examined whether parents' sex preferences related to adolescent mental health through ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models (n = 1,245 adolescents). Adolescents whose mothers stated no sex preference reported significantly*

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fewer anxiety and depressive symptoms than their peers. Fathers' sex preferences were not significantly related to adolescent mental health. These findings suggest that a lack of sex preference may hold meaningful and positive implications for adolescent mental health. Further, although son preference is a widespread phenomenon, singular attention on those with son preference may mask important nuances among Indian families.

Keywords: Sex preferences; fertility; gender discrimination; demography; gender

INTRODUCTION

Son preference is widespread in India (Arnold et al., 2002; Bongaarts & Guilmoto, 2015; Das Gupta et al., 2003; Guilmoto, 2012; Madan & Breuning, 2014), and a large body of research has examined parental reports of son preference and their connection to child outcomes, such as poorer nutritional status and health outcomes for daughters compared to sons (e.g., Barcellos et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2019). In contrast, research in Western contexts has documented weakening sex preferences and growing indifference among parents about the sex composition of their children, linking these changes to the gender revolution (Pollard & Morgan, 2002). While reports of having *no sex preference* in India have been documented (Barman & Sahoo, 2021; Bongaarts, 2013; Clark, 2000), the characteristics of this group have not been examined. In addition, whether parental lack of sex preference is related to child outcomes has gone largely unexplored. We use data representative of rural South India to address these gaps by first exploring associations between sociodemographic characteristics and sex preferences among adults. We then explore the relationship between parents' sex preferences and adolescents' anxiety and depressive symptoms.

Son Preference

The child sex ratio – the number of girls compared to the number of boys under six in a given year – showed dramatic shifts in India over past decades. The 1991 Indian census stirred global concern due to the heavily masculine child sex ratio, reaching 943 girls per 1,000 boys (see Fig. 1.1 from Madan & Breuning, 2014). Despite efforts to reverse this trend in India and other Asian nations (Chung & Das Gupta, 2007), the sex ratio grew more masculinized in the following decades. This trend is thought to be the product of several larger trends including (1) declining overall fertility, leading parents to feel more pressure with each pregnancy to ensure their preferred child sex composition; (2) access to pre-natal sex-determination technology (e.g., ultrasounds) and sex-selective abortion, which allow parents to enact their preferences more effectively; and (3) son preference (Guilmoto, 2009).

Son preference refers to the degree to which individuals value sons over daughters and has been found to be widespread in India (Bongaarts & Guilmoto, 2015;

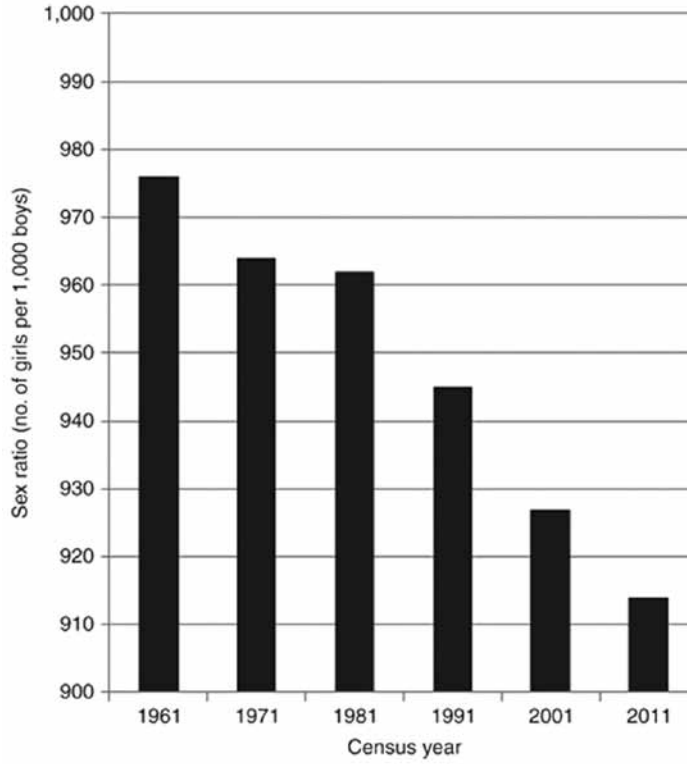

Fig. 1.1. Child Sex Ratio in India by Decade from Madan and Breuning (2014).

Diamond-Smith et al., 2008; Guilmoto, 2012). Son preference exists for several complex and interactive reasons. Sons provide economic benefits to families, as they are expected to take care of parents in old age. As daughters age and marry, they often join their husbands' families, leaving their families of origin (Das Gupta et al., 2003). In contrast to sons' economic contributions, the presence of daughters often requires families to save money and resources for dowries (Borker et al., 2022; Diamond-Smith et al., 2008; Sekher & Hatti, 2010). Thus, sons bring financial resources into the family, whereas daughters draw on these resources. However, economic reasons do not seem to be the sole driving force behind the persistence of son preference (Das Gupta et al., 2003). This is likely because sons are also important for religious and cultural reasons. For instance, certain rituals and ceremonies in Hinduism – such as lighting the funeral pyre that can lead a parent's soul to heaven – must be performed by a son (Pande & Astone, 2007; Vlassoff, 1990). Still, researchers have found that son preference exists across the diversity of religions represented in India, including among groups such as Sikhs and Muslims (Nasir & Kalla, 2006). For these and other reasons, son preference is widespread in India, albeit with meaningful regional differences, with stronger

indicators of son preference in North India compared to South India (Dyson & Moore, 1983; Klasen & Wink, 2003).

The Meaning of Sex Preferences

Scholars have grappled with the broader meaning of reported son preference, often tying it to gender attitudes – or views of men's and women's roles and responsibilities in society (Allendorf et al., 2023). Some consider son preference as one aspect of broader gender attitudes, amidst other components (Shu, 2004), while others have used son preference as a proxy for gender attitudes (Lin & Adserà, 2013), implying they are highly related concepts. Under these assumptions, reporting son preference is compatible with non-egalitarian gender attitudes, and reporting no sex preference could be an indicator of progressive or more egalitarian gender attitudes. This type of thinking is consistent with scholarship on sex preferences in the United States. Pollard and Morgan (2002), for example, focused on stopping behaviors, such as people with one child of each sex being more likely to stop having children compared to those who have two boys only or two girls only. The relationship between the sex composition of children and having another child weakened at the height of the gender revolution in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and then stalled at the same time the gender revolution stalled, possibly indicating its impact on lessening distinctions between boys and girls (Pollard & Morgan, 2002; Tian & Morgan, 2015).

It is important to note that those who report no sex preference could be distinct from those who desire an equal number of boys and girls (something called "gender balance"; Lin, 2009). It is common for people in the United States to report that their ideal family includes at least one girl and one boy (Nugent, 2013). Scholars focused on both India and the United States have proposed theories about these preferences. Some argue that children have gendered experiences, and parents may want to enhance their parenting experience by having a child of each sex, so that they can participate in differing rites of passages, teaching of skills, etc. (Nugent, 2013). Further, parents may prefer at least one girl and one boy, as having both may help meet a wider variety of familial needs (Lundberg, 2005; Nugent, 2013). Boys and girls are also often associated with various gains in social status – and having both may be especially beneficial in terms of social gain (Nugent, 2013). Therefore, a desire for an equal number of boys and girls reveals an acknowledgment of distinctions between sons and daughters and could reflect more non-egalitarian gender attitudes.

No Preference in the Indian Context

Although son preference is widespread in India, past studies have shown that a significant number of respondents indicate they have no child sex preference. Several studies have measured son preference by comparing reports of how many sons versus how many daughters people desire and have found that up to 50% of respondents report having no sex preference, albeit with a wide range across survey years and Indian states (Barman & Sahoo, 2021; Clark, 2000).

If the presence of (or increase in) no sex preference is associated with movements like the gender revolution, a high-son-preference country such as India may be an unexpected context in which to observe this phenomenon (Arnold et al., 2002). The Indian government and nongovernmental organizations have dedicated significant resources, policies, and programming to address gender inequalities. Nevertheless, son preference and related gender-based issues, such as domestic violence or lower levels of girls' education, persist (Kalokhe et al., 2017; Vaughan, 2013). Survey reports of no sex preference could therefore indicate the success of these interventions – evidence that addressing son preference and improving women's status can change child sex preferences. Alternatively, reports of no preference could also reflect respondents' desires to provide answers that are socially desirable. Examining the characteristics of this group could illuminate these nuances. A study in Taiwan, for example, reported an increase in "gender indifference" – or people reporting no sex preference – from 1992 to 2002 (Lin, 2009). Education was the strongest predictor of reporting no sex preference, and past studies have shown that social desirability bias is inversely related to educational attainment (e.g., Heerwig & McCabe, 2009), indicating that these reports likely reflect real change.

Sex Preferences and Adolescent Mental Health

A closer examination of those who report no sex preference in India is also important, as this lack of sex preference may have implications for child outcomes for several reasons. First, sex preferences may relate to child outcomes via differential parental treatment. Past studies have shown that son preference is associated with greater parental investments (e.g., parent–child time, vitamin supplementation, and duration of breastfeeding) in sons over daughters (Barcellos et al., 2014). Differences in investment result in a variety of improved outcomes for boys compared to girls, such as nutritional status (Pande, 2003; Song & Burgard, 2008), health-care utilization (Mishra et al., 2004), immunization status (Pande, 2003), and overall health (Wang et al., 2019). Wang et al. (2019), for example, found that much of the relationship between son preference and negative health outcomes for girls in China was explained by physical maltreatment and the quality of the relationship girls had with their parent(s). Therefore, because son preference appears to be negatively related to child well-being for girls, a lack of sex preference could be positively related to girls' well-being. The relationship between gender indifference and boys' well-being is less clear in terms of parental investment.

Second, if sex preferences reflect views parents hold about gender, they may be related to parental expectations for adolescent behavior, influencing adolescent mental health. For example, past studies have found that, in China, sons experience more harsh and physical discipline than daughters (Tang, 2006; Wong et al., 2009). Some have explained these findings as parents trying to ensure sons live up to their high expectations, being especially concerned because sons represent the family and carry on the family name (Wang et al., 2019). Further, boys are more reluctant to express psychological strain or seek help than girls in large part because these behaviors are perceived to threaten their masculinity (e.g., Juvrud &

Rennels, 2017; MacLean, Hunt, et al., 2013; MacLean, Sweeting, et al., 2010). Consequently, boys who more closely adhere to traditional conceptualizations of masculinity experience more depressive symptoms than their peers (Rogers et al., 2017). Similar associations are seen for girls, where girls who adhere more strongly to traditional femininity experience more depressive symptoms than girls who do not (Tolman et al., 2006). Scholars have connected these findings to the stress of inauthenticity (Tolman et al., 2006). As such, parents with no sex preference, who may tend to hold more egalitarian gender attitudes, could be less likely to have stereotypical masculine and feminine expectations for their sons and daughters, which could result in greater authenticity, less psychological strain, and better mental health for both boys and girls.

The third reason parents' sex preferences could relate to child outcomes is selection. Differential reports of sex preference may reflect other meaningful differences across individuals. Characteristics including caste, education, rural versus urban residency, religion, region, and age have been found to be related to sex preferences (Chakrabarti & Chaudhuri, 2011; Clark, 2000; Kapadia, 1995). For example, Clark (2000) reported that son preference is higher among individuals who are older, have lower levels of education, belong to lower-status castes, and are in rural areas; further, son preference was found to be higher among Muslims and Hindus compared to Christians and was more widespread in North rather than South India. Consequently, sex preferences could serve as a proxy for a variety of socioeconomic differences across individuals rather than reflecting true preferences or attitudes toward sons and daughters.

Although a variety of child outcomes are relevant and worthy of examination when considering parental sex preferences, mental health is especially important. Rates of adolescent emotional problems, including anxiety and depression, have risen dramatically in recent decades globally (Bor et al., 2014; Collishaw et al., 2004). Adolescent mental health is meaningfully related to several aspects of life, including social functioning and academic achievement (Sellers et al., 2019), and has long-term implications for adult mental health (Umberson et al., 2008). The bulk of scholarship on adolescent mental health focuses on Western contexts (Collishaw et al., 2004; Umberson et al., 2008). There are fewer studies in the Global South, including India, which has witnessed high rates of adolescent mental illness (Aggarwal & Berk, 2015). Due to the increasing prevalence of mental illness among adolescents worldwide, understanding potentially malleable factors related to adolescent mental health is needed.

Mothers' Versus Fathers' Sex Preferences

Parents' own gender might create important nuances in how they come to, have, or express child sex preferences, as well as how they might differentially influence child outcomes. Mothers and fathers, on average, hold different roles and social positions in families. Mothers in India – like mothers across many contexts – spend more time with children than fathers do (Saraff & Srivastava, 2010). Therefore, mothers' preferences and ideologies may shape child treatment more frequently or in more intimate ways. Because mothers spend more time with children, they

have more opportunities to express and explain their stances concerning gender roles and gendered behaviors. Mothers may also have more influence on how tasks are divided and on their children's time. Perhaps for these reasons, past studies in India have found that mothers' gender ideologies are more strongly related than fathers' gender ideologies to their children's own gender ideologies (Dhar et al., 2019). Thus, mothers' sex preferences may be more strongly related to child outcomes than fathers' sex preferences.

This Study

To the best of our knowledge, no previous studies have focused on those who report no child sex preference in India. To address this gap, we use data from a sample representative of rural South Indian households to estimate two sets of analyses.

First, using a sample of adults, we examine sociodemographic predictors of those who report having no sex preference at the start of their marriage. Here, we expect that reports of no sex preference will be more prevalent among those who are younger, have higher levels of education, belong to a higher-status caste, and are Christian, mirroring results from Clark (2000), who studied reports of son preference.

Second, we focus on a sample of adolescent respondents and observe associations between adolescent mental health and parents' reported child sex preferences. We expect that parents' reports of no sex preference will be related to fewer adolescent anxiety and depressive symptoms. We further expect that mothers' preferences will be more strongly associated with adolescent outcomes than fathers' preferences (Dhar et al., 2019).

DATA AND METHODS

We employed survey data from the South Indian Community Health Study (SICHS), which was conducted in 949 villages in rural and peri-urban areas of Vellore district in Tamil Nadu, South India. Between 2012 and 2014, the SICHS research team conducted a census of 290,000 households in the study area to collect basic demographic and socioeconomic information. A household survey was undertaken in 2015–2016 in a sample of 5,000 households. The sampling frame for the survey included all ever-married men ages 25–60 in the SICHS census (referred to as male primary respondents) plus a small number of divorced or widowed women (female primary respondents) with "missing" husbands who would have been ages 25–60, based on the average age gap between husbands and wives in the census. The sample of primary respondents was subsequently drawn to be representative of each caste in the study area, excluding castes with less than 100 households in the study area. The response rate for primary respondent households was 85%. In addition to male and female primary respondents, interviews were also conducted with primary respondents' spouses, if they were currently married, and their children resident in the household

aged 12–17. The study area is representative of rural Tamil Nadu and rural South India with respect to socioeconomic and demographic characteristics (Borker et al., 2022).

Sample

Analyses in this chapter comprised two samples. Our first set of analyses utilized the sample of primary respondents and their spouses regardless of parental status (n = 8,088). We refer to this as our "adult" sample. We excluded one respondent who was under 18 years old and one respondent who reported their religion as "other," leaving 8,086 respondents. To measure *child sex preferences*, we used information from two survey questions: "At the time of marriage, how many boys did you want to have?" and "At the time of marriage, how many girls did you want to have?" For both questions, respondents reported a number or indicated that they had "no preference." We subtracted the number of desired boys from the number of desired girls, and in combination with responses of "no preference," we created a four-category variable: (1) those who reported no preference for either sons or daughters; (2) those who reported wanting an equal number of sons and daughters; (3) those who reported wanting more sons than daughters or indicated a numeric preference for sons but no preference for the number of daughters they desired (we considered this an indication of son preference); and (4) those who reported wanting more daughters than sons or indicated a numeric preference for daughters but no preference for the number of sons they desired (we considered this an indication of daughter preference). Because only 2% of our sample indicated a daughter preference, we excluded this group (n = 195) from our sample. We report sensitivity analyses below to ensure this decision did not notably change the findings. Our final analytic sample for our first set of analyses included 7,891 male and female adults.

Our second set of analyses used data from the sample of adolescents aged 12–17 (n = 1,969), who are children of primary respondents. We excluded adolescents who did not have both a mother and father complete the survey as primary respondents or spouses (n = 633), because we wanted to include both parents' sex preferences in our analyses and observe differences in mothers' and fathers' preferences. We also excluded adolescents whose mother or father reported daughter preference (n = 91). Our final analytic sample for our second set of analyses included 1,245 adolescents.

Measures

Predicting Adult Sex Preferences

Dependent Variable. We first focused on the adult sample (n = 7,891). In these analyses, our dependent variable was *child sex preferences* at the time of marriage, as outlined above, coding the categories as 1 = no preference, 2 = preference for an equal number of sons and daughters, 3 = son preference, and 4 = daughter preference (the last category was dropped from our main analyses).