



# Son Preference in India: Do Family Composition Drive Future Fertility Desire and Contraceptive Use?



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## BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE

- ❖ The term son preference refers to the attitude that sons are more important and more valuable than daughters.
- ❖ Parents in India have strong economic and social inducement to prefer sons over daughters, including important religious roles that only sons can perform, sons' role in old age support of parents and perpetuation of the family name.
- ❖ The objective of the present study was to explore whether the fertility desire and contraceptive use vary by parity of women and sex composition of surviving children.
- ❖ A prior study showed that the minimal effect of sex preference on total fertility was (0.02 children per respondent).

**Keywords :** Family Composition; Son Preference; Contraception Use; National Family Health Survey(NFHS); India

## INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Son preference is a custom rooted in gender inequality that is prevalent in many countries and found across religions and classes.
- ❖ Sons are more valued than daughters in most of the Asian countries for a variety of social and economic reasons, including their financial and labour contributions to the family, their ability to support their parents and sustaining their family name.
- ❖ The need to study the demographic consequences of parental preference for sex of offspring because preference may result in an imbalanced sex ratio at birth.
- ❖ Another need for the study of sex preference is that the parental preference for sex of offspring has implications for the level of fertility in a stable state.
- ❖ Previous studies concentrated on number of sons desired at different parity while we focused on number of daughters.
- ❖ Intensity of son preference decreases as a country develops, primarily because of diminishing traditional beliefs. Other modernizing factors, such as education, place of residence, exposure to mass media also help for reducing preference for sons.
- ❖ In the current study, focus was to examine how family size and sex composition was associated with desire for another child and contraceptive usage. Several combinations of daughters and sons at different parity were considered for the analysis.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

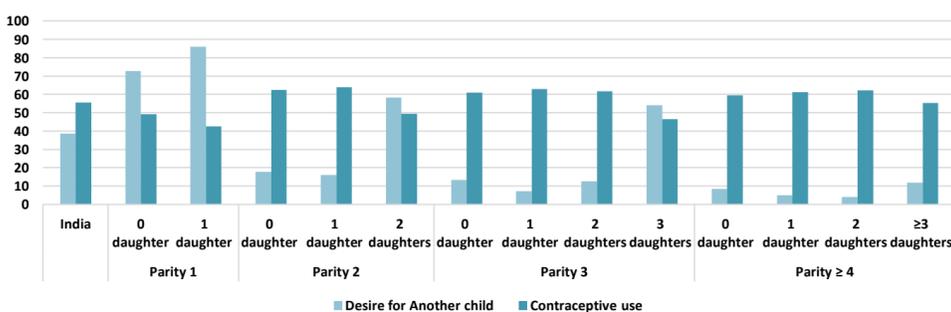
- This study utilizes the data from the fourth round of National Family Health Survey(2015-2016), India.
- To identify the socio-demographic determinants governing the pioneering study behavior, bivariate and multivariable techniques have been used in the analysis.
- Multivariate logistic regression was used to determine if family sex composition was independently associated with women's desire to have another child, and contraceptive use, controlling for some important demographic characteristics.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- The current study aimed to test the hypothesis that there was no difference in desire for another child and use of contraceptive method by sex composition of the child.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FP Use and Desire for Another Child by Parity and No. of Daughters



- ❖ Above figure demonstrate the percentage distribution of respondents for the two outcome variables by parity and number of daughters.
- ❖ At each given parity, the proportion of women with desire for another child increased as the number of daughters increased. The prevalence rate of contraceptive use also varied with the number of daughters and son at each parity with slightly lower use among women with more daughter than sons.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS(Continued...)

Logistic Regression table for desire of another child and use of any contraceptive use by parity and number of daughters in India.		
Parity and number of daughters	Desire for another child Unadjusted (OR)	Contraceptive use Unadjusted (OR)
<b>Parity 1</b>		
No daughter	1	1
1 daughter	2.28*(2.18 - 2.39)	0.77*(0.74 - 0.79)
<b>Parity 2</b>		
No daughter	1	1
1 daughter	0.89*(0.84 - 0.94)	1.06**(1.02 - 1.11)
2 daughters	6.43*(6.06 - 6.83)	0.59*(0.56 - 0.62)
<b>Parity 3</b>		
No daughter	1	1
1 daughter	0.50*(0.43 - 0.58)	1.09(0.99 - 1.20)
2 daughters	0.93(0.82 - 1.06)	1.04(0.95 - 1.14)
3 daughters	7.62*(6.63 - 8.75)	0.56*(0.50 - 0.62)
<b>Parity ≥ 4</b>		
No daughter	1	1
1 daughter	0.57*(0.43 - 0.77)	1.07(0.92 - 1.26)
2 daughters	0.45*(0.34 - 0.59)	1.12(0.97 - 1.30)
≥ 3 daughters	1.46**(1.14 - 1.88)	0.84**(0.73 - 0.97)

\*\*\*P-value<0.1; \*\*P-value<0.05; \*P-value<0.01

- From the above table we find that the odds for desire of another child was higher among women with more daughters and further the odds of contraception use were lower at all parity.
- At parity two, women with two daughters were significantly more likely to want another child (OR = 6.43; 95% CI: 6.06–6.83) and were 41% less likely to use contraceptive method (OR = 0.59; 95% CI: 0.56–0.62) than their counterpart.
- Similarly, at parity three, the women with three daughters were significantly more likely to have another child (OR = 7.62; 95% CI:6.63–8.75) and less likely to use contraception (OR = 0.56; 95% CI:0.50–0.62) compared to that of women with three sons.
- After controlling for other socioeconomic factors, the odds ratio of desire for another child at all parity decreased with advancement in age and educational level of the women, increased economic status, and increased exposure to mass media. The association was opposite for use of contraception methods.(Tables not shown here)

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

- The present study excluded those women who were sterilised, which helped in estimating the accurate picture of sex preference as sterilised women cannot have a further desire for another child, nor be using any other method of family planning like pills and injectables to avoid pregnancy.
- Further strength of this study is that the study used family sex composition for investigation of son preference rather than using measures based upon a hypothetical or ideal number of children that women.
- From the present study, it was evident that parity and family sex composition strongly influenced fertility desires and contraceptive behaviour in India. Positive association between number of daughters at each parity and desire for another child negative association with contraception use was found.
- The findings of this study were consistent with other studies in South Asia, noting higher likelihood of desire for another child and lower use of contraception by women with more daughters.
- The findings of this study recommend that family planning programs need to target women based on parity and family sex composition to maximize family planning acceptance, reduce fertility, and counter the attitude of son preference.
- There is a need to integrate population policies with other social development programmes.

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