

Socio-economic Correlates of Values Attributed to Sons and Daughters

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the values of having sons and daughters as perceived by mothers and how these values change with the socio-economic status of the respondents by analyzing data from Shimla, the capital city of Himachal Pradesh. The sample comprised of 417 mothers in the age range of 30-49 years. The respondent's perceptions of the value of children were measured by means of open ended questions. The great variety of mother's responses were coded and clubbed into three main categories: economic/utilitarian values, socio-cultural values and psychological values. Some very interesting findings emerged from the present investigation. Results indicated that the values of having children in the state of Himachal Pradesh are multi-dimensional. However, sons were desired or valued primarily for economic and socio-cultural reasons such as old age security and continuity of family name regardless of the mother's education, work status and household income. The instrumental value of sons, especially expected economic help, is inversely related to socio-economic levels and the opposite pattern was noted for most measures of psychological appreciation which becomes important at higher levels of development. On the other hand, daughters were desired for utilitarian reasons by unemployed mothers with fewer years of schooling whereas the employed mothers with higher educational attainment value daughters for emotional support.

Keywords: Values of children, Socio-economic status, Economic/utilitarian values, Socio-cultural values, Psychological values, sons and daughters.

The value of children (VOC) refers to the functions children serve for parents, or the needs they fulfill. Many terms similar to value have been used in the literature such as utilities attached to children, satisfactions and advantages of having children, rewards or functions of children, tastes, preferences, or the demand for children, motivations or reasons for parenthood or childbearing (Fawcett, 1988). The value of children approach was first developed by Hoffman and Hoffman (1973). They proposed nine areas in which parents' value children and these areas are not explicitly formulated to represent the value of sons or daughters per se, rather they are intended as the value of being parents. The nine categories of the value scheme are: adult status and identity, expansion

of the self, morality, group ties, stimulation, creativity and accomplishment, power, social comparison and competition, and economic utility.

The value of children for parents, the family, and the society is of great theoretical and practical significance. An understanding of the satisfaction that parents find in children is a key to developing insight into family dynamics, sex roles, social norms, beliefs, attitudes and fertility behavior. A series of scientific studies have been carried out around the world to ask parents and prospective parents directly about the personal satisfaction of having children.

Parents have several expectations about children which

are learned through the individual's own experiences growing up within a family setting. These expectations differ across cultures and across time periods (Arnold and Kuo, 1984). Parents expect psychological benefits from having children (Bulatao, 1982), they may also expect economic gains, if they live in a society where children work at younger ages or if they expect to rely on their children for support in their old age. In fact, in developing countries, expected economic benefits from children tend to dominate the responses of parents when they are asked about the advantages of having children. Children are sometimes wanted to increase the size and, thus, enhance the power of an ethnic, tribal, or national group. Ultimately children are not only desired for personal and social reasons but are also needed to perpetuate the species and carry on the family line (Arnold et al, 1975). For these reasons and because of the central role of the family in the functioning of a cultural system, customs have developed over time that give great significance to the achievement of parenthood, equating this to a large extent with becoming an adult, a 'real man' or a 'real woman' (Hull, 1975).

In the 1970s, the "value of children" (VOC) project was promoted for the purpose of investigating social, economical and psychological factors of fertility behaviors. This survey discovered the fact that the economical values of children drop while their psychological values rise according to the progress and modernization of the social economy (Arnold *et al.* 1975; Bulatao, 1975). It was uncovered that people's perception of value of children changes according to social transitions and consequently influences their fertility intentions and fertility behavior. The VOC vary depending on the sex of the children and people's interests in the sex of children changes depending on the system and culture of the society in which their parents lead their lives. The social roles played by men and women are of particular importance. The larger the gender disparities, the clearer the parents recognize the different values placed on sons and daughters, which determines sex preferences, i.e., which sex is preferred for their children and what sex composition of children is preferred.

Bulatao (1982) presented a comprehensive explanatory

framework in which he suggested that with socio-economic development and modernization of societies the perceived economic benefits and satisfactions to be derived from children declined and parents started to desire children mainly for emotional and psychological reasons. Bulatao's framework was supported by studies which have compared value of children across countries at different levels of development (e.g., Bulatao, 1981), comparison of more or less developed regions within countries (Kagitcibasi, 1982; Knodel and Saengtienchai, 1996; Smolin, 2011), comparison of groups of respondents defined according to socio-economic status, both within and across countries (Arnold *et al.* 1975), and comparisons of individuals with varying levels of education or belonging to different social classes (Arnold *et al.* 1975; Kagitcibasi and Esmer, 1980).

Economy, family structure, education and residential arrangements, directly or indirectly, has an impact on the perceived value of children. There is evidence that value of children changes with an increase in the level of education of parents. For example, Kagitcibasi (1982) reported that the importance of economic reasons for wanting a boy, especially "maternal help" and "old age security", appeared to decrease with development and education of women. Moreover, the "companionship" value of sons, a psychological value, increased in salience with women's education. Women's education appeared to be a key indicator of change in the values accorded to children. Kagitcibasi further reported that psychological values such as "companionship", "living through children" were not stressed much by respondents with higher incomes. These findings suggested that income was not a factor that greatly affected the value of children. Association between women's work status and perceptions of the advantages of having children revealed that working women stressed values such as old age security, financial and practical help, and help in house work, whereas non-working women emphasized psychological and social values of children. Kagitcibasi concluded that the economic/utilitarian value factor was more important in rural areas and the psychological values were more salient in urban areas.

Due to socio-economic and cultural differences, the demand for and value of children varies between the

developing and the developed world. Freedman (1974) observed that the preferred number of sons is relatively high in many Asian countries. Especially in South Asia the preference for male children is one of the major causes of high fertility in most countries of the region (Karki, 1988; Dasgupta *et al.* 2003). In South Asia sons are very highly prized because they continue the family name (Arnold, 1985; Knodel *et al.* 1996; Dadoo, 1998; Clark, 2000; Merli and Smith, 2002), can perform funeral rituals and are expected to provide support in old age (Cleland *et al.* 1983). The preference for a particular sex derives from the perceived value or benefits of that particular sex to parents (Karki, 1988; Hank and Anderson, 2002).

Such changes in the value of children have also been observed in India (Nag and Kak, 1984; Jejeebhoy and Kulkarni, 1989; Malhi, 1993a; Raina, 1999). The research findings in India have indicated that the instrumental value of children, especially expected economic help, is inversely related to socio-economic levels. The opposite pattern is noted for most measures of rewarding interaction and psychological appreciation. The psychological values become more important at higher levels of socio-economic development. In other words, in societies and households where children provide economic or practical value in the household, these benefits dominate the way parents perceive the satisfaction of children. It is only when instrumental value of children is absent or of lesser consequence that the children's emotional or psychological values assume importance for parents (Fawcett, 1983). Male children in India are valued for their role in retaining or perpetuating family name, provision of old age security and serve as a source of social prestige to parents. Male children are also desired because they are perceived to render assistance to their parents in terms of helping on the farm or helping parents in their business. On the other hand, female children are particularly desired for assisting their mothers in a range of household chores (Nag and Kak, 1984; Jejeebhoy and Kulkarni, 1989; Malhi, 1993a; Raina, 1999).

The impact of socio-economic factors in influencing value of children has been a dominant concern in research in developing countries. The findings of a number of studies suggest how the value of children may change

in the process of modernization. In developing countries children are primarily desired for economic/utilitarian satisfaction, while in the developed world children are desired for psychological satisfaction.

Since little is known about the values accorded by parents to children in India, and how these values change with socio-economic factors, the aim of the present research work was to investigate the different values that parents attribute to sons and daughters, and to examine how these values change with increase in socio-economic status of the women.

Based on the above review of the studies it was hypothesized that women with higher socio-economic status (e.g., education, work status and household income) would value sons and daughters for psychological reasons while women with relatively lower socio-economic status would value sons and daughters primarily for economic and socio-cultural reasons. The present study provided an opportunity to investigate whether women's education, work status and household income influences the values attributed to sons and daughters.

METHOD

Sample

A stratified random sampling approach was employed to select a total sample of 500 mothers whose children were in the age range of 11-14 years. Due to incomplete responses and, in certain cases, non-availability of mothers the final sample was reduced to 425. Since 8 mothers had a single child they were not included in the final data processing. Thus, the final sample comprised of 417 mothers.

The educational level of mothers was found to be quite low. Nearly, 19 per cent of the mothers were illiterate. A little more than one-fourth (27.1 per cent) of the mothers had up to middle level of schooling, 36.5 per cent of the women had up to 12 years of education and only 17.5 per cent were graduates. Nearly 85 per cent of the mothers in the sample were housewives and the remaining 15 per cent were employed. The respondents reported generally low levels of family income. A little

less than half (47.7 per cent) of the respondents had a monthly income of less than ₹ 30,000, 37.9 per cent reported their income to be in the range of 30,000 to ₹ 50,000 and the remaining 14.4 per cent had a monthly household income of ₹ 50,000 and above.

Tools Used

Questionnaire for mothers

The questionnaire elicited information regarding their education, work status and income of their family from all the sources.

Measure of sex preferences for children

Sex preferences for children were measured with the help of Coombs IS index (Coombs *et al.* 1975). This index is a seven point scale and measures sex preferences of the individual. The scale ranges from IS1 (a strong girl bias) to IS7 (a strong boy bias), with IS4 being a preference for balanced sex composition. The preference for balance means equal number of boys and girls and as suggested by the authors are not to be interpreted as indifference or an absence of sex bias.

Assessment of the values of having sons and daughters

The respondents' perceptions of the values of children were measured by means of open-ended questions following the guidelines of Arnold *et al.* (1975), Arnold and Fawcett (1975) and Bulatao (1975). The mothers were asked to state the three important reasons for desiring sons and daughters, the purpose of which was to ascertain, from the respondents spontaneous answers, the values of sons and daughters which were salient for them. The great variety of responses to the questions as mentioned by the respondents, were categorized, following the guidelines of Arnold *et al.* (1975), Arnold and Fawcett (1975), Karki (1988), and Malhi (1993b).

The reasons for valuing sons and daughters, as mentioned by the mothers, were coded and clubbed into three main categories: economic/utilitarian values, socio-cultural values, and psychological values. Since the total number of responses for valuing sons and daughters was three each, the range of responses falling under each of the above mentioned categories was from

0-3. Thus, the responses of the mothers on the values of having sons and daughters were quantified following this pattern for the purpose of data processing.

Statistical Analysis

Chi-square

Cross tabulations were done for analyzing the mothers' responses regarding the values of having children by selected demographic and socio-economic variables. Chi-square test was applied to test the significance of differences among the percentage of responses of mothers belonging to various demographic and socio-economic groups. This was done in the following ways:

1. To test the statistical significance of the difference among mothers with varying levels of education on the values of having sons and daughters.
2. To test the statistical significance of the difference between employed and unemployed mothers on the values of having sons and daughters.
3. To test the statistical significance of the difference among high, middle and low household income categories on the values of having sons and daughters.

Stepwise multiple regression analysis

Three regression analyses of the economic/ utilitarian values, socio-cultural values, and psychological values of having sons and daughters was carried out separately for boys and girls. The common predictor variables for these three values were mother's age, mother's education, mother's work status, father's education, household income, marital duration of parents, and sex preferences for children as measured by the Coombs IS index.

RESULTS

Impact of the Socio-Economic Characteristics on the Values Accorded to Sons

Cross tabulations of the reasons for desiring sons by the mother's level of education, work status and household income are reported in Table 1. Chi-square test was applied to test the significance of difference among the

Table 1: Reasons for Having Sons, by Mother's Education, Mother's Work Status & Household Income (Percentage of Respondents Mentioning Specific Responses)

Reasons/Values for Having Sons	Years of Schooling				χ^2	Work Status			χ^2	Household Income			χ^2
	0	1 to 8	9 to 12	12+		Unemployed	Employed			<30,000 (₹)	30,001-50,000 (₹)	50,001 and above (₹)	
Economic/Utilitarian Reasons													
Old Age Security	87.3	81.4	77.6	83.6	3.5	81.4	82.5	0.1	85.4	78.5	76.7	3.9	
Financial Support	53.2	40.7	30.9	13.7	28.8**	36.7	23.8	3.9*	43.7	29.7	18.3	15.9**	
To take care of Parental Property	16.5	23.0	30.9	39.7	12.3**	27.4	28.6	0.0	16.1	33.5	50.0	31.1**	
Socio-Cultural Reasons													
Continuity of Family Name	62.0	71.7	71.0	69.9	2.5	68.1	76.2	1.6	66.8	69.6	76.7	2.1	
Religious/Social Obligations	36.7	23.9	14.5	8.2	24.0**	21.7	11.1	3.7	28.6	15.2	5.0	19.9*	
Share Social Responsibilities	11.4	10.6	18.4	23.3	7.3	15.2	19.0	0.6	12.1	20.2	16.7	4.4	
Psychological Reasons													
Psychological Support Number	15.2	32.7	42.1	57.5	31.8**	35.0	49.2	4.6*	27.6	44.9	48.3	15.0**	
	79	113	152	73		354	63		199	158	60		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

responses of the mothers belonging to various groups of education, work status and household income.

Mother's Education and Value of Sons

As is evident from the Table 'Old age security' emerged as an important reason for desiring sons for all the women, irrespective of their educational status ($\chi^2=3.5, n.s.$). However, with an increase in the level of education, the value of sons for providing 'financial help' to parents declined ($\chi^2=28.8, p < .01$). Nearly 40 per cent of the mothers with 12 and above years of schooling desired sons to 'take care of parental property' and the percentage declined to 16.5 per cent for the illiterate mothers ($\chi^2=12.3, p < .01$).

The Table further indicates that the socio-cultural value of sons such as providing 'continuity of family name' was salient for all the women belonging to the four educational groups ($\chi^2= 2.5, n.s.$). On the other hand, significant differences ($\chi^2= 24.0, p < .01$) emerged among the mothers on 'religious/social reasons' for desiring sons. However, the differences among the four groups

of education on 'sharing social responsibility' were statistically non-significant ($\chi^2= 7.3, n.s.$).

Higher levels of education among the mothers played a key role in heightening the 'psychological support' of sons. Significant differences emerged ($\chi^2= 31.8, p < .01$) among the four educational groups. For example, 'psychological support' from sons was nearly four times (57.5 per cent) as salient to the women with 12 and more years of schooling as compared to the mothers with no schooling (15.2 per cent).

The results reported above, thus, reveal that values of having sons such as 'old age security' and 'continuity of family name' were salient to all the mothers irrespective of the level of education attained. 'Financial support' and 'religious/social obligations', however, emerged to be more important for the mothers with fewer years of schooling. 'To take care of parental property' and the 'psychological values' of sons were expressed by a significantly higher percentage of the mothers with a relatively higher levels of education.

Mother's Work Status and Value of Sons

Table 1 also reveals that 'old age support' from sons emerged as an important reason for all the urban women, regardless of the fact whether they were employed or were housewives ($\chi^2= 0.1$, n.s.). An overwhelming majority of both the working and the non-working mothers (81.4 per cent and 82.5 per cent, respectively) strongly emphasized this value as an important reason for desiring sons. However, the salience of son's 'financial support' was more pronounced among the unemployed mothers (36.7 per cent) and the corresponding percentage dropped to 23.8 per cent for the employed mothers. Thus, significant differences ($\chi^2= 3.9$, $p < .05$) emerged between the employed and the unemployed mothers on the value of 'financial support' of having sons. 'Carrying on the family line', a cross-cultural value of sons, was highly salient to all the mothers regardless of their work status (68.1 per cent and 76.2 per cent, respectively). The difference on 'religious value' of sons between the two groups of mothers defined by work status was also not significant ($\chi^2= 3.7$, n.s.). Significant differences ($\chi^2= 4.6$, $p < .05$) emerged between the working and the non-working mothers on 'psychological reasons' for desiring sons.

From the above results it seems that the women's work status also plays a role in determining various values accorded to sons. It is evident that the benefits accruing from sons such as 'old age security' and 'continuity of family name' were salient to all the mothers regardless of their work-status. 'Financial support' of having sons was significantly more important for the housewives, whereas 'psychological support' of sons was expressed by a significantly higher percentage of the working mothers.

Household Income and Value of Sons

Table 1 also presents the reasons for desiring sons by household income of the respondents. The value of sons as providers of 'security in old age' was salient among all the three groups of household income with an overwhelming majority of mothers (85.4 per cent, 78.5 per cent and 76.7 per cent, respectively) emphasizing such support from sons, but the differences among the

three income groups failed to reach the significance value ($\chi^2= 3.9$, n.s.).

Significant difference ($\chi^2=15.9$, $p < .01$) among the mothers belonging to different income groups emerged on the 'financial support' value of son. For instance, about 44 per cent of the respondents coming from the lowest income group expressed the need to have sons for providing 'financial help', whereas this value was not of much importance for the mothers from the households with higher income (18.3 per cent). Not surprisingly, 'looking after parental property' was an important concern expressed by a significantly higher proportion of the mothers from higher income groups as compared to the mothers from relatively lower income groups ($\chi^2= 31.1$, $p < .01$).

The mothers belonging to all the three income groups emphasized the importance of sons for 'continuing the family name' and the differences failed to reach the significance value ($\chi^2= 2.1$, n.s.). The 'religious value' of sons significantly increased with a decline in the household income of mothers ($\chi^2= 19.9$, $p < .01$), thereby indicating significant difference among the mothers from different income categories regarding the 'religious value' of having sons.

'Psychological value' of sons was also found to significantly increase ($\chi^2= 15$, $p < .01$) with an increase in the income level. 'Psychological support' from sons was nearly twice as salient to women with the highest income level (48.3 per cent) as to those with the lowest household income group (27.6 per cent). The results thus indicate that the financial status of the family influences the values attributed to sons.

In sum, the results presented in the above section depict that the mother's level of education, her work status, and the household income of the family play a key role in determining the values accorded to sons. The values for desiring sons such as 'old age security' and 'continuity of family name' were salient to all the mothers regardless of their education, work status, and the household income of the family. Values such as 'financial support' and 'religious/social obligations' were, however, more salient to mother who were unemployed, from households with lower income, and had fewer years

of schooling. In contrast, the psychological reasons of valuing sons were significantly more salient to mothers who were employed, from households with higher incomes, and had relatively higher level of education.

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Socio-Economic Variables as Predictors of the Values of Sons

An important objective of the present investigation was to study the socio-economic and demographic predictors of the values attributed to sons. In order to assess the most significant predictors of the three types of values accorded to sons, three stepwise regression analyses were performed separately for the three types of values of sons. The predictor variables included mother's age, mother's education, mother's work status, father's education, household income, marital duration, and sex preferences as measured by the Coombs index. The three predicted measures were the economic/utilitarian, socio-cultural, and psychological reasons stated by the mother for desiring sons.

For the economic/utilitarian values of sons, none of the variables emerged as a significant predictor thereby indicating that economic and financial contributions of sons to the family are salient reasons for desiring them for all respondents regardless of their socio-economic status.

The results of the stepwise regression analysis of different variables in terms of their importance on the socio-cultural values of sons is reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Different Socio-Economic Variables as Predictors of Socio-Cultural Values of Sons

Independent Variable	r	Beta Coefficient	T	R ²	R ² change	F-value (R ² change)
Household income	-.19**	-.195	4.04**	.038	.038	16.48**
Mother's Education	-.18**	-.131	2.53*	.053	.015	6.45*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 2 reveals that the significant predictors of socio-cultural reasons of desiring sons were the Household

Income ($\beta = -.19$, $t = 4.04$, $p < .01$) and the Mother's Education ($\beta = -.13$, $t = 2.53$, $p < .05$). Thus, the lower socio-cultural values of sons was predicted by higher Household Income and higher levels of Mother's Education. These two variables accounted for 5.3 per cent of the variance in socio-cultural values of sons. Out of this, the Household Income explained 3.8 per cent ($F = 16.48$, $p < .01$) of the variance and the Mother's Education contributed an additional 1.5 per cent ($F = 6.45$, $p < .05$) of the variance in the socio-cultural value of sons.

Table 3 presents the results of the step wise regression analysis of different socio-economic variables in terms of their importance in predicting the psychological values of sons.

Table 3: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Different Socio-Economic Variables as Predictors of Psychological Values of Sons

Independent Variable	r	Beta Coefficient	T	R ²	R ² change	F-value (R ² change)
Mother's Education	.27**	.273	5.77**	.074	.074	33.33**
Mother's Age	.10*	.086	2.81*	.089	.015	7.84**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The significant predictors of the psychological values of having sons were the Mother's Education ($\beta = .27$, $t = 5.77$, $p < .01$) and the Mother's Age ($\beta = .08$, $t = 2.81$, $p < .05$). Thus, the higher psychological value of sons was predicted by higher levels of Mother's Education and higher Mother's Age. These two variables accounted for 8.9 per cent of the variance in the psychological reasons for desiring sons. Out of this, the Mother's Education explained 7.4 per cent ($F = 33.33$, $p < .01$) of the variance and the Mother's Age contributed an additional 1.5 per cent ($F = 7.84$, $p < .01$) of the variance in the psychological reasons for valuing sons.

It seems then that of all the socio-economic variables the household income and the mother's education are the key variables which are related to the lower socio-cultural values of sons. The education of the mother is the important variable which is related to the higher psychological values of sons.

Impact of the Socio-Economic Characteristics on the Values Accorded to Daughters

Cross-tabulation and chi-square test was applied to test the significance of difference among the responses of the mothers belonging to various levels of education, work status, and household income and the results are reported in Table 4.

Mother’s Education and Value of Daughters

Table 4 reveals that with an increase in the level of education of the mothers the economic/utilitarian value of daughters to provide ‘help in housework’ declined significantly ($\chi^2= 16.1, p < .01$). Similarly, the socio-cultural value of daughters such as ‘caring for siblings’ was less salient to the respondents with higher levels of education than to the women with lower levels of education.

Small percentage of mothers in all the four educational groups expressed that daughters were valued for ‘religious and social obligations’, and the differences

among these mothers were not significant ($\chi^2= 4.3, n.s.$). The ‘unconditional love and affection’ that daughters provide to parents emerged as an important reason for desiring daughters for all the women, irrespective of their educational status ($\chi^2= 5.5, n.s.$). On the other hand, significant differences ($\chi^2= 9.7, p < .05$) emerged among the mothers with different levels of education on the psychological value that daughters are ‘more caring and concerned’ for parents with a higher percentage of mothers with 12+ years of schooling (78.1 per cent) emphasizing such a value in contrast to a relatively lower per cent of the women with fewer years of schooling.

The results, thus, indicate that instrumental assistance from daughters and socio-cultural reasons such as ‘caring for siblings’ were significantly more salient to mothers with relatively fewer years of schooling. On the other hand, psychological reasons of valuing daughters were highly salient to all the mothers, but as predicted, the tilt was more towards the mothers who had attained a higher level of education and the differences among the four educational groups were significant for ‘more caring and concerned than sons’.

Table 4: Reasons for Having Daughters, by Mother’s Education, Mother’s Work Status & Household Income (Percentage of Respondents Mentioning Specific Responses)

Reasons/Values for Having Daughters	Years of Schooling				χ^2	Work Status			Household Income			
	0	1 to 8	9 to 12	12+		Un-employed	Employed	χ^2	<30,000 (₹)	30,001-50,000 (₹)	50,001 and above (₹)	χ^2
Economic/Utilitarian Reasons												
Help in Housework	79.7	77.0	67.8	53.4	16.1**	72.6	55.6	7.4**	71.9	70.9	61.7	2.4
Socio-Cultural Reasons												
Caring for Sibling	27.9	23.0	13.2	5.5	17.7**	18.6	9.5	3.1	21.1	14.6	11.7	4.2
Religious/Social Obligations	9.6	4.4	5.6	3.4	4.2	9.6	3.4	2.9	7.6	8.9	7.2	3.6
Psychological Reasons												
Providing Unconditional Love and Affection	75.9	82.3	80.9	90.4	5.5	80.2	92.1	5.1*	80.9	79.1	93.3	6.3*
More Caring and Concerned than Sons	69.6	56.6	65.1	78.1	9.7*	65.2	69.8	0.5	65.8	66.5	65.0	0.04
Character, Maturity, Responsible	35.4	39.0	45.4	50.7	4.7	41.0	52.4	2.8	38.7	46.8	45.0	2.5
Number	79	113	152	73		354	63		199	158	60	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Mother's Work Status and Value of Daughters

As is evident from Table 4 the salience of daughters to provide 'help in housework' was significantly ($\chi^2= 7.4$, $p <.01$) more pronounced among the unemployed mothers (72.6 per cent) and the corresponding percentage dropped to 55.6 per cent for the employed mothers. The difference between the employed and unemployed mothers was significant ($\chi^2= 5.1$, $p <.05$) with regard to the psychological value of daughters. It is noteworthy that a substantial majority of both employed (92.1 per cent) and the unemployed (80.2 per cent) mothers considered it important to desire a daughter for the 'unconditional love and affection' provided by them. Desiring daughters for their personal qualities emerged as an important reason for all the urban mothers, irrespective of the fact whether they were working or were housewives ($\chi^2= 0.5$ and 2.8, respectively).

From the results presented above, it is evident that the value of desiring daughters for 'help in housework' was more important to the housewives. No significant differences, however, emerged between the unemployed and the employed mothers on the socio-cultural reasons for desiring daughters. Psychological benefits accruing from daughters were perceived to be the most important advantage of having daughters by an overwhelming majority of the mothers.

Household Income and Value of Daughters

The reasons for wanting daughters by household income are also reported in Table 4. The value of daughters as providers of 'help in housework' was salient among all the three groups of the mothers defined on the basis of the household income, with an overwhelming majority of the mothers (71.9 per cent, 70.9 per cent and 61.7 per cent, respectively) emphasizing such help from daughters. Not surprisingly, the difference among the different income groups failed to reach the significance value ($\chi^2= 2.4$, n.s.). On the other hand, significant difference ($\chi^2= 6.3$, $p <.05$) emerged among the mothers from the three income groups on the reason that daughters have 'unconditional love and affection' for their parents.

The differences among the mothers on the value that girls are 'more caring and concerned than sons' and for the personal qualities of girls such as 'character, maturity and responsibility' failed to reach the significance level ($\chi^2= 0.04$ and 2.5, respectively). These reasons were found to be salient for all the women regardless of their household income. The above results indicate that women from households with higher incomes value daughters primarily for psychological reasons, whereas there are no differences among the women from higher or lower income households on the economic and socio-cultural values of daughters.

In sum, the results reported in the above section indicate that the mother's level of education, her work status, and the household income of the family play a crucial role in influencing the values attributed to daughters. The reasons for valuing daughters such as instrumental assistance and the socio-cultural reasons were more salient to mothers who had fewer years of schooling, were unemployed, and were from households with lower incomes. The psychological reasons for desiring daughters were, however, salient to all the mothers irrespective of their education, work status, and the financial status of the family.

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Socio-Economic Variables as Predictors of the Values of Daughters

Table 5 presents the results of the stepwise regression analysis of different variables in terms of their importance on economic/utilitarian reasons of daughters.

Table 5: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Different Socio-Economic Variables as Predictors of Economic/Utilitarian Values of Daughters

Independent Variable	r	Beta Coefficient	T	R ²	R ² change	F-value (R ² change)
Mother's Education	-.28**	-.281	5.96**	.079	.079	35.62**
Mother's Work Status	-.12*	-.103	2.19*	.090	.011	4.83*

$p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The significant predictors of the economic/utilitarian value of daughters were the Mother's Education ($\beta = -.28, t = 5.96, p < .01$) and Mother's Work Status ($\beta = -.10, t = 2.19, p < .05$). Thus, lower economic/utilitarian value of daughters was predicted by higher levels of education and employed status of mothers. These two variables accounted for 9 per cent of the variance in the economic/utilitarian values of daughters. Out of this, the Mother's Education explained 7.9 per cent ($F = 35.62, p < .01$) of the variance and the Mother's Work Status contributed an additional 1.1 per cent ($F = 4.83, p < .05$) of the variance in the economic/utilitarian reasons for desiring daughters.

The results of the stepwise regression analysis of different variables in terms of their importance on the socio-cultural values of daughters is reported in Table 6.

Table 6: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Different Socio-Economic Variables as Predictors of Socio-Cultural Values of Daughters

Independent Variable	r	Beta Coefficient	T	R ²	R ² change	F-value (R ² change)
Household Income	-.20**	-.354	4.43**	.099	.099	22.65**
Mother's Age	.17**	.090	5.67*	.112	.014	7.88*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The significant predictors of the socio-cultural values of daughters were the Household Income ($\beta = -.35, t = 4.43, p < .01$) and the Mother's Age ($\beta = .09, T = 5.67, p < .01$). Thus, higher socio-cultural values of daughters was predicted by lower Household Income and older Age of Mother's. These two variables accounted for 11.2 per cent of the variance in the socio-cultural reasons of having daughters. Out of this, the Household Income explained 9.9 per cent of the variance ($F = 22.65, p < .01$) and the Mother's Age contributed an additional 1.4 per cent ($F = 7.88, p < .01$) of the variance in the socio-cultural values of girls.

The results of the regression analysis of different variables in terms of their importance on the psychological values of daughters is presented in Table 7.

The significant predictors of the psychological values of daughters were the Mother's Education ($\beta = .27, t = 5.76,$

$p < .01$) and the Mother's Work Status ($\beta = .11, t = 2.26, p < .05$). Thus, higher psychological value of daughters was predicted by higher levels of Education and Work Status of mothers. These two variables accounted for 8.6 per cent of the variance in psychological values of having daughters. Out of this, the Mother's Education explained 7.4 per cent ($F = 33.28, p < .01$) of the variance and the Mother's Work Status contributed an additional 1.1 per cent ($F = 4.69, p < .05$) of the variance in the psychological value of female children.

Table 7: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of Different Socio-Economic Variables as Predictors of Psychological Values of Daughters

Independent Variable	r	Beta Coefficient	T	R ²	R ² change	F-value (R ² change)
Mother's Education	.27**	.273	5.76**	.074	.074	32.28**
Mother's Work Status	.13**	.107	2.26*	.086	.011	4.69*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

From the above results it is apparent, that as women attain higher socio-economic status as a consequence of increased education, employed status, and higher financial status of the family, the utilitarian value of daughters loses importance and they are desired more for psychological reasons.

DISCUSSION

The present study assessed how far socio-economic development brings about a change in the parental values attributed to sons and daughters. The mother's education, her work status and the household income of the family were taken as indicators of socio-economic development in order to examine how the values of sons and daughters varied across various socio-economic status groups.

A noteworthy finding was that the economic value of old age security and the socio-cultural value of continuity of family name for desiring sons were highly salient to all the mothers regardless of their education, work status, and household income. It seems that these two values, which appear to be true reflection of a

traditional patriarchal society, are so deeply rooted in the Indian female psyche that it has become insensitive to modernization which comes gradually with increased education, female employment, and consequently, increased household income.

The results further revealed that the economic value of financial support of sons was significantly more salient to the unemployed mothers, from households with lower levels of income and who had fewer years of schooling. Education perhaps provides women with greater employment opportunities, which brings with them greater economic independence while such opportunities are restricted to women with relatively fewer years of schooling which, consequently, increases their dependence on sons for economic support. The third economic value of sons, i.e., to take care of parental property was significantly more salient to the mothers with higher levels of education and from households with higher income. For the economic/utilitarian reasons, none of the variables emerged as a significant predictor thereby indicating that economic/utilitarian reasons of desiring sons were the most important values accorded to sons by the respondents.

The results further indicated that the socio-cultural values such as religious/social obligations were significantly more salient to the mothers with lower levels of education and from households with lower levels of income. It is noteworthy that the significant predictors of the socio-cultural values of sons were the household income and the mother's education. These two variables were negatively related to the socio-cultural values of sons. Higher household income and higher levels of mother's education has a dampening effect on the salience of the socio-cultural values which provides support to the result discussed above that household income and female schooling are the ones that can bring about a change in the socio-cultural values of sons.

Moreover, the psychological value of sons was more significant to the employed educated mothers, from higher income households. These findings support previous generalizations that with socio-economic development and modernization of societies the

perceived economic benefits and satisfactions derived from children declines and parents start to desire children mainly for emotional and psychological reasons (Arnold *et al.* 1975; Arnold and Fawcett, 1975; Bulatao, 1982; Kagitcibasi, 1982; Jejeebhoy and Kulkarni, 1989; Malhi, 1993b; Smolin, 2011).

The two significant predictors of the psychological values of sons were the mother's education and the mother's age. These two variables were positively correlated with the psychological values of sons thereby indicating that the psychological values of sons increases with an increase in the level of mother's education and her age. This result is congruent with Kagitcibasi's (1982) contention that education plays a key role in heightening such psychological values as providing companionship and emotional support to parents.

In sum, several patterns emerge consistently from the above findings. The mothers in the urban centre of Himachal Pradesh value sons primarily for economic and socio-cultural reasons such as old age security and continuity of family name regardless of their education, work status and household income. These two values of sons seem to be the most important motive of preferring sons. Secondly, the instrumental value of sons, especially expected economic help, is inversely related to socio-economic levels. The opposite pattern is noted for most measures of psychological appreciation which becomes important at higher levels of development. In other words, it is only when mothers have achieved higher level of education, are involved in some income generating activities and are from families with higher household income that the financial support and religious/social obligations value of sons declines in significance and their emotional and psychological value assumes importance.

On the other hand, utilitarian value of daughters such as help in housework was more salient to the unemployed mothers, with fewer years of schooling and from households with lower levels of income. The psychological reasons, however, were salient to all the mothers but the tilt was more towards the employed mothers, from families with higher financial status, and with more years of schooling. The results of the regression

analyses revealed that the mother's education and her work status significantly predicted the utilitarian and the psychological values of daughters. These two predictor variables were negatively and positively correlated with the utilitarian and psychological values, respectively. The findings indicate that in urban Himachal Pradesh unemployed mothers with fewer years of schooling value daughters for the utilitarian values. On the other hand, employed mothers with higher educational attainment value daughters for emotional support.

The results further indicated that socio-cultural value of daughters were less salient among the respondents except that caring for siblings decreased significantly, as predicted, with an increase in the mother's education.

The results reported above lend support to the findings of studies conducted in the developed countries and in India that with socio-economic development the socio-cultural reasons and the utilitarian satisfactions to be derived from daughters declines and parents start to desire children primarily for emotional and psychological reasons (see e.g., Arnold *et al.* 1975; Bulatao, 1982; Fawcett, 1983; Jejeebhoy and Kulkarni, 1989; Raina, 1999; Smolin, 2011). However, in contrast to the findings of the present study, Malhi (1993b) found no significant decline in the socio-cultural and utilitarian functions of daughters with an increase in the level of women's education. A likely explanation for the contrasting results seems to lie in the two types of sample of the two studies. The present sample is an urban one whereas the sample of Malhi's study comprised of rural respondents from the state of Haryana. In conventional rural settings daughters are socialized to look after the household chores when adult family members including the female folk are busy in the fields. Presumably, people in such settings are more likely to desire daughters for their utilitarian functions and since socio-cultural values are deeply rooted they are more rigid in their outlook, and consequently, more resistant to social change that occurs gradually as a result of increased education, employment, and enhanced economic status.

The above findings, thus, indicate that the utilitarian values of daughters are inversely related to the socio-economic levels of the individuals. Socio-cultural values

of daughters did not emerge to be an important reason for desiring daughters among the urban respondents. However, the psychological values emerged to be the most important reason to an overwhelming majority of the mothers. It seems, then, that the mothers in the urban centre of the state of Himachal Pradesh are more concerned about the psychological benefits of daughters rather than their utilitarian functions. A remarkable finding of the present investigation, which is worth consideration, is that there is a convergence of interests, among the urban mothers in Himachal Pradesh, at several levels to put a premium on sons and discriminate against daughters. Son preference seems to be in the interest of the lineage, whose continuity depends on sons alone. A woman values her sons more than her daughters because the former will be her major source of support in old age and in the event of financial crisis. Indeed, a woman's position in her husband's home is not consolidated unless she produces at least one son (also see Cain, 1982,1984).

However, in some respects women in Himachal Pradesh have comparatively high status by such measures as age at marriage, level of female literacy, women's participation in income generating activities, and sex ratio. Nevertheless, these factors do not seem to have increased the value of daughters to their parents in the state because the patrilineal kinship system has remained largely untouched by them. Because women are marginalized in the state, as in other patrilineal societies, sons are of greater value than daughters for every individual. Preference for male children is likely to continue in Himachal Pradesh until this mechanism for structurally marginalizing women is altered. Such changes could be affected by state policies or actions such as propaganda campaigns, enforcement of existing legislation for protecting women's rights (such as the law of equal inheritance by sons and daughters), and enacting new laws towards this end such as the Supreme Court ruling, that was passed in the 1980s, that women as well as men have a duty to support their parents.

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