

## Son Preference and Later Life in India: Myth and Reality

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### Description

In Indian society son preference is popularly deep-rooted [1]. It passes from generation to generation historically. Gender biased and patriarchal society is being happy with male off springs [2]. There are several reasons attached to this. Parental socio-economic and educational background has little impact on this matter. Of course, in urban area, this son preference is slowly in changing mode [3]. Parents enjoy more benefit from son than their daughter. Son is their assets while daughter is considered as liabilities so that their investment for their son's care and development is very much purposive. They opine that son would renew their race and they would take care at their later life [4]. For daughter, they have to pay a handsome dowry and daughter is only a guest in later life. Rephrase, son would bring handsome wealth as dowry and it is gain for future prospect and secure life [5]. A study was conducted to know the status of elderly care at their later life by their sons. For this purpose, a sample of 100 elderly couples above 65 years of age was selected through adopting simple stratified random sampling. Among these 100 couples, 50% population was from urban area (Kolkata, a metro city of Eastern India) and they were financially sound and well off. While rest of the population was from adjacent rural area of the city of Kolkata and they were also financially well off. In this study, race/religion, education and other demographic part were ignored.

The study explored that about 70% of these couples had two sons only as their off springs, 20% of them had one son and one daughter and rest 10% couples had only daughter(s). These couples usually lived alone and they used to manage themselves with the help of maid-servants. Their male off springs lived separately and only 32% of these couples rarely used to avail care from their sons and it was only during their illness. Only they used to assist physically. Majority of them was detached from their parents and their care and supports towards their parents were evidently thin. While daughters and their spousal partners

(son-in-laws) were more serious for their care and support. They lived separate, even in a long-distance area, but they were always in contact with these elderly population. They frequently visited and enquired their living situation. But mental health of these elderly was in a poor condition because they always preferred care and support from their sons and they were hoped to live with their sons. They commented that their son preference was miss rooted and they were late to understand it at their later half of life. At the same time, they were not so much happy and satisfied with the care and support of their daughter and her counterpart because their expectation from son and his counterpart (daughter-in-law) was most generous. It was revealed that their mind set towards girls had changed less than expectation.

Practically the elderly population is the root of the family. They nurture the family towards better living in their later life and they expect to live with their sons and their counterparts. They think that it would be their mostly happiest moments in life. But they fall out from it at their later life. Now they are mentally ill, isolated and they suffer from loneliness. Therefore, improvement of their mental health would be ensured when their son would live together.

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Received July 10, 2017; Accepted July 13, 2017; Published July 18, 2017

Citation: Adhikari H (2017) Son Preference and Later Life in India: Myth and Reality. *J Gerontol Geriatr Res* 6: 438. doi:[10.4172/2167-7182.1000438](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-7182.1000438)

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