Son Preference and Socialization in Nepali Society

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Abstract

This study examines son preference in Nepal, revealing deep-rooted societal attitudes toward male and female children. Data were collected from 85 households through interviews and focus group discussions using stratified random sampling. Findings indicate a strong preference for sons, driven by cultural norms, economic factors, and familial responsibilities, regardless of parental education levels. Uneducated respondents expressed a heightened need for sons, while educated individuals offered more nuanced views. Daughters are valued for domestic roles and emotional support but face barriers to education and empowerment. Despite certain awareness of gender discrimination, opportunities for equality remain limited, with societal structures favoring male authority. The study underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to promote gender equity, emphasizing education and societal change.

Introduction

The social construction of sex-based differences, known as gender, encompasses the roles, activities, and cultural components that shape societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity (Eccles, 2009). Gender differentiates socially imposed inequalities from biological differences, establishing men and women as unequal social categories through the social processes that contribute to these disparities (Choo & Ferree, 2010). This framework emphasizes the dynamics of power and the cultural contexts in which gender roles are defined and perpetuated. Sex and gender are distinct concepts and are not solely defined by biology. 'Sex' encompasses a combination of chromosomes, hormones, physical anatomy, and genetic factors. In contrast, biological traits may not necessarily align with gender identity. Gender refers to cultural identity and carries social significance, reflecting

specific societal meanings and roles. It encompasses social conventions, attitudes, and expressions that inform how individuals experience and perform their gender (Allegranti, 2013).

Socialist feminism encompasses two primary perspectives: one emphasizes the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy, while the other addresses various forms of domination, including racial, class, and gender hierarchies, as well as global power dynamics. Increased awareness of these structures and their impacts on both social and individual levels, along with strategic actions to achieve the movement's goals, can facilitate change (Berberoglu, 2017). Additionally, some feminists argue that women can only fully express their cultural identities by distancing themselves from men, viewing the lesbian identity as a representation of an autonomous, woman-identified experience (Frost & Elichaoff, 2014).

A human newborn begins life as a biological organism driven by instincts, gradually transforming into a social being as they learns social behaviors and emotions. This transformation occurs through socialization, a vital process without which society and culture would not exist. Socialization involves individuals adapting to the circumstances and norms established by their society, facilitating the absorption of culture. It is the mechanism through which a developing person acquires the customs, values, attitudes, and beliefs of their social group (Maheshwari, 2016).

The process of socialization involves learning the rules and norms established by the community (Rao, 2011). It encompasses the complex interactions through which individuals acquire the habits, values, abilities, and judgment necessary to thrive in social groups. Men and women experience distinct cultural and social influences, which provide opportunities for personal growth. Personality development is not automatic; each community has its methods for guiding young members in social interactions, a process we refer to as training.

In Nepal, most women live in rural areas, taking on roles as wives, mothers, and household managers. They often provide social and cultural services both voluntarily and commercially, working in farms and family businesses when not formally employed. However, their limited access to income, wealth, and employment is a significant factor contributing to their low economic status, which directly and indirectly impacts their decision-making power (National Planning Commission, 2006).

The gender perspective theory, which has been developed since the 1950s, is closely related to this study. It provides a modern framework for analyzing gender roles for men and women across various societal contexts. This paradigm addresses the distinctions and discrimination prevalent between genders, exploring the

underlying causes of patriarchal ideals, disparities between boys and girls, and the dynamics of oppression and socialization. Central to this theory is the emphasis on achieving equal growth for men and women and fostering a balanced distribution of power within society. An important aspect of socialization is the learning of culturally defined gender roles, which encompasses the actions and attitudes considered appropriate for specific genders. This process teaches girls how to be girls and boys how to be boys, shaping their identities and behaviors. Such learning results from various socialization processes, with families playing a significant role in promoting gender norms. However, friends, workplaces, schools, and the media also contribute to this influence. Numerous subtle and overt mechanisms shape these gender roles, reinforcing societal expectations and behaviors (Henslin, 2006).

Feminist theory encompasses a range of political, intellectual, and social movements that advocate for equal rights and opportunities for all genders in Nepalese society. It investigates parental preferences and their broader implications for women's political, economic, personal, and social rights, highlighting the necessity of equality in education and the workplace. Adopting a critical intersectional perspective, feminist theories examine not only women's experiences but also the complexities of various social identities. While there are notable distinctions among feminist theories, they are united in their political and academic pursuits, focusing on dynamic processes of emergence rather than static concepts and challenging dualistic thinking. According to Ferguson (2017), feminist theories are essential to the ongoing struggle for justice, freedom, and equality.

This paper analyzes the philosophical foundations and social value systems influencing parental preferences for newborn girls and boys in Nepalese society. Feminism asserts that women should enjoy the same social, political, and economic rights as men, highlighting the oppressive treatment of women in the modern world. Feminism has evolved through two distinct waves: the first wave, which emerged alongside the women's suffrage movement, focused on securing voting rights, while the second wave, spurred by the civil rights movement, centered on broader issues of women's liberation (Gordon, 2019).

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the factors influencing son preference in socialization within Rakhidanda, Eastern Pokhara Metropolitan City, Ward No. 26, Kaski. Grounded in gender theories, gender-sensitive socialization, and feminist perspectives, the research utilizes a stratified random sampling procedure to select 85 households, ensuring representation across various socio-economic backgrounds and education levels. Data collection involved

structured personal interviews, guided by a carefully designed interview schedule, along with focus group discussions with both male and female participants to capture diverse perspectives. Quantitative data from the interviews were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns related to son preference, while qualitative data from the focus groups underwent thematic analysis to extract key insights into socialization practices and cultural norms. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the research process. This comprehensive methodology provides valuable insights into the cultural values and socialization practices that sustain son preference in the community.

Results and Discussion

Gender Preference for Sons and Daughters

This study relies on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire, which facilitates systematic information gathering and enables researchers to analyze specific variables aligned with the research objectives. Evidence from the field survey has been compiled to aid in the analysis and interpretation of results, focusing on the preferences for boys and girls across various social strata in Nepalese society. This approach provides insights into the underlying patterns and attitudes that shape these preferences.

In the Nepalese context, dominant social and cultural norms contribute significantly to gender-based discrimination, particularly evident in parents' strong preference for sons. Females are often perceived as less valuable and occupy an inferior position within a patriarchal framework that influences social relations. As a result, parents tend to prefer having sons over daughters when deciding to expand their families. This study reveals that the desire for sons persists across different educational levels among parents, highlighting the entrenched nature of these gender preferences.

The data indicates that respondents without formal education expressed a greater need for sons, while a higher percentage of educated respondents indicated a preference for daughters. However, a closer examination reveals that the perceived needs for sons and daughters among illiterate and educated respondents do not differ significantly. This suggests that the strong preference for sons may stem from factors beyond educational attainment alone. The attitudes of parents are likely influenced by prevailing social and cultural norms and values that dictate the perceived roles of sons within the family and community. These conventions contribute to a deep-seated desire for male children, regardless of the parent's educational background.

Table 1

Gender Preference for Son and Daughter by Respondent's Education and Sex

Need of		Number of Respondents by Education and Sex							
		Illiterate			Literate			Total (N=(85)	
		F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M
Son	Yes	9	12	21	20	33	53	29	45
	No	1	3	4	3	4	7	4	7
Total								33	52
Daughter	Yes	8	9	15	19	29	48	27	37
	No	2	6	5	4	9	13	6	15

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

This table presents the gender preference for sons and daughters among respondents categorized by their education level (illiterate and literate) and sex (female and male), with a total of 85 respondents. The findings reveal a predominant preference for sons, largely attributed to cultural beliefs that emphasize the importance of sons in preserving family lineage and performing post-mortem rituals. Respondents expressed a strong belief that having a son is crucial for maintaining the family clan name, which is a significant aspect of Nepali heritage.

Moreover, many couples believe that sons provide essential support in old age, especially given the lack of state-sponsored social security for the elderly in Nepal. In traditional Nepali culture, daughters typically leave their parental home to live with their husbands after marriage, reinforcing the perception that sons are essential for familial continuity and economic support. This cultural context illustrates the deep-rooted societal norms that shape gender preferences, highlighting the challenges faced by daughters in achieving equality and recognition within their families and communities.

In Nepali culture, traditional norms dictate that daughters typically move in with their husbands after marriage, which reinforces the perception that sons are more valuable as they remain within the parental household. This dynamic influences family decisions and preferences, further entrenching the societal bias towards male children. The data underscores the complex interplay between cultural expectations and familial responsibilities, illustrating why many parents are compelled to prioritize sons in family planning.

Parents so contend that sons share in both their happy and sad moments, as well as the highs and lows in their life. The presence of sons in a family is seen as crucial for their tasks and responsibilities towards the family, as dictated by society. Consequently, society denigrates parents in general and women specifically who are

unable to conceive a son. Compared to women who have both sons and daughters, women who only have daughters are denigrated. In addition, their standing in society is superior to that of women who are childless. As a result, after giving birth, women's standing is elevated, particularly when they have sons.

Table 2

Reasons for the Need of Sons and Daughters by Respondent's Gender

Need of Sons	Female (N=33)	Male (N=52)
Sons take part in happiness and sorrow	4	4
They help parents in old age	6	11
They carry over clan names	11	17
They perform funeral rites	9	15
No son is looked down by the society	3	5
Total	33	52
Need of Daughters		
The Daughter manages all the household work	12	28
To take care of the younger siblings	3	4
The Daughter is Laxmi of the house	5	5
The Daughter loves her parents more than a son	13	25
Total	33	52

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

The data in Table 2 reveals a complex perspective on gender preferences among parents, highlighting both the desire for sons and the recognition of daughters' value. While many parents express a preference for sons, viewing them as essential for continuing family lineage and providing support in old age, daughters are equally appreciated for their contributions within the household. Respondents noted that daughters often take on significant responsibilities, assisting with domestic tasks and caring for younger siblings. Female respondents particularly emphasized the emotional bonds they share with their daughters, believing that daughters offer love and understanding that enrich family dynamics.

Moreover, despite the traditional emphasis on sons, many parents view daughters as blessings, attributing good fortune and referring to them as the "beauty and charm of the house" (gharko shova). Interestingly, a significant number of respondents indicated a preference for having a son as their first child, followed by a daughter, reflecting the ongoing interplay between traditional values and evolving

attitudes toward gender roles. This duality is further influenced by educational backgrounds, with less educated individuals more likely to adhere to traditional preferences. Overall, the findings illustrate a nuanced understanding of gender roles within Nepalese society, where both sons and daughters hold important, albeit different, places in family life.

Table 3

Respondent's Preference Order by their Education and Sex for Son/Daughter

Preferred Order and Sex of the Child	Education and Sex of the Respondents (N=85)				
	Illiterate		Literate		Total
First Child:	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Son	8	12	15	28	63
Daughter	2	3	8	9	22
Total	10	15	23	37	85
Second Child:					
Son	5	9	7	11	32
Daughter	5	6	16	26	53
Total	10	15	23	37	85

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

The data presented in the table examines the preferred order and sex of children among respondents based on their educational background (illiterate and literate) and gender. The total number of respondents is 85, reflecting diverse preferences for the sex of the first and second child. For the first child, the majority preference is for sons, with 63 respondents opting for a son, while only 22 preferred a daughter. This trend is observed across both illiterate and literate groups, although literate respondents show a slightly higher preference for sons (43) compared to illiterates (20). Notably, within the illiterate group, 8 females preferred a son as the first child, while 2 opted for a daughter, indicating a significant leaning toward male children even among women without formal education.

In terms of the second child, there is a shift in preference. While 32 respondents still preferred a son, the number of those preferring a daughter rose to 53. This suggests that while there is a strong initial preference for sons, there is a growing acceptance of daughters in the family structure, particularly for the second child. The data reveals a pattern where many families may prioritize a son first, but increasingly recognize the value and importance of daughters as part of their family dynamics.

Overall, these findings highlight the prevailing cultural norms surrounding gender preference in Nepalese society, showcasing the complexities of family planning and the evolving perceptions of gender roles influenced by education and societal changes.

Table 4

Levels Desired by the Respondents to Educate their Sons/Daughters

Level	For Son	For Daughter
As long as parents can afford	42%	30%
Ph.D.	2 %	1%
Master's Degree.	16%	14%
Bachelor's Degree	13%	29%
Higher Secondary	12%	15%
S.L.C./SEE	14%	10%
No Response	1%	1%
Total (N=85)	100%	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

The data in the table presents the preferences for sons and daughters among respondents based on their education level. It reveals notable trends regarding how educational attainment influences gender preferences.

A significant portion of respondents (42%) indicated that they would prefer a son as long as parents can afford to raise children. This suggests a strong cultural inclination toward sons, often associated with economic and social expectations. In contrast, only 30% expressed a preference for daughters under the same conditions, indicating a lesser valuation of daughters in terms of economic support.

Looking at specific educational achievements, preferences vary: among those with a Ph.D., 2% preferred sons while only 1% preferred daughters, reflecting a low response rate overall in this category. For Master's Degree holders, 16% favored sons compared to 14% for daughters, indicating a slight preference for sons, but relatively balanced. In the Bachelor's Degree category, there is a notable shift, with 13% preferring sons and 29% favoring daughters, suggesting that higher education may lead to more acceptance of daughters.

At the higher secondary level, preferences for sons (12%) and daughters (15%) are fairly close, indicating a potential trend toward valuing both genders. In contrast, among respondents with S.L.C./SEE qualifications, a higher percentage (14%) preferred sons over daughters (10%), showing traditional preferences still play a role.

Overall, the data illustrates a complex interplay between educational attainment and gender preference, with a gradual shift toward valuing daughters more as education levels rise, though traditional preferences for sons remain prevalent in many categories.

Gender Perception of Marriage and Family

Families and individuals make up society. Members of the family are linked through marriage or by birth. They are therefore either affine or consanguine kens. The origin of each of these relationships is marriage. The study inquired why marriage is customarily performed in society. Of the 85 respondents, 35 percent of women and 34 percent of men claimed that marriages are necessary to manage society, with the remaining 15 and 11 percent of respondents citing mutual aid as their reason. In societies such as Nepal, the establishment of a family requires marriage. Most civilizations' conventions and values oppose the idea of unmarried couples living together and having children.

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Table 5

Gender Perceived Reason of Marriage by Sex

Reasons	Total Respondents (N=85)	
	Female (N=33)	Male (N=52)
To continue society	35%	34%
For mutual help	15%	11%
To form family	30%	25%
Maintain lineage	10%	18%
For support in old age	10%	22%
Total	100%	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

The table outlines the reasons provided by respondents for having children, categorized by gender and the total number of respondents (N=85). The responses

indicate a range of motivations for parenthood, reflecting societal norms and expectations. Among females, 35% cited the need to continue society as the primary reason, indicating a strong cultural emphasis on reproduction and societal continuity. Additionally, 30% mentioned the desire to form a family, highlighting the importance placed on familial structures. Mutual support was also noted by 15%, emphasizing community and cooperative living. For males, the reasons were somewhat similar but differed in emphasis. A notable 34% also prioritized continuing society, while only 25% highlighted the importance of forming a family. However, a higher percentage of male respondents (22%) indicated that support in old age was a motivating factor, reflecting traditional views on filial responsibilities. Interestingly, 18% of males mentioned maintaining lineage, which may underscore patriarchal values associated with family heritage.

Overall, the data illustrates that while both genders recognize the importance of societal continuation and family formation, men place a greater emphasis on support in old age and lineage maintenance.

Table 6

Gender Perceived Need of Family by Sex of Respondents.

Reason	Sex			Total Percentage
	Female	Male	Total	
For help and safety	21	33	54	64
For pleasure	5	7	12	14
To care for the sickness	3	5	8	9
For social standing	2	3	5	6
To form society	2	4	6	7
Total	33	52	85	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

The table presents the reasons for having children, categorized by the sex of the respondents (female and male) and the total number of respondents (N=85). The data indicates that the predominant motivation for parenthood is the desire for help and safety, with 64% of respondents (21 females and 33 males) citing this reason. This reflects a common societal belief that children provide security and assistance, especially in times of need. Pleasure was the second most cited reason, mentioned by 14% of respondents, suggesting that the joy of parenting and family life is also valued. Caring for parents during sickness was noted by 9%, indicating a recognition of filial responsibilities and support systems. Social standing was less emphasized, with only 6% of respondents identifying it as a reason, while 7% mentioned forming society,

indicating a desire to contribute to community and societal structures. Overall, the findings highlight that practical considerations, particularly help and safety, are the primary motivations for parenthood, with emotional and social factors playing lesser roles.

Awareness of Gender Discrimination in the Family

Gender equity and equality are often used interchangeably, similar to how the term "gender" is sometimes narrowly associated with women. However, these concepts are distinct. According to IUCN (2003), Nepal's Strategy for Integrating Gender and Social Equity is "gender equality is the end goal where women and men are treated the same." Yet, merely treating men and women equally is inadequate for achieving true gender equality, as it may perpetuate existing inequities. Gender equity focuses on fairness in treatment, often requiring different approaches for men and women to address historical and societal disadvantages. This means recognizing and compensating for the inequalities and disparities that currently exist, ensuring that both genders have equitable opportunities and outcomes.

Gender equity is defined by the UNDP as "fairness in women's and men's access to socio-economic resources," whereas gender equality is defined as "refers to norms and values, attitudes and perceptions required to attain equal status between women and men without neutralizing the biological differences between being women and men." Equality therefore concerns the standing, privileges, and obligations of both genders. In the process of obtaining equality, that is a step. Stated differently, equity is the method and equality is the aim. While equality does not always imply equity, equity does lead to equality. In addition, the study's survey inquired about the respondents' access to equal chances with other family members and whether their age, sex, educational background, or membership in a specific caste or ethnic group affected their availability of options. Merely 37 out of the total respondents stated they experienced equal opportunity.

Table 7

Opportunity in the Family by Respondents' Gender

Equal Opportunity available	Gender	Total Number of Respondents (N=85)
Yes	Female	13
	Male	24
Total 'Yes'		37
No	Female	20
	Male	28
Total 'No'		48

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

The table presents data on the perception of equal opportunities available, categorized by gender among the total respondents (N=85). Out of the total respondents, 37 individuals (13 females and 24 males) believe that equal opportunities are available, indicating a modest level of optimism about gender equality in the context studied. However, a larger group, consisting of 48 respondents (20 females and 28 males), feels that equal opportunities are not available.

This disparity highlights a significant concern regarding perceived gender inequality, as the majority of participants express skepticism about the existence of equal opportunities. The data suggests that while some individuals see progress, a larger portion of the community feels that barriers to equality still persist, indicating a need for further advocacy and action towards achieving gender equity.

Possibilities include property inheritance/ownership, improved food and clothing (*khana/laguna*), educational facilities, freedom of movement, and decision-making. The respondents thought that these kinds of discrimination could be eliminated or reduced. It was believed that society's role was crucial in eradicating these kinds of discrimination. Among all family members, the head of the household-especially the male head-was thought to play the most significant role in eliminating discrimination amongst family members.

According to the respondents, society has a critical role to play in lessening gender discrimination inside families. In a patriarchal society, male heads of households retain significant authority when it comes to overseeing family matters. They have the power to influence their families to embrace gender equality. The primary causes of gender discrimination in families across society are seen to include societal attitudes about sons and daughters, government policies surrounding girl and boy children, and the different treatment of sons and daughters by families.

Table 8

Actors in the Elimination of Gender Discrimination

Role of actors	Respondents (N=85)	
	Number	Percentage
Society	34	40
Household Head Males	28	33
Family	12	14
Males	5	6
Government	4	5
Household Head Females	2	2
Total	85	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

Despite being the head of the household, only a few respondents thought that women's roles are crucial in eradicating gender inequality. This is the case because the head male's rule is regarded as typical, whereas the head female's rule is thought to be the product of exceptional circumstances. In addition, the family's youngsters paid greater attention to their fathers than to their mothers. The respondents expressed a tendency that moms are not given the respect they deserve since they lack education and don't work in offices where they may earn money.

Gender Perception of Male Domination over Female and Female Domination over Male

Respondents in various FGDs identified several factors contributing to male dominance, including social customs, ignorance, lack of education, patriarchy, helplessness, and the perception that women are incapable of performing on an equal footing with men. Additionally, several issues contribute to women's subordination, such as poverty, educational disparities, caste membership, sensitivity to caste discrimination, and excessive alcohol consumption, particularly among certain lower castes. Male dominance exists across all castes and ethnic groups, although its intensity varies based on age and educational attainment. Furthermore, gender domination primarily impacts uneducated women.

Gender Perception on Empowerment by Age, Sex Education, and Caste/Ethnicity

In the FGDs regarding women's empowerment, respondents overwhelmingly identified education as the key factor. Among the different groups, Brahmins ranked highest in this belief, followed by Dalits, Kshetris, and various Ethnic groups. Participants also highlighted that training, employment opportunities, financial resources, and skill development are critical components of empowerment. While education was unanimously recognized as essential for empowering individuals of any gender, respondents noted that its effectiveness is enhanced when combined with other supportive factors.

In addition to education, other important elements mentioned included opportunities, skill development, training, awareness, and financial resources that respect and uplift women. Respondents pointed to the roles of parents, individual effort, and societal support as crucial in empowering women. Ultimately, parents were

seen as primarily responsible for fostering women's the need for a collective approach that involves families, communities, and governmental support.

Discussion

This study reveals the complex interplay of cultural norms, education, and gender dynamics that shape son and daughter preferences in Rakhidanda, Eastern Pokhara. Respondents highlighted a strong preference for sons, driven by deep-rooted cultural beliefs about lineage, support in old age, and societal expectations. Notably, the perception that sons carry on family names and perform important funeral rites underscores the patriarchal framework prevalent in Nepali society.

However, the findings also illustrate an evolving perspective among educated individuals, who express more nuanced views about gender roles. Educated respondents are increasingly recognizing the value of daughters, acknowledging their contributions to household responsibilities and emotional support. This shift suggests that education plays a critical role in challenging traditional gender norms and promoting more equitable views on child preference.

Despite the acknowledgment of the importance of gender equality, significant barriers remain. The study indicates that illiterate women tend to prefer sons, reflecting their limited exposure to alternative views on gender roles. In contrast, educated respondents both male and female exhibit a greater willingness to appreciate the strengths and contributions of daughters. This highlights the potential for education to empower women and shift societal attitudes.

Moreover, the data reveal that decision-making and perceptions of autonomy differ markedly between genders and education levels. Men generally enjoy greater access to resources and decision-making power, while women often face systemic barriers. Yet, some respondents noted instances of female empowerment, particularly in lower socioeconomic groups, where women can hold significant influence within the household.

The findings also point to a broader societal awareness of gender inequality, with many respondents acknowledging the need for systemic change. Cultural norms, educational disparities, and religious beliefs were identified as key factors perpetuating gender inequality. Addressing these issues will require comprehensive strategies that include education, skill development, and community engagement to foster gender equity.

In summary, this study highlights the complex factors influencing son and daughter preferences, emphasizing the importance of education and societal change in promoting gender equity. The interplay of cultural beliefs, educational attainment, and individual perspectives reveals both challenges and opportunities for advancing women's rights and reshaping gender dynamics in Nepalese society.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the intricate dynamics of son preference and socialization within the context of Rakhidanda, Eastern Pokhara. It reveals that societal attitudes toward gender roles are deeply rooted in cultural norms, with a pronounced preference for sons, particularly among uneducated respondents. Although educated individuals display slightly more balanced views, a notable inclination for sons persists, suggesting that education alone may not be enough to dismantle entrenched gender biases.

The research highlights significant differences in the socialization processes of boys and girls, with female children often bearing a heavier burden of domestic responsibilities. This gendered division of labour highlights the societal expectations placed on women and girls, further reinforcing traditional roles. Furthermore, the study illustrates that perceptions of gender roles are influenced by various factors, including caste, age, and educational background. These intersecting identities contribute to the complexity of gender inequality, revealing that attitudes toward sons and daughters are not uniform but vary significantly across different demographics.

In conclusion, addressing son preference and promoting gender equity in Nepal requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, cultural awareness, and community engagement. By challenging traditional norms and fostering inclusive attitudes, it is possible to create a more equitable society where both sons and daughters are valued equally, ultimately contributing to the empowerment of women and the dismantling of systemic gender disparities.

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