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## **Domestic Labor Sharing and Preference for Son: Children's Perspective**

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# Domestic Labor Sharing and Preference for Son: Children's Perspective

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## **Abstract**

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The main aim of this study was to find out through the perception of children whether there is a significant association between the sharing of domestic labor and preference for sons between fathers and mothers. This study used a cluster sampling method to select 1982 secondary students from Malaysia to answer questionnaires. The results showed significant associations between the preference for sons and the sharing of domestic labor between fathers and mothers in the perception of children. These significant associations could still be found after logistic regression controlling for some background factors. In the light of the continuing prevalence of preference for sons in some Asian countries, it is suggested that more studies are needed to examine the possible influence of preference on culture in different areas.

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**Keywords:** preference for sons, domestic labor, children, parents, Malaysia

# Repartición del Trabajo Doméstico y Preferencia por el Hijo Varon: Perspectiva de las Niñas y Niños

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## Resumen

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El objetivo principal de este estudio ha sido encontrar a través de la percepción de las chicas y chicos si hay una asociación significativa entre la repartición de las tareas domésticas y las preferencias hacia hijos varones entre padres y madres. Este estudio ha utilizado un muestreo por grupos para seleccionar 1982 estudiantes de educación secundaria de Malaysia para responder los cuestionarios. Los resultados muestran asociaciones significativas entre la preferencia por hijos varones y la repartición de las tareas domésticas por parte de los padres y madres según la percepción de los chicos y chicas. Estas asociaciones se encuentran también después de realizar regresiones logísticas controladas por algunos factores descriptivos. A la luz de la continuidad de una preferencia por hijos varones en algunos países asiáticos, se sugieren que más estudios son necesarios para examinar las posibles influencias de preferencia de cultura en diferentes áreas.

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**Palabras claves:** preferencia por hijos varones, tareas domésticas, niñas y niños, padres, Malaysia.

The unequal sharing of domestic labor has been reported in many studies. Most of these studies found that wives spent more time on domestic labor than husbands. Different perspectives have been used to explain this phenomenon, such as relative resources, gender or sex roles, and Marxist-feminist perspectives. None of the studies have examined this phenomenon through the perspective of cultural preference for sons, even though preference for sons has been found in many Asian countries, especially in those countries that are dominated by Confucian philosophy, such as China, Taiwan and Korea. This study targeted Chinese Malaysians, since this population is under study but has been found to be closely connected with Chinese traditional culture and increasing sex ratio at birth.

Therefore, this study is aimed at examining the relationship between cultural preference for sons and the sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives through the perception of adolescents in Malaysia. Lee and Waite (2005) pointed out that most studies that explored the sharing of domestic labor collected data from a single member of a married couple. The views of children are seldom explored, though they are a member of the family. The inclusions of reports from adolescents are therefore important as the results are able to provide further information to understand the phenomena from a different angle. In addition, the reports from adolescents are able to avoid the social desirability effect (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2005) that husbands and wives might exaggerate their involvement in domestic labor to meet the social image of good husbands and wives.

Housework is usually defined as unpaid work intended to support the family and home (Coltrane, 2000; Shelton & John, 1996). Since people invest an equal amount of time in unpaid and paid labor, social scientists believe that domestic labor serves the function of maintaining society just as much as paid labor. They focus on the gender difference in the sharing of domestic labor, such as how men and women perform domestic labor differently and how they experience and evaluate it, intrigued by the fact that although more women engage in paid labor and more machines have been created to reduce the domestic workload, it is still women who invest more time in unpaid labor (Coltrane, 2000).

The unequal sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives been observed in a number of countries where wives usually take care

of the family and husbands work outside to earn money for the family (Kabeer, 2005). Although some studies have shown that the rate of increase in men's hours of routine housework actually exceeded the rate of decrease in women's hours, Coltrane (2000) argued that since men were starting from a low level, their contributions did not approach those of women.

Why then do wives invest more time in domestic labor than husbands? Different explanations have been offered. The unequal sharing of domestic labor could be related to economic reasons. The relative resource explanation believes that those with better resources would be able to get more benefits than those with poorer resources. Since more wives are economically dependent on their husbands, they do more domestic labor than their husbands (Shelton & John, 1996). Some studies have supported this explanation by showing that the more equal the sharing of housework between husbands and wives the smaller the gap between their earnings (Blair & Lichter, 1991).

Shelton and John (1996) believed that the unequal sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives was related to husbands investing more time in paid labor than wives, so they claimed that the unequal sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives would be diminished when more females invested as much of their time in paid labor as males did.

This supposition, however, was not supported by other studies. Coverman and Sheley (1986) found that even if more wives invested more time in labor force, the participation of their husbands in domestic labor did not increase. Even if husbands do help with the housework, Demo and Acock (1993) still found that it is wives who invest more time in doing the housework than their husbands. This phenomenon is also applicable in some countries where the disparity in salaries paid to males and females is being equalized (Marshall, 1993; The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco: Economic Research, 2007). In addition, this relative resources perspective finds it difficult to explain the finding that husbands who are dependent on their wives economically still do less domestic work than those who are not so dependent (Brines, 1994).

The unequal sharing of domestic labor can also be related to unequal gender status. The socialization and gender role attitudes perspective suggest that women and men learn different gender roles from their

parents (Goldscheider & Waite, 1991). Men and women always use domestic labor to define and express gender relations, as the family is one of the primary settings in which gender is constructed. For example, owing to their unequal gender status, a wife always works hard to keep the home clean as the performance of a wife is usually linked to the quality of domestic labors (Ferree, 1990).

Greenstein (1996) supports this view by pointing out that women actually spend more time in performing domestic labor after than before marriage. In contrast, males spend less time on domestic labor after marriage. Therefore, he believes that men and women with a liberal view of sex roles are more likely to perform equal sharing of domestic labor.

The Marxist-feminist theory explores this issue from a broader perspective. This perspective argues that men take advantages from women through patriarchy or capitalism, which oppress women and thus cause the unequal sharing of domestic labor between genders (Shelton & John, 1996). This view claims that even if females engage more in paid labor, it is still harder for them to achieve a high position and good pay compared with males, as the patriarchal precedent and the capital mode of production were structured to reinforce the dependence of females on males. Moreover, this latter relation has transformed into a cultural norm, whereby the main role of women is to take care of their children and home rather than be a breadwinner (Hartmann, 1981). Since most men and women have been socialized to accept the unequal sharing of domestic labor, most husbands today are unwilling to participate in doing housework, and most employed wives continue to bear the responsibility for housework and childcare (Greenstein, 1996).

This study adopted the cultural perspective, which explores the sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives in a culture that prefers sons to daughters. It was expected that the sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives was related to whether couples had a preference for sons or not.

Some researchers believe that the preference for sons has its roots in the agricultural economy of the past for the following reasons. Firstly, a male is considered to be stronger and more suited to work on a farm, so he could do more to develop his family's economic status than a daughter could (Ho, 1981,1989; Secondi, 2002).

Secondly, a son was expected to stay with his family after marriage, so he could not only continue to improve the economic status of the family after his marriage, but his children would become the workforce supporting the family in the future. In contrast, a daughter, who lived with her husband's family after marriage, could only improve the economic status of her husband's family (Secondi, 2002; Short, Fengying, Siyuan, & Mingliang, 2000). Lastly, owing to the low flexibility in logic of patrilineal kinship, whereby a son is responsible for caring for his elderly parents, most parents preferred to invest more resources in their sons to insure a bright future for their sons and a good quality of life for themselves during their old age (Gupta et al., 2003; Hare-Mustin & Hare, 1986; J. Li & Lavelly, 2003; Short et al., 2000).

Even though the preference for sons was created in the context of the agricultural economy of the past, this preference still exists today in some countries, such as those in central and western Asia, the Middle East and North America (Miller, 2001). According to the Central intelligence agency (2011), the top five countries with the highest sex ratios at birth (SRB) are Armenia (1.14), Georgia (1.13), Azerbaijan (1.13), China (1.11) and India (1.12). The SRB of all these five countries are above the international baseline, which is 100 girl babies to 106 boy babies (Miller, 2001). These high SRB indicate the involvement of sex-selection techniques (N. Li, Feldman, & Tuljapurkar, 1999), such as sex-selective abortion and sex-selective infanticide (Gupta et al., 2003). In general, this preference is found in countries where Confucian philosophy is interwoven with societal values (Gupta et al., 2003), such as China, Korea and Taiwan.

Most researchers believe that it was cultural rather than economic factors that created the preference for sons among parents (Gu & Roy, 1995; Löfstedt, Luo, & Johansson, 2004; Secondi, 2002). Banister (2004) rejected the view that the preference for sons would diminish with economic development and female education, as studies still found higher female than male infant death rates in both urban and rural areas.

Coale and Banister (1994) examined data from censuses and fertility surveys in China from 1930 to 1994, and concluded that the imbalance of sex ratios at birth was not a recent issue; it could be traced back as far as the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) (Banister, 2004). The son preference has persisted with the help of social forces such as education and laws

that perpetuate the high status of males and the subordinate role of females. For example, in the past a Chinese girl was taught to be dependent on her father when she was young, on her husband after marriage, and on her son after her husband's death. A woman could not ask for a divorce even if she was seriously mistreated (Zhan, 1996).

Thus, the preference for sons did not diminish over a long period of time and the only difference was the method people employed to have more sons: in the beginning, high sex ratio at birth was mostly caused by the practice of female infanticide and maltreatment of unwanted girls of every age. Later, however, it was mostly caused by sex-selection techniques (Banister, 2004). Coale and Banister (1994) therefore questioned the views that attribute the causes of high sex-ratio at birth in China simply to compulsory family planning or the one-child policy.

Nonetheless, though many studies have explored how parents with a preference for sons treat their children differently (Chen, Huq, & D'souza, 1981; Gupta, 1987; Levine, 1987), no study has explored the relationship between the son preference culture and the sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives. The exploration of this issue is important, as it will help to explain the potential influence of this son preference culture inasmuch as it not only influences the interaction between parents and children, as most studies have found, but also the interaction between husbands and wives.

This study explored the issue by recruiting Chinese Malaysians as a research sample. Even though the preference for sons in Malaysia is regarded as neutral (Pong, 1994), one study has suggested the presence of a trend towards a rising SRB among Chinese Malaysians between 1963 and 2003 (Siah, 2008). This rise could be related to the influence of the traditional Chinese son preference culture on Chinese Malaysians.

In 2004, Chinese Malaysians comprised about a quarter of the total population of Malaysia (Central intelligence agency, 2011). Most of them emigrated from southern China during the colonial period (late-eighteenth to nineteenth centuries); during that time the colonial government encouraged the recruitment of laborers from China and India (Y. P. Li, 2003). Most Chinese Malaysians preserve their cultural identity through education. More than 90% of Chinese Malaysians send their children to national-type primary schools to learn Mandarin, rather than to national primary schools where the medium of instruction is



Malay (Segawa, 2007). Therefore, most Chinese Malaysians have accepted and have been influenced by traditional Chinese culture. Some of them may also have been influenced by the son preference culture.

Though children are important members of a family, their perception of their parents' time used on domestic labors are seldom been explored. Their reports may actually be able to provide data to discount the social desirability effects that the different perception of husbands and wives on their own and their partners' time used on domestic labors (Schulz & Grunow, 2007). The aim of this study is to examine adolescents' perception of the sharing of domestic labor by parents with or without a preference for sons. It was expected that less sharing of domestic labor among parents who had a preference for sons than among those who did not have such a preference would be reported by respondents.

## **Method**

### **Repondents**

All respondents were recruited from independent Chinese schools in Malaysia, in which the medium of teaching is Chinese. Two schools were located in east Malaysia, and the other four in the northern, central and southern regions of west Malaysia. Thus, the samples included independent Chinese schools located in different regions in Malaysia. All respondents were Chinese. Their mean age was 14.17 years and about 58% were males. The questionnaires were printed and distributed to 1982 respondents by counseling teachers. All questionnaires were collected back by the same teachers, since the study was administered in class/lecture hours. About 75% of respondents reported that neither of their parents had a preference for sons.

### **Questionnaire**

On the cover page of the questionnaire, respondents were informed that they did not have to write down their names to preserve confidentiality. After reading this cover page, respondents were asked to answer the following questions.

**Background.** Respondents answered questions giving information related to their background, such as age, gender, and parents' educational background.

**Preference for sons.** Respondents ticked a box to indicate whether one, both or neither of their parents had a preference for sons.

**Domestic labor.** Five types of labor were included in this section; house-cleaning, food preparation, care giving, social skills training, and homework guidance. Respondents were asked to tick a box indicating whether both their parents shared these labors or not.

### **Procedure**

Counselors from independent Chinese schools were approached during a workshop to seek their help in conducting this survey. Six counselors agreed to help to distribute and collect questionnaires in their schools. They were instructed to use the cluster sampling method to recruit respondents from their schools. For each year of classes (secondary year 1 to year 3, about grade 7 to 9), they needed to use a random method to select three classes of students. Counselors were instructed to explain to the students the purpose of this study, answering students' questions about the study and the confidentiality of the data they provided. After the respondents had completed the questionnaires, the counselors helped to collect and post the questionnaires back to the researcher for data analysis. A summary of the results has been sent to the counselors to share with the students.

### **Data analysis**

First, in the light of the respondents' answers about whether their parents had or did not have a preference for sons, respondents were categorized into two groups: NSP (neither of the parents had a preference for sons) and SP (either one or both of the parents had such a preference). After that, a 2 (NSP vs. SP) X 2 (both parents share vs. did not share the duties) Chi-square test for independence was run to find the association between the preference for a son and the sharing of household duties. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between preference for sons and sharing of domestic labor, rather than deriving a cause-and-effect explanation.

## Results

### Background Information

**Preference for a son.** About 75% of respondents reported that neither of their parents had a preference for a son.

**Gender difference.** The results of the Chi-square test for independence found a significant association between genders (male vs. female) and preference for sons (none of the parents had a preference vs. one or both parents had a preference). More female respondents than male respondents reported that their parents had a preference (31.3% vs. 20.9%),  $\chi^2(1, n = 1858) = 25.05, p = 0.001$ .

**Parents' educational background.** The results of the Chi-square test for independence also found a significant association between parents' educational background and preference for sons. More respondents whose fathers had received less education (equal or below secondary school level) reported that their parents had a preference for sons than those whose fathers had received higher education (above secondary school level) (27.9% vs. 22.2%,  $\chi^2(1, n = 1673) = 5.95, p = 0.015$ ). Also, more respondents whose mothers had received lower education (equal or below primary school level) reported that their parents had a preference for sons than those whose mothers had received higher education (above primary school level) (29.65% vs. 23.61%),  $\chi^2(1, n = 1666) = 7.42, p = 0.006$ .

**Parental ages.** About 56% of respondents reported that the ages of their fathers were above 45, and about 50% of respondents reported that their mothers were aged above 42. By using Chi-square test for independence, no significant association between preference for sons and fathers' ages (above 45 vs. equal or below 45) was found,  $\chi^2(1, n = 1689) = 2.85, p = 0.086$ . Also, no significant association between preference for sons and mothers' ages (above 42 vs. equal or below 42) was found,  $\chi^2(1, n = 1699) = 0.63, p = 0.429$ .

**Employment of parents.** About 99% of respondents reported that their fathers were employed, and about 63% of respondents reported that their mothers were housewives. Also, the results of Chi-square test for independence did not find significant association between preference for sons and employments of mothers (housewives vs. paid labors),  $\chi^2(1, n = 1784) = 0.17, p = 0.683$ .

**Domestic Labor**

Most respondents reported that their parents shared social skills training (59.4%), care giving (58.9%), homework guidance (34.8%), house-cleaning (25.8%) and food preparation (22.7%).

**Mothers’ employment with domestic labors.** No significant association was found between mothers’ employments with social skills training, care giving and homework guidance (see Table 1). However, more shared house-cleaning (31.2% vs. 24.1%) and food preparation (32.3% vs. 19.9%) were reported while mothers had paid works than had unpaid works,  $\chi^2 (1, n = 1739) = 10.66, p = 0.001$  and  $\chi^2 (1, n = 1706) = 32.76, p = 0.001,$  in order.

Table 1  
*Mothers’ Employment Statues and Sharing of Domestic Labors*

Domestic Labours	Mothers' employments statues		Chi-square	p-value
	Paid work	Unpaid works		
Social skills training	76.1%	77.1%	0.22	0.641
homework guidance	61.5%	55.9%	3.31	0.069
Care giving	52.7%	52.6%	0.001	0.981
House cleaning	31.3%	24.1%	10.66	0.001
Food preparation	32.2%	19.9%	32.77	0.001

**Domestic Labor and Preference for Sons.**

The results of the Chi-square test for independence found significant association between domestic labor and preference for sons. As expected, more respondents whose parents did not have a preference for sons than those whose parents had a preference reported that their parents had shared social skills training (80% vs. 65.5%), homework guidance (60.8% vs. 49.2%), care giving (56% vs. 43.7%) and house-cleaning (28.6% vs. 22.9%). However, no significant association was found between preference for sons and food preparation (see Table 2).

Table 2.  
*Percentages of Respondents in NSP and SP Groups Who Reported That Their Parents Had Shared the Domestic Duties*

Duties	Groups		Chi-square	p-value
	NSP	SP		
Social skills training	80.0%	65,5%	30.078	0.001
homework guidance	60.8%	49,2%	10.781	0.001
Care giving	56.0%	43.7%	15.163	0.001
House cleaning	28.6%	22.9%	5.379	0.020
Food preparation	25.3%	21.8%	2.194	0.139

To examine whether the significant associations between preference for sons and sharing of domestic labor was caused by other factors than the preference for sons or not, a logistic binary regression was run. It can be seen from Table 3, while only preference for sons was used as the predictor in model one, parents who did not have the preference were more likely to share social skills training, homework guidance, care giving and house cleaning than those who have the preference. However, no such significant results were found in food preparation.

Table 3.

*Logistic Regression of Domestic Labours predicted by Preference for Sons and Control Variables*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Social skills training</b>			
•Preference for sons (1= Yes)	2.24***	2.27***	2.28***
•Gender (1= male)		1.07	1.05
•Fathers' education (1 = equal or below secondary school)			1.25
•Mothers' education (1 = equal or below primary school)			1.08
<b>Homework guidance</b>			
•Preference for sons (1= Yes)	1.71***	1.73***	1.69***
•Gender (1= male)		1.16	1.11
•Fathers' education (1 = equal or below secondary school)			1.69***
•Mothers' education (1 = equal or below primary school)			0.99
<b>Care giving</b>			
•Preference for sons (1= Yes)	1.75***	1.67***	1.65***
•Gender (1= male)		0.64***	0.62***
•Fathers' education (1 = equal or below secondary school)			1.23
•Mothers' education (1 = equal or below primary school)			1.31*
<b>House cleaning</b>			
•Preference for sons (1= Yes)	1.34*	1.29	1.24
•Gender (1= male)		0.74**	0.73**
•Fathers' education (1 = equal or below secondary school)			1.39**
•Mothers' education (1 = equal or below primary school)			1.08

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Food preparation</b>			
•Preference for sons (1= Yes)	1.15	1.16	1.13
•Gender (1= male)•Gender (1= male)		1.09	1.07
•Fathers' education (1 = equal or below secondary school)			0.91
•Mothers' education (1 = equal or below primary school)			1.52***

Note. \*\*\* OR < 0.001; \*\* OR < 0.01; \* OR < 0.05

Gender of respondents was added as a predictor in model two (see Table 3). The results showed that parents who did not have the preference were more likely to share social skills training, homework guidance and care giving than those who have the preference. However, no such significant results were found in house cleaning and food preparation.

Lastly, parents' education backgrounds were added as predictors in model 3 (see Table 3). Similar to model 2, parents who did not have the preference were still more likely to share social skills training, homework guidance and care giving than those who have the preference. Also, no such significant results were found in house cleaning and food preparation.

### Discussion

Many studies have explored the relationships between cultural preference for sons and the unfair treatment of daughters by parents in terms of feeding, health care and education, but not many studies have explored the relationship between this cultural preference and the sharing of domestic labor among husbands and wives. Based on the continued prevalence of preference for sons in some Asian countries, this study aimed to examine the association between the preference for sons and the sharing of domestic labor among husbands and wives through the perception of adolescents.

All of the respondents were recruited from six independent Chinese schools in different regions of Malaysia. Firstly, they were asked to report whether their parents have or did not have a preference for sons, and then they were asked to report whether their parents shared or did

not share five different types of domestic labor; food preparation, house cleaning, care giving, homework guidance and social skills training. This study expected that more husbands and wives who did not have a preference for sons would share the domestic labor than those couples who had such a preference.

### **Preference for Sons**

The results showed a significant association between preference for sons and parents' education levels, and a significant association between preference for sons and the gender of the respondents. These results were not surprising, as parents with a lower educational background were more likely to be influenced by the traditional values than those with a higher educational background. In Malaysia, more than 90 per cent of Chinese Malaysians send their children to national-type primary schools to learn Mandarin and culture rather than to national primary schools where the medium of instruction is Malay (Segawa, 2007). However, there are no national-type secondary schools. Most Chinese Malaysians send their children to public secondary schools where Bahasa is used as the medium of instruction or to public or private universities where Bahasa or English is used as the medium of instruction. Therefore, the cultural values of those with higher educational levels would be influenced by other cultural values rather than by Chinese traditional values alone.

A possible reason for more female than male respondents reporting that their parents have a preference for sons could be because females are the sufferers and therefore they are more sensitive than males to the preference attitudes of their parents. According to Manke (1994), daughters who were more likely to do the domestic labor were more likely to substitute their fathers' domestic labor than sons were. Nonetheless, as most studies of preference for sons were using census data rather than reports from adolescents, further studies are necessary to explain these results.

### **Domestic labor**

According to the reports of the respondents, most of their parents shared social skills training, followed by care giving, homework guidance, house cleaning and food preparation. In other words, most physical



housework is still done by wives rather than husbands. Nonetheless, more housewives than wives with paid jobs did this physical housework, and more husbands would share the house cleaning and food preparation if their wives were employed than if they were not working. However, there was no significant association between the employment of mothers and social skills training, care giving and homework guidance.

### **Preference for Sons and Sharing Domestic Labor**

The results supported the expectation that preference for sons was associated with the sharing of domestic labor. The respondents perceived that parents who did not have the preference for sons shared more domestic labor, except for the sharing of food preparation, than those who did have the preference. This could be related to the measurement of domestic labor. The sharing of food preparation could be that the wives prepare the food and the husbands wash the dishes. The preference for sons may influence more husbands in washing dishes than in food preparation. Moreover, the increasing numbers of domestic helpers in Malaysian families may also reduce the impact of the son preference culture in the sharing of food preparation, so that the sharing of food preparation by the husbands is being done by domestic helpers.

The results of logistic regression provided further evidence to support the influence of cultural preference for sons on the sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives. After controlling the background factors, the results of logistic regression still found significant associations between preference for sons and the sharing of domestic labor, except for the sharing of food preparation and house cleaning. It seems that cultural preference for sons did not influence domestic labor that involved physical work that can be done by domestic helpers. Future study could consider putting this variable and the families' income in the measurement to examine this issue further.

Many studies have been conducted to explore the negative impacts of the cultural preference for sons on females. Firstly, studies found that parents who had the preference for sons would treat their daughters unequally, including giving poorer childcare, food, and health care to daughters than to sons (Chen et al., 1981; Gupta, 1987; Levine, 1987).

Secondly, males would practice different forms of violence against females throughout their lives (United Nation Children's Fund, 2000), and this violence could take the form of intersocietal warfare, murder, or male violence towards women. Thirdly, the low birth rate of baby girls compared with baby boys that is caused by the preference for sons may produce future sex ratio imbalances. Studies found that the shortage of women would not actually improve but would lower women's status and create more abduction, rape and kidnapping of women (Banister, 2004).

Recently, a study by Edlund, Li, Yi and Zhang (2007) found that the increasing imbalance in the sex ratio in China may explain about 14 per cent of the overall rise in crime and an increase of 0.01 in the sex ratio may cause a rise of about 3 per cent in violent and property crime rates. Finally, the preference for sons has also caused more women to undergo abortions. Since it is illegal to have an abortion in some countries, many women risk their lives. These negative influences of the preference for sons caused the United Nations to declare prenatal sex selection a form of discrimination (Miller, 2001).

There are very few studies that have explored the influence of the cultural preference for sons on husbands and wives. The main contribution of this study is therefore to suggest that the preference for sons is not only associated with the unfair treatment given to females, as most studies have found, but that it can also be extended to the interaction between husbands and wives. The unequal sharing of domestic labor between husbands and wives may be only one of them.

Since there is no good measurement to measure the preference for sons, future studies could design a better-constructed instrument to assess the preference for sons to make the results more reliable. Also, though there are many different ways of measuring domestic labors, such as time diaries and survey questions (Schulz & Grunow, 2007). Nonetheless, in a comparison of the survey method and the experience sampling method, Lee and Waite (2005) concluded that different measurements would produce different estimations of time spent on domestic labor. These inconsistent results could be caused by random and recall errors, the construction of the dependent variables and social desirability effects (Schulz & Grunow, 2007). Generally, however, it is acknowledged that a more reliable measurement of domestic labor is

needed (Coltrane, 2000; Lee & Waite, 2005; Shelton & John, 1996).

Thus, a more reliable measurement of domestic labor is clearly required, so that researchers can discuss the issue using similar definitions. Besides assessing reports from children, future studies could use multiple approaches to explore this issue, such as the use of interviews and observation, and the inclusion of parents as participants. Finally, it would be helpful if more controls could have been included in the survey, such as husband-wife differences in income, occupational prestige, work time, and husband and wife gender attitudes.

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