The findings also support the sibling effect hypothesis by showing a positive correlation between family size and the proportion of daughters. In this sample, families of up to four children had a disproportionate number of sons, while families with five or more children had a disproportionate number of daughters. These results are similar to those of Park and Cho, who found that in Korea, among women who had completed childbearing, the sex ratio at birth was masculine for families with one or two children but was feminine for families with three or more.

Another unique feature of this article is that it examined parity progression driven by desire for sons through formal, parity-specific multivariate regression models. This analysis showed that even after adjustment for socioeconomic factors, having a higher proportion of daughters was associated with significantly elevated odds of parity progression. Among other correlates, women with more sons than daughters were more likely to progress to higher parities than were women with more daughters than sons. Although the findings supply considerable evidence of desire for sons, parents were by no means completely averse to having daughters. The proportion of women in our sample who progressed to the next parity was lowest among women with at least two sons and at least one daughter, a result consistent with previous research that found that although parents in India desire sons more than daughters, they do want one or more daughters. One study explained this fertility preference by alluding to the Hindu custom of kanyadaan (giving away a daughter in marriage), which proponents believe earns spiritual merit for parents. The current analysis suggests that roughly 7% of births in India through parity 5 can be attributed to parity progression driven by a desire for sons. This finding is similar to a previous estimate that about 8.4% of fertility in Calcutta, India.

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