

Gendered expectation towards sons and daughters in Chinese parents in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Based on the responses of 5,707 parents, this pioneer study examined Chinese parents' expectations about sons and daughters using the 12-item Chinese Parental Gendered Expectations for Sons and Daughters Scale (PGE). Results showed that the PGE was internally consistent. An examination of the profiles of responses to the items of the scale showed several observations: a) a significant proportion of parents held traditional expectations about sons and daughters; b) differentiation of expected parental roles in taking care of sons and daughters still persisted; c) traditional gendered expectations about sons and daughters were gradually changing. Results also showed that fathers and mothers did not significantly differ from each other regarding their gendered expectations about sons and daughters. However, lower educational level, occupational status in terms of engagement in non-full-time work, and low family income were associated with parents' higher endorsement of traditional gendered expectations about sons and daughters.

Keywords: Gendered expectations, demographic correlates, gender stereotype, children, Chinese value

Introduction

Parental expectation reflects the objective and requirement parents set for rearing children (1). It entails significant implications for children's development. Studies showed that parents' expectation influences parenting attitudes, mediates parenting style, and shapes children's academic performance, psychosocial competence and developmental trajectories (1-4). In Chinese culture, parental expectation has often been discussed with gender, i.e. sons versus daughters, the reason of which may be ascribed to the deeply ingrained gender ideology that women are inferior to men. According to Shek and Sun (5), this gender inequity has its social and cultural roots. In an agricultural society, men naturally occupied the

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dominant position as they had more physical strengths and advantages in social production. As a result, men within the family usually had greater say and more authority in handling family matters, including child-rearing matters. Women, on the contrary, became dependent on men to gain status, power and wealth (5). From a cultural perspective, the ethics of Confucianism, which have prevailed China for more than two thousand years, advocate a submissive role of women to men and code of conduct women should obey (5-7). The inferiority of women is well reflected in traditional Chinese sayings such as, “*nan zhu wai nü zhu nei*” (“men are breadwinners and women are homemakers”) and “*nü zi wu cai bian shi de*” (“innocence is a virtue for women”).

Against this social and cultural background, Chinese societies have been well documented with the gender ideology of son preference, together with social phenomena such as sex-selected abortion and sex-ratio imbalance (8-11). An extensive review of literature reveals three observations. First of all, gender-stereotypic expectations are intrinsic to the socialization from parents which are often defined by traditional gender traits and identities (10, 12, 13). For example, Liu’s (13) study indicated that parents considered it critical to cultivate masculine characteristics for sons (e.g. strong, manly and ambitious) and feminine characteristics for daughters (e.g. gentle, considerate and sentimental). Higher socio-economic families seemed to adopt a more gender-neutral approach but did not go too far. Her findings were somewhat echoed by Ge’s (12) study, which also suggested that Chinese parents largely expect the masculine characteristics (e.g. humorous, athletic, independent and creative) for sons, but both masculine and feminine characteristics (e.g. kind, independent, neat and creative) for their daughters. However, as Ge (12) argued, there were still noticeable features of gender stereotype, suggesting a relative stability of gender ideology. According to Sadker (14), these gender stereotypes can underestimate daughters’ potentials and restrict their career choice.

Second, research shows a contradictory picture of parents’ educational expectation for sons and daughters. Some researchers claimed that sons received higher educational aspirations from parents and bore more pressure, especially in rural areas of

China (9, 10, 15). In a study carried out in a rural region of Gansu, one of the most impoverished regions in China, findings suggested higher maternal aspirations for boys (although the aspirations for girls were also high) and that girls were more likely to be called on for household chores (10). The higher expectation was well reflected in practice that more domestic resources were invested in sons’ schooling and resulted in lower educational attainment of rural girls (11, 16).

Nevertheless, different voices also emerged where researchers argued no son preference in terms of parents’ educational expectation (17-20). For example, two recent studies (18-19) suggested that parents in fact held higher expectations for daughters for their secondary education, indicating a major improvement of gender ideology. This improvement for girls, asserted by many scholars, was an unintended consequence of Chinese one-child policy (18,20) and the upheaval of society in the past few decades where younger generations of women had played a more active social role than ever before (7,12). It is also noted that most of these studies were conducted in more developed regions in Greater China. As Wang (11) argued, “children who live in urban areas with educated parents received better educational opportunities and experience less gender bias” (p. 3). Obviously, there are urban-rural differences in gendered expectations for sons and daughters in China.

Third, the favor of sons is highly associated with family responsibility. Research provides empirical evidence that in many regions, especially rural China, parents still expected their sons to provide support to them in their old age (6, 10). This perspective gave rise to parents’ beliefs that educating girls was a waste (10). This pragmatic attitude was prevalent in families with limited resources who hoped to seek the maximum return of educational profits (21). In addition, parents might feel obliged to shoulder the financial responsibility of their sons’ marriage, making investment within a family even more tilted towards sons (22). This expectation stems from the traditional agricultural society where daughters would leave the family after marriage, which means a loss in manpower. As a result, investment in daughters is comparatively less because they will become “outsiders” after marriage.

To sum up, the aforementioned literature indicates a general perpetuated gender differentiation in the light of parental expectation. Interaction effects were also found between geography, SES, generation, education and gender. Therefore, parents' expectations towards sons and daughters should be understood in specific sociocultural contexts. The focused context of our study, Hong Kong, is a unique place in terms of culture and society. On one hand, Hong Kong is a Chinese society with Confucian ethics and patriarchal norms permeating every aspect of society, including unequal gender role positioning (23). Furthermore, Buddhist and Taoist thoughts also highlight the importance of men to women. On the other hand, it embraces Western cultural values to a larger extent than other communities in Mainland China, as it had been a British colony for over a century. The rapid social and economic development has led to a more favorable status of women. Recent statistics (24) show that female students have outnumbered male students in UGC-funded undergraduate (54.6%) and taught postgraduate programme (62.5%), and reached 41.9% in research postgraduate programmes. In career field, women professionals such as Certified Public Accountant and lawyers have witnessed a continuous increase in the past decade (24), which all suggests a more equal gender status in Hong Kong.

Despite such a unique blend of Eastern and Western cultures in Hong Kong society, there is a scarcity of research that has attempted to explore parents' gender perspectives towards child rearing. As a response, we fill a gap in the literature by systematically examining Hong Kong Chinese parents' expectations towards sons and daughters. The present study draws on a culturally-sensitive measurement tool and includes various demographic correlates in the analysis. There are several objectives of this study. First, we attempted to examine the reliability of an indigenous developed measure of parental expectations about sons and daughters in a large sample of Chinese parents in Hong Kong. Second, we investigated the profile of responses to the items in the indigenous scale. Finally, socio-demographic correlates of parental expectations about sons and daughters, including parental gender, education level, occupation status and family income were examined.

For the socio-demographic correlates, several hypotheses were proposed. For age, before of cohort effect (i.e., older people are more susceptible to traditional influences), it was predicted that age would be negatively related to gendered expectations about sons and daughters. On the other hand, because the Western influence and Hong Kong is quite a gender-equal society, it was expected that there would not be difference between fathers and mothers on the gendered expectations about sons and daughters. Regarding the educational and income correlates, it was expected that higher education background (hence higher family income) would be associated with a weaker endorsement of traditional gender stereotype expectations.

Methods

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the "Survey and Behavioural Ethics Committee" at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The participants in this study were 5,707 Chinese parents recruited from 5 out of 13 geographical districts in Hong Kong, including "Sham Shui Po," "Wan Chai," "Yau Tsim Mong," "Northern," and "Eastern Hong Kong island." The participants were recruited through the method of quota sampling to comprise five generational groups who had child/children born from the 1970s to 2010s. The different generational and geographical groups collectively provided a mixed socioeconomic background of the participants who were from households with high, middle, or low income. These participants were recruited through multiple methods and sources. Specifically, for the participants coming from the oldest generational group, we recruited them through NGO service centers for elders, research institutes for aging, and associations on parental education. For the participants whose children were born in the 1980s and 1990s, we recruited them through secondary schools, higher education institutions, NGOs and the Internet. For the participants who had children born in the 2000s and 2010s, we recruited them through kindergartens and primary schools.

Among the final sample, around one third of the participants were men (31.7%) and two thirds were women (67.5%). The age scope of the participants

was wide, ranging from 20s to 90s. Around half of the participants had two children and one third of them had one child. Less than one third of the participants had completed college or university education (24.2%) whereas a much smaller proportion of them completed postgraduate education (4.7%). Participants' detailed demographic profile can be found elsewhere (25).

Instruments

The participants completed a questionnaire including demographic information and four scales measuring "Parental Expectations for Children," "Parental Gendered Expectations for Sons and Daughters," "Parental Roles," and "Parental Beliefs," respectively. In the present study, we focused on profiles of the "Parental Gendered Expectations for Sons and Daughters" (PGE hereafter) and related demographic correlates. The PGE scale contained 12 items outlining traditional parental expectations for sons and daughters, such as "sons are more responsible than daughters," "sons are in greater need of ability to bring home bacon than daughters," and "marriage is more important than a career to daughters." A five-point rating scale (1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree") was applied with a higher score representing a more traditional gendered expectation for sons and daughters. The scale showed good internal reliability in this study with the Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 and the mean inter-item correlation of 0.43.

The demographic information measured the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, including gender, parental role (i.e., father or mother), age, educational level, occupational status, and total family income.

Data analyses

We conducted the following analyses. First, we examined the reliability of the scale in terms of internal consistency. Second, we computed the percentage of positive or negative responses for each item to form the response profiles. Third, we conducted correlation analysis to examine the linkage

between participants' age and their gendered expectation for sons and daughters. Finally, several one-way ANOVAs were performed to see whether parents' gendered expectations for sons and daughters could be related to different demographic factors including parenting role, educational level, working condition, and family income.

Results

Reliability analyses showed that the scale was internally consistent (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90), with acceptable mean inter-item correlation (0.43) and mean item-total correlation (0.62).

Table 1 shows participants' responses on each item. For 10 out of 12 items, a significant proportion of the participants (between 27.8% and 49.5%) gave positive responses which represent their endorsement of the traditional parental expectations for sons and daughters. For the two exceptional items (Item 6 and Item 12), over half of the participants (between 55.0% and 57.3%) endorsed the respective traditional gender beliefs about sons and daughters.

More specifically, for parents' differentiated expectations towards sons and daughters (Items 1-3), over one third of the parents expected that "sons are more responsible than daughters" (34.9%), "sons are more capable of supporting the family" (48.7%), and "sons have stronger leadership than daughters" (34.6%). Regarding parental responsibilities and practices towards sons and daughters (Items 4, 9, 10, and 12), parental belief appeared to shift from "parents should always take care of children" as less than 30% of the parents thought that "parents must help sons to get married and establish family" (Item 4). However, 46.5% and 57.3% of the parents had an expectation that "father takes a more important role in education sons" (Item 9) while "mother take a more important role in educating daughters" (Item 12), respectively. Besides, some parents (30%) reported that they disciplined sons much more rigorously. With reference to gender beliefs for daughters (Items 5-8), nearly half of the parents expected their daughters to get married (Item 5) and 55% of them expected their daughters to be decent and virtuous (Item 6). Besides, 32.2% of the participants held a view that "it will be difficulty for daughters to find a partner if they are too

capable” (Item 7). Likewise, 36.8% of them regarded a marriage as more important than a successful career to their daughters (Item 8). Finally, 31.3% of the participants reported that they “wish to have a son if possible” (Item 11), indicating that nearly one third of the parents held traditional son preferences.

Based on the response profiles outlined above, it appeared that while most Chinese parents in Hong Kong generally did not show extreme gendered expectations towards their children, some parents still held gender stereotypical attitudes towards sons and daughters.

Regarding socio-demographic correlates of gendered expectations towards their children, the correlational analysis showed that parents’ expect-

ation for sons and daughters was significantly and positively associated with their age ($r = 0.24$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = 0.06$), meaning that the older the parents are, the more likely they hold a traditional gendered view towards sons and daughters.

Second, as shown in table 2, parental role did not show a significant effect on parents’ different expectations for sons and daughters ($F = 0.15$, $p = 0.70$), suggesting that fathers and mothers did not differ significantly in their gendered expectations for sons and daughters (also see Figure 1). Different from parental role, educational achievement ($F = 94.42$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.08$), occupational status ($F = 54.13$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.05$) and family income ($F = 44.60$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.06$) served as significant predictors.

Table 1. Profile of responses (N = 5,490-5,635)

I expect my children to	Mean	SD	1		2		3		4		5		Positive response (options 4-5)	
			Strongly disagree		Slightly disagree		Neutral		Slightly agree		Strongly agree			
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
兒子比女兒更有承擔 Sons are more responsible than daughters	2.91	1.36	1,284	22.79	778	13.81	1,609	28.55	1,091	19.36	873	15.49	1,964	34.85
兒子比女兒更需要有能力養家活兒 Sons are more capable of supporting the family than daughters	3.29	1.34	873	15.53	566	10.07	1,447	25.75	1,493	26.57	1,241	22.08	2,734	48.65
兒子比女兒更有領導能力 Sons have stronger leadership than daughters	2.96	1.30	1,119	20.0	714	12.7	1,835	32.7	1,162	20.7	775	13.8	1,937	34.56
父母有責任協助兒子成家立室 Parents must help their sons to get married and establish family	2.85	1.24	1,047	18.6	985	17.5	2,028	36.1	897	16.0	662	11.8	1,559	27.75
女兒會嫁得出 Daughters are able to get married	3.49	1.18	450	8.0	498	8.9	1,878	33.6	1,401	25.0	1,368	24.5	2,769	49.49
女兒斯文，賢淑 Daughters are decent and virtuous	3.63	1.08	262	4.7	423	7.6	1,826	32.7	1,707	30.6	1,367	24.5	3,074	55.04
如果女兒太能幹，會難找伴侶 If daughters are too capable, it will be difficult for them to find a partner.	2.91	1.24	1,014	18.1	916	16.4	1,862	33.3	1,181	21.1	618	11.1	1,799	32.18
對女兒來說，婚姻比事業成功更重要 A marriage is more important than a successful career to daughters.	3.08	1.20	753	13.5	811	14.5	2,024	36.2	1,233	22.1	766	13.7	1,999	35.78
父親在教養兒子方面的角色比較重要 Father takes a more important role in educating sons.	3.35	1.19	530	9.4	670	11.9	1,799	32.1	1,514	27.0	1,096	19.5	2,610	46.53
我對兒子管教比對女兒嚴厲 Compared to daughter, I discipline my son much more rigorously.	2.88	1.25	1,089	19.5	811	14.5	2,004	35.9	1,045	18.7	634	11.4	1,679	30.07
可以的話希望能有個兒子 if possible, I wish to have a son.	2.93	1.32	1,160	21.1	638	11.6	1,972	35.9	875	15.9	845	15.4	1,720	31.33
母親在教養女兒方面的角色比較重要 Mother takes a more important role in educating daughters.	3.61	1.17	427	7.6	430	7.7	1,535	27.4	1,748	31.2	1,466	26.2	3,214	57.33

Table 2. One-way ANOVAs

Variables	N	Mean	SD	F	η^2_p
Parental role				0.15	0.00002
Father	1762	3.16	0.83		
Mother	3677	3.15	0.86		
Educational level				94.42***	0.08
Primary school or below	795	3.61	0.89		
Junior secondary school	970	3.31	0.83		
Senior secondary school	1764	3.10	0.81		
Matriculate	379	3.12	0.85		
University/Higher Education	1372	2.94	0.78		
Graduate school or above	267	2.69	0.79		
Employment status				54.13***	0.05
Work full time	2596	3.01	0.79		
Work part time	601	3.13	0.84		
Full time homemaker	967	3.14	0.82		
Unemployed or between jobs	75	3.12	0.96		
Retired	1173	3.46	0.91		
Social security recipient	100	3.56	0.79		
Family monthly income				44.60***	0.06
< 4,000	383	3.65	0.97		
4,000 – 9,999	283	3.32	0.82		
10,000 – 14,999	490	3.29	0.89		
15,000 – 19,999	567	3.19	0.85		
20,000 – 29,999	864	3.20	0.80		
30,000 – 49,999	1165	3.05	0.78		
50,000 – 79,999	862	2.97	0.78		
≥80,000	682	2.87	0.79		

*** $p < 0.001$.

Further comparisons employing the LSD (“Least Significant Difference”) test indicated that parents’ score on gendered expectations for children decreased as their educational achievement increased (see Figure 2). Specifically, parents with primary school or below levels of education (i.e., the lowest education achievement) had the highest score of gendered expectations for children ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.89$), indicating a most traditional and gender stereotypical view towards sons and daughters among these parents. Parents who completed education at junior secondary school level showed the second highest mean score ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.83$), followed by the scores among parents having education at senior

secondary ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.81$) or matriculated levels ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.85$), which were significantly higher than the score of parents who completed university/higher education ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 0.78$). Finally, parents had the highest level of education (i.e., graduate school or above) showed the least gender stereotypical expectations for sons and daughters as reflected by their lowest mean score ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 0.79$).

Referring to parents’ occupational status, respondents who had full-time jobs showed the lowest mean score ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.44$), indicating their least traditional expectations for sons and daughters. Compared with these respondents, parents who had

part-time jobs, or worked as full-time homemakers, or did not find a job had significantly higher mean scores (M ranged between 3.12 and 3.14). As depicted in Figure 3, parents who had been retired or living on social assistance scored the highest (M ranged between 3.46 and 3.56) and held the most traditional different expectations for sons and daughters.

Based on Figure 4, there is an obvious trend that parents' mean scores on gendered expectations for sons and daughters decreased as their family income increased. For example, parents who earned the

highest monthly income (i.e., more than HK\$80,000) showed the lowest mean score ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.79$), suggesting that these parents upheld the least traditional and gender stereotypical expectations for their children. In contrast, parents who had the lowest level of monthly income (i.e., below HK\$4,000) demonstrated the most traditional gendered expectations for sons and daughters indicated by the highest mean score ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.97$) (see Figure 4).

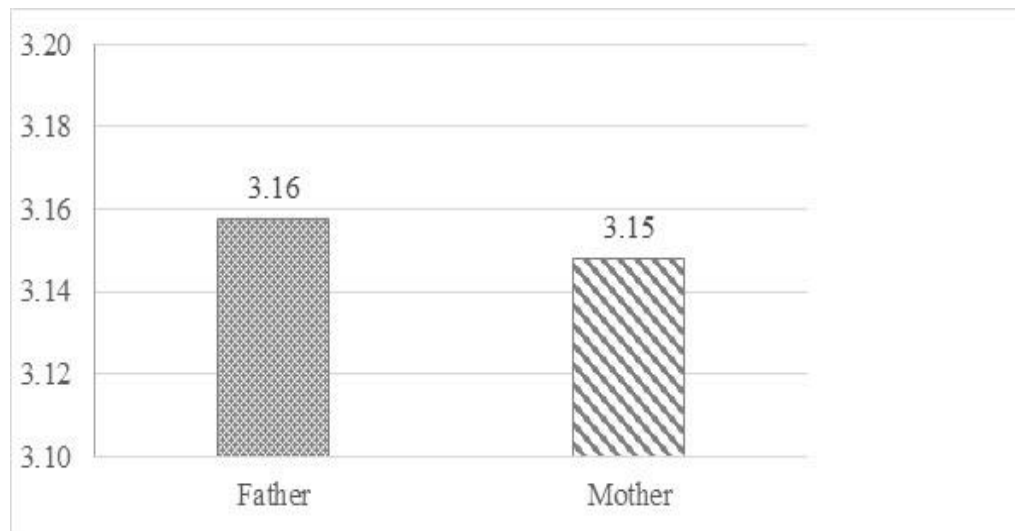


Figure 1. Parental gendered expectation towards sons and daughters as a function of parental role.

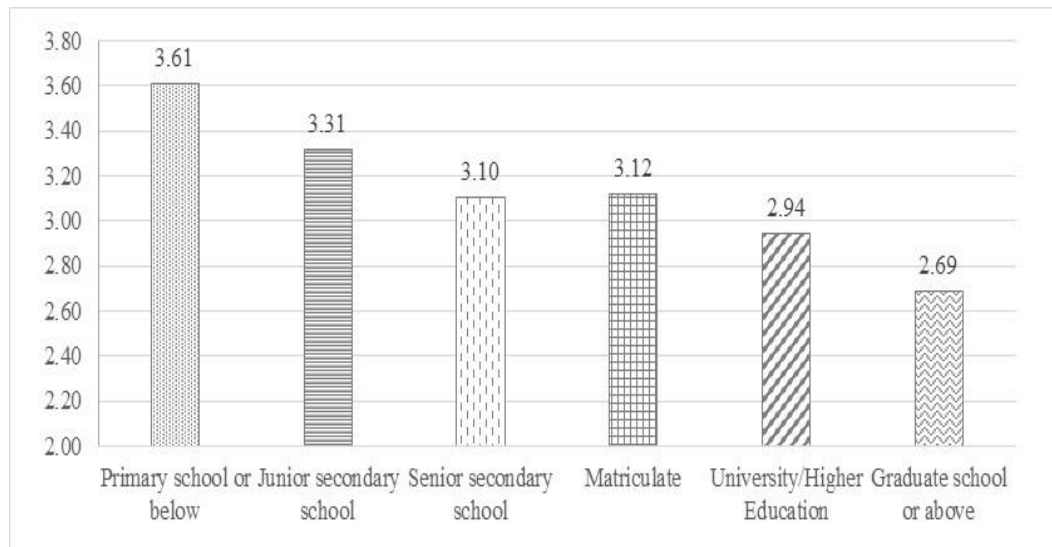


Figure 2. Parental gendered expectation towards sons and daughters as a function of parents' education level.

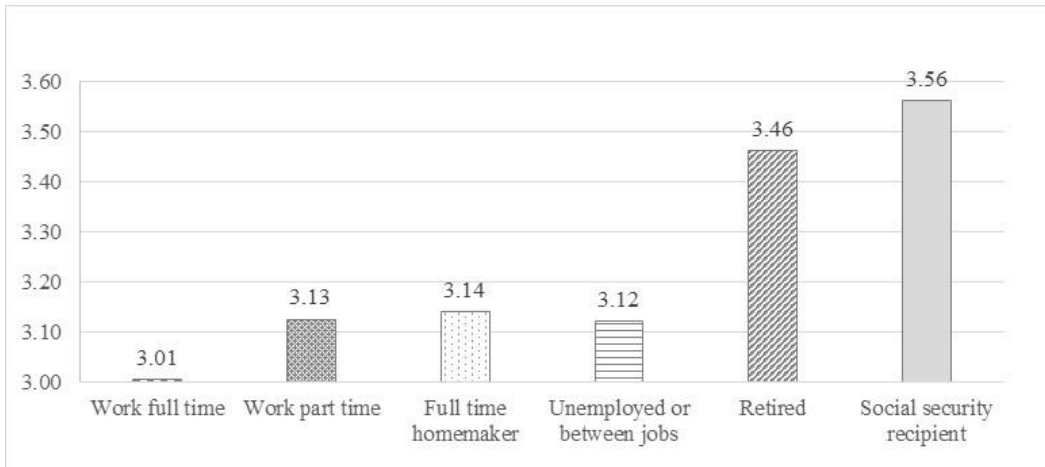


Figure 3. Parental gendered expectation towards sons and daughters as a function of parents' employment status.

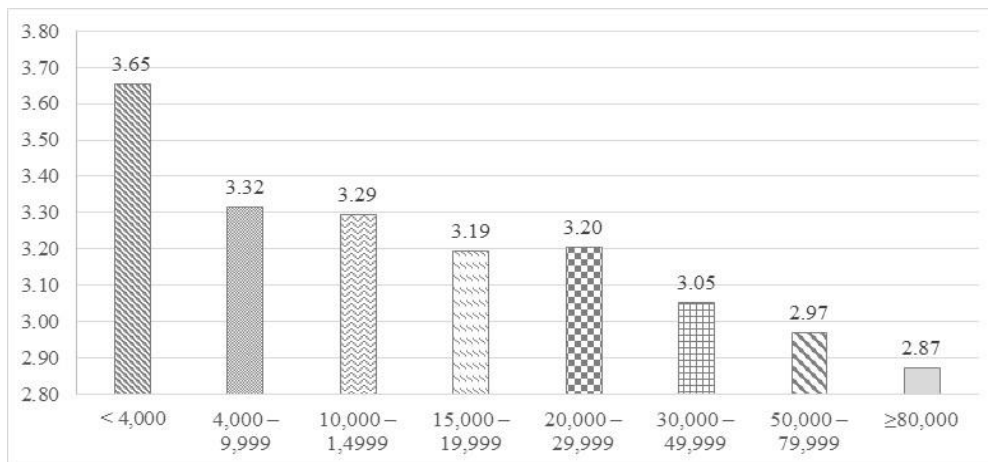


Figure 4. Parental gendered expectation towards sons and daughters as a function of family monthly income (\$HK).

Discussion

This pioneer study attempted to investigate the profiles of responses of Chinese parents' gendered expectations for their sons and daughters in Hong Kong as well as how their traditional beliefs for sons and daughters were associated with demographic variables such as parental role, educational achievement, and family income. Generally speaking, the majority of Chinese parents in Hong Kong have changed their traditional gender stereotype towards sons and daughters in terms of differential expectations and parenting practice for sons and daughters. Yet, there are still some parents who held traditional gender views in some aspects such as son preference and importance placed on daughters'

characteristics related to female gender role of home maker. In conjunction with other empirical findings (7,22), our observations in this study suggest that while some traditional family and gender values have been changing gradually in Chinese communities with the influence of rapid social transitions and economic development, some traditional Chinese beliefs about sons and daughters still have a place in the contemporary society (26).

Several observations could be highlighted from the present findings. First, traditional gendered expectations about sons and daughters were gradually changing. For instance, only around one third of parents expected sons to be more responsible and to have stronger leadership than daughters. As these qualities can be regarded as gender traits associated

with men's traditional social role of resource providers as well as their superiority to women, this observation suggests that Chinese parents' socialization goals may have shifted away from the traditional Chinese gender ideology that "*nan zhu wai nü zhu nei*" ("Men are breadwinners and women are homemakers"). This speculation is consistent with the fact that in the past several decades, women have substantially participated in the labor market and provided financial support for the family through having full-time jobs (26). Echoing this finding, shifts in parents' traditional gender beliefs for daughters were also observed. Specifically, around two thirds of parents did not agree that daughters' capability would hinder their intimate relationship, which appeared to be inconsistent with Chinese traditional belief that "*nü zi wu cai bian shi de*" ("innocence is a virtue for women"). Likewise, more than 60% of the parents tended not to regard daughters' marriage as more important than career, suggesting that parents placed more importance on daughter's career success than before. These findings are in line with the previous conclusion that Chinese women have been encouraged to pursue educational and career opportunities and take other responsibilities than merely being housewives (7, 24).

Second, it is notable that a considerable proportion of parents still held traditional expectations for sons and daughters. For example, nearly half of the parents still expected their sons to be more capable of supporting family and their daughters to get married. Besides, over half of parents expected their daughters to have feminine characteristics such as decent and virtuous that are considered important for women to fulfill their responsibilities in looking after family and attending to children. Besides, nearly one third of parents indicated their willingness to have a son, which reflect their traditional son preference. These findings indicate that traditional Chinese beliefs and gender ideology still affect parental expectations for sons and daughters in some aspects to a certain extent despite the increasing gender equality. This is consistent with 'Ge's (12) suggestion that gender ideology is relatively stable and noticeable gender stereotypical features still exist in Chinese society. The finding is also in accordance with the picture that parents imposed higher educational aspirations for sons than for daughters and devoted

more resources to sons' schooling while required daughters to assist more with household chores (10-11).

The third observation is that differential parental roles in taking care of sons and daughters still persisted. Particularly, more than 46% of parents assumed fathers' greater responsibilities in educating sons whereas over 57% of participants advocated the more important role of mothers in educating daughters. Noteworthy, different parental roles of fathers and mothers are largely attributable to their culturally prescribed gender roles in family. Traditionally, men bear obligations to secure family income and maintain family honor whereas women are responsible for "interior chores" (i.e., "*nan zhu wai nü zhu nei*" mentioned before). This gender expectation makes a Chinese father the more appropriate educator and role model in family to discipline sons who are expected to be a qualified father one day and further expand the reputation of the family lineage (27). Likewise, a mother in family is more likely to be a role model for daughters in everyday parenting practice. Such differentiated parental roles of fathers and mothers in educating sons and daughters can be reflected in well-known idiomatic Chinese expressions such as "*yang bu jiao, fu zhi guo*" (to feed but not teach the child, the father's fault indeed") and "*fu zi zhi yan, bu ke yi xia*" ("the father should be strict with the son and not improperly close").

Apart from the above-mentioned findings, this study also delineated associations between demographic variables and Chinese parents' expectations for sons and daughters. First, fathers and mothers did not significantly differ from each other in their expectations. This finding is consistent with previous evidence that differences between paternal and maternal perceptions of the ideal child in Hong Kong were minimal (28). A more recent study also reported that women, in general, were as traditional as men regarding their attitudes towards gender roles (7). This finding shows that paternal and maternal expectations about sons and daughters are not much differentiated in contemporary Hong Kong. Third, older parents showed greater adherence to traditional expectations for sons and daughters. Echoing this age effect, retired parents who were older reported a higher level of traditional gender stereotypical

attitudes towards sons and daughters. Again, this finding is in line with Hu and Scott's (7) observation that younger women were less traditional than their senior counterparts towards gender values. The significant effect of age is probably a reflection of cohort effect.

Third, consistent with previous studies on demographic correlates of parental beliefs and practice (7, 29), we found that higher educational level, employment with full-time work, and higher family income were linked with less traditional expectations and attitudes towards sons and daughters. The findings are consistent with a general expectation that social and economic development enables endorsement of less traditional attitudes towards gender values and gender equality (26).

Despite the above important findings revealed by the present study, several limitations are noted. First, this study is quantitative in nature which is unable to inform subjective perceptions underlying the quantitative results. For example, we do not know what factors and possible mechanisms make some parents not see daughters' marriage as more important than career. Thus, to portray a holistic picture of parental expectations for sons and daughters, both quantitative and qualitative research methods should be applied in future research. Second, geographic influence on traditional beliefs has been identified (7). As Hong Kong is a very urbanized city, it will be insightful to compare parental expectations for sons and daughters in different regions in Greater China. Finally, the present study investigated the demographic correlates to parental expectations towards sons and daughters while not taking into account the influence of other psychosocial factors, such as beliefs of collectivism or individualism and self-identity. Future research should include rich influential variables. Nevertheless, the present study adds value to the existing literature and advances our knowledge of Chinese parents' expectations for sons and daughter in Hong Kong.

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Ethical compliance

The authors have stated all possible conflicts of interest within this work. The authors have stated all sources of funding for this work. If this work involved human participants, informed consent was received from each individual. If this work involved human participants, it was conducted in accordance with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. If this work involved experiments with humans or animals, it was conducted in accordance with the related institutions' research ethics guidelines.

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