

LIVED PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERS HAVING ONLY DAUGHTERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

This study investigates the lived psychosocial experiences of mothers having only daughters in a patriarchal society where sons are culturally preferred as family leaders and symbols of social prestige. Grounded in Patriarchal theory the research examines how societal norms, internalized gender biases, and familial pressures shape these mother's emotional and psychological struggles, including feelings of guilt, shame, social stigma, and strained mother-daughter relationships. The study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the subjective experiences of 8 daughter's mothers selected through purposive sampling. Findings reveal that these mothers face significant societal and familial challenges but also demonstrate resilience through coping mechanisms such as faith, social support networks, and empowering relationships with their daughters. This research contributes to understanding the impact of patriarchal values on maternal well-being and highlights pathways for promoting gender equity and psychological support for affected mothers.

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the lived psychosocial experiences of mothers with only daughters in cultures marked by son preference, particularly in South Asian contexts like Rawalpindi and Islamabad. It highlights the societal and familial pressures these mothers face, including blame for not bearing sons, marital instability, and emotional distress due to cultural norms that prioritize sons as lineage carriers and economic providers (Ahmed, 2019; Khan & Hussain, 2020; Ali et al., 2021). Familial pressures, such as threats of divorce or remarriage, and exclusion from kinship networks exacerbate psychological struggles like guilt, shame, and anxiety (Raza & Malik, 2022; Khan & Hussain, 2020). Despite these challenges, mothers employ resilience strategies such as religious faith, social support, and empowerment of their daughters (Ahmed, 2019; Ali et al., 2021).

The study employs **patriarchal theory** (Walby, 1990; Engels, 1884; Lerner, 1986) to analyze systemic male dominance and gendered power dynamics, revealing how cultural norms devalue daughters and position women as caregivers. Methodologically, it uses **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)** with purposive and snowball sampling (Grbich, 1999; Goodman, 1961) to gather in-depth narratives from mothers aged 28-40 with no sons. By focusing on cultural contexts and structural inequities, the research underscores the need for interventions to dismantle patriarchal systems and promote gender equality.

METHOD**Qualitative research design**

The present inquiry tries to address the provisional and intrusive nature of the chosen method, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). In both the interviewing and data processing stages, IPA used twofold hermeneutics, or questioning and emphatic hermeneutics (Smith & Osborn, 2007). IPA denotes a thorough; two-fold richer investigation where the researcher asks the subject about items, they might not be aware of while concentrating on their lived experience (Charmaz, 2008).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The subjective experiences of participant's daughter's mothers are analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The general linear pattern was employed by IPA to analyze the lived experiences of the daughter's mothers. Cross checking was done for the thorough inquiry by contrasting each participant's audio recording with their corresponding transcription (Polit & Beck, 2008). In IPA, a methodical, step by step procedure was employed. Similar to the previous phase, preliminary observations of the transcripts were quickly recorded upon the completion of the comprehensive reading of the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Secondly, emerging themes identified and appropriate code related to the research question was specified separately to significant declarations in the transcripts. Additionally, similar meaning code was grouped together. Sub-themes were then developed in relation to the research question, under each code that was based on the significant statement that reflects something important (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the current study, IPA provides an opportunity to understand the participant's views about mothers who are having only daughters by emphasizing their own experiences. This kind of rigorous exploration has been lacking in the empirical literature (Hodge, 2007).

Data collection method

The phenomenological study (Smith, 2004) used open ended semi structured individual interviews, which are a commonly used qualitative data collection method (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The interviews lasted

60 to 90 minutes, depending on the 8 participant's subjective experiences.

Sample

Purposive sampling with homogeneity has been applied (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Because the samples appear to have homogeneous properties, deliberate sampling was done. An explanation of the study aims and a consent form were read aloud in the national language, Urdu. A total of eight willing participants (daughter's mother) were chosen by the search.

Inclusion criteria

In order to ensure a focused exploration of the psychosocial experiences of mothers raising only daughters, the study's inclusion criteria required participants to be mothers of at least two daughters and no sons, have lived in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and show a willingness to participate in the study and openly share their personal experiences. All mothers were from early middle age group.

Exclusion criteria

Mothers who had sons and daughters, as well as those with severe psychological or medical conditions that could hinder their ability to participate effectively, were excluded.

Procedure

Participants were introduced and explained the purpose and benefits of the research. Furthermore, secured signed consent forms were taken before proceeding with the interviews. Interviews began with introductory questions to build rapport and ease participants into the conversation. To assure the strength of data collection, Interview guide (visual guide as interview questions and oral guide for researcher help) was provided to participants with the right of asking a question. Each interview started with general open guided questions regarding participant background and marriage duration. To make the interview process easy, the first question was asked conversationally and laid the foundation for more complex questions that would follow. Interview prompts were used throughout the process for the encouragement of participant lived experiences and reflection of feelings.

Moreover, the purpose of using an audio recorder was explained to ensure accurate documentation. The

duration of one interview was 60 to 90 minutes. Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential in all reports based on the information gathered. After transcribing the data, multiple steps were followed to identify significant and relevant super ordinate, subordinate and recurrent themes. The analyzes were confirmed by peer feedback (Crewel, 1998), recognizing personal bias, and methodological soundness (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Ethical considerations

This plan of study was examined and permitted by the institutional postgraduate research committee, Riphah International University, Pakistan. Semi-structured interviews were conducted from participants. They were elucidated about study objectives and in line with APA ethical standards confidentiality and anonymity were assured. After obtaining signed informed consent, the interviews were conducted and data was obtained.

Table 1: Demographic of Participant: (N=8)

Sr.no	Participants	Gender	Age	No of daughters	Marriage duration	Education	Occupation	Husband's Occupation
1	P1	Female	40	7	24 years	Matric	Housewife	Govt. employee
2	P2	Female	42	4	22 years	F. A	Housewife	Driver
3	P3	Female	31	4	10 years	F. A	Housewife	Metro
4	P4	Female	37	4	14 years	Masters in mass communication	Housewife	Real Estate
5	P5	Female	36	4	15 years	Masters in English	Educator	Sqn Ldr
6	P6	Female	32	3	12 years	Bachelors	Corporate	Lecturer
7	P7	Female	32	6	14 years	F. A	Housewife	Business
8	P8	Female	32	5	15 years	Primary	Housewife	Cook

Note: In order to protect participant anonymity, the real names are not added.

Table 2: Main Themes and Sub Themes of Psychological Experiences of Mothers

Super ordinate theme	Sub ordinate theme	Emergent themes	Verbal account
Emotional Struggles with Motherhood	1.1. Emotional Breakdown and Guilt	Societal Blame	"JB log khety thy na k iski betiyan hi betiyan hy to bohoooooot dukh hota tha (P_8)." "Mujhe lagta tha log mujhe ghalat samajhte hain k Allah ny beta nahi diya (P_6)." "Log mujhe koshish na karne wali kehte hain (P_7)."
		Guilt Over Gender	"Mei khoud ko koosti thi k mei hi hn jiska beta ni Hy (P_8)." "Aurat khoud ko khoud stress krti hy... pressure dalti hy k beta ho (P_7)." "Jab beti hoti thi to mujhe lagta k meri wajah se beta nahi hua (P_3)."
		Emotional Distress	"CHOTI beti ka JB mgy pta chala, mei ghr ai, mei itna phooooot phooooot k roi (P_5)." "Pheli beti ki paidaish pr SB ny Kaha chaly koi ni next time Allah apko beta dy ga (P_6)." "Mujhe lagta tha main society ke expectations puri nahi kar rahi (P_2)."
	1.2. Grief and Fear of Rejection	Marital Instability	"Beta hony sy miyan biwi ka rishta Bach skta hy (P_8)." "Agr ap k husband ki yehi khawahish hy or ap k in-laws bhi yehi Cha rahy hy to phir beta hi ap k rishty ko bacha skta hy (P_4)."

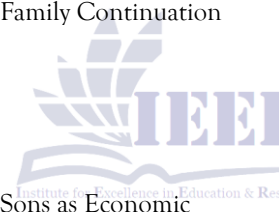
		<p>Fear of Loneliness</p> <p>Social Alienation</p>	<p>"Mujhe hamesha lagta tha k beta hoga tabhi meri shaadi stable rahegi (P_3)."</p> <p>"Soch yei k beta ni Hy, kuch time k bd betiyan apny ghro k hngi (P_6)."</p> <p>"Mei betiyan akeli chor k ni ja skti, Mera beta hota to mgy yei preshani to na Hoti (P_8)."</p> <p>"Betiyaan to apne ghar ki ho jaati hain, beta hota to apne paas rehta (P_7)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe society mein akela chhod dete hain ke beta nahi hua (P_3)."</p> <p>"Dost aur rishtedar alag nazar se dekhte hain agar beta na ho (P_6)."</p> <p>"Main khud ko akeli feel karti thi kyunki log mujhe alag karte thay (P_4)."</p>
	1.3. Coping with Emotional Pressure	<p>Support from Spouse</p> <p>Turning to Faith</p> <p>Seeking Family Support</p>	<p>"Mere husband ne mujhe aaj tak kabhi yah Nahin kaha ki mujhe beta chahie (P_3)."</p> <p>" Unhone mujhe support kiya jab log unhy dosri shadi krny ka khethy thay (P_6)."</p> <p>"Mujhe husband ka support hamesha raha jab pressure tha (P_4)."</p> <p>"Humary nand kheta k hr bachi apna naseeb ly k ATI hy (P_4)."</p> <p>"Howa bhi k JB ap ki beti Hoti hy to ap k liye rizq k darwazy Khul jaty hy (P_4)."</p> <p>"Mujhe duaon ka sahara lena para tha (P_3)."</p> <p>"Mera maika mgy bohoooooot support krta hy (P_2)."</p> <p>"Mujhe meri maa ne samjhaya ke betiyan bhi achhi cheez hain (P_6)."</p> <p>"Mujhe meri behnon ka sahara tha jab pressure tha (P_5)."</p>
Identity and Self-Worth	2.1. Validation Through Sons	<p>Societal Respect</p> <p>Strength as a Mother</p> <p>Comparison with Mothers of Sons</p>	<p>"Very true k betoo ki MAA ko betiyon ki MAA pr foqiat milti hy (P_5)."</p> <p>"Bohoooooot si khawateen Dekhi hy jinky bety hoty hy unhy dimagh bohoooooot kharab hoty hy (P_5)."</p> <p>"Mujhe lagta tha ke sirf beton wali aurat ki izzat hoti hai (P_6)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe kehte hain ke tum betiyon ke saath mazboot ho (P_4)."</p> <p>"Main apne betiyon ko sambhal kar lagta hai ke main mazboot hoon (P_3)."</p> <p>"Betiyan mera sahara hain jab mujhe izzat nahi milti (P_5)."</p> <p>"Log bar bar kehte hain ke dekho uske ghar mein beta hai, tumhare nahi (P_7)."</p> <p>"Mujhe lagta hai ke beti ke saath log mujhe kam samajhte hain (P_3)."</p> <p>"Main bar bar compare karti hoon apne apko un se jo beton wali hain (P_2)."</p>

	<p>2.2. Emotional Impact of Comparisons</p>	<p>Loss of Confidence</p> <p>Feelings of Inadequacy</p> <p>Family's Role in Comparisons</p>	<p>"Apny lehaz sy ni logo k lehaz sy kmi mehsoos ki... log bar bar feel krany ki Koshish krty thy k dekho is k ghr betiyan hy bety ni Hy (P_2)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe hamesha yeh mehsoos karate hain ke beta hona zaroori hai (P_6)."</p> <p>"Comparison mujhe hamesha neechi dikhata hai (P_5)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe ghalat samajhte hain ke beta nahi hua (P_4)."</p> <p>"Mei unko feel ni hony dyti thi k mera beta ni hy (P_2)"</p> <p>"Log mujhe sirf betiyon wali samajhte hain, kuch aur nahi (P_6)."</p> <p>"Mujhe meri saas ne bola ke tumhari sirf betiyan hain, tum beta nahi la sakti (P_5)."</p> <p>"Mujhe meri maa ne hamesha kaha ke beta hona zaroori hai (P_3)."</p> <p>"Sasural walay hamesha meri betiyon se muqabla karte hain unke beton ke saath (P_7)."</p>
	<p>2.3. Impact on Self-Esteem</p>	<p>Erosion of Identity</p> <p>Overcompensation</p> <p>Seeking Validation</p>	<p>"Mujhe lagta hai ke meri betiyan meri identity ke liye kaafi nahi hain (P_3)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe sirf betiyon wali samajhte hain (P_6)."</p> <p>"Comparison mujhe hamesha depression deta hai (P_7)."</p> <p>"Main hamesha apni betiyon ke liye zyada karti hoon kyunki log mujhe criticize karte hain (P_5)."</p> <p>"Mujhe lagta hai mujhe har waqt prove karna hota hai ke betiyan kafi hain (P_3)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe underestimate karte hain, isliye main apni betiyon ke liye zyada karti hoon (P_4)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe tabhi izzat denge jab beta ho (P_6)."</p> <p>"Mujhe bar bar lagta hai ke mujhe prove karna hai ke betiyan meri strength hain (P_7)."</p> <p>"Main bar bar logo se baat karti hoon ke betiyan bhi valuable hain (P_2)."</p>
<p>Coping Mechanisms and Resilience</p>	<p>3.1. Spiritual Coping</p>	<p>Faith as Solace</p> <p>Acceptance Through Religion</p>	<p>"Humary nand kheti k hr bachi apna naseeb ly k ATI hy (P_4)."</p> <p>"Howa bhi k JB ap ki beti Hoti hy to ap k liye rizq k darwazy Khul jaty hy (P_4)."</p> <p>"Mujhe dua karne se sukoon milta hai, Allah ka plan samajhne ki koshish karti hoon (P_3)."</p> <p>"Allah ne mujhe betiyan di hain, shayad meri zimmedari yeh hai ke unhe sambhalun (P_6)."</p> <p>"Maine socha ke meri betiyan Allah ka tohfa hain, jo bhi diya uska shukar karun (P_3)."</p> <p>"Dua ke baad mujhe lagta hai ke Allah ke plan mein betiyan thi, isme mera role nahi (P_5)."</p>

		Relying on Prayer	"Jab bhi mujhe dukh hota hai, mai namaz par kar sukoon paati hoon (P_3)." "Namaz aur Quran mujhe samjhata hai ke duniya ki soch nahi badal sakti (P_6)." "Jab kuch samajh nahi aata tha, Allah se maangti thi ke mujhe sabar de (P_5)."	
3.2. Shielding Children from Stigma	Protective Parenting	Avoid Negative Conversations	Empowering Daughters	"Mei ny apni betiyon ko bhi kbhi feel ni hony diya k tm logo ka bhai ni Hy or Mera beta ni hy (P_2)." "Main unhe hamesha samjhata hoon ke tum log meri strength ho (P_6)." "Apni betiyon ko hamesha yeh lagata hai ke wo mere liye sab kuch hain (P_4)." "Main unke samne kabhi is tarah ka baat nahi karti ke beta hona zaroori hai (P_3)." "Unhe samjhata hoon ke duniya kya kehti hai, tum log apne liye important ho (P_5)." "Main unhe society ke bias se door rakhti hoon (P_7)." "Unki tarbiyat mein yehi sikhaati hoon ke wo kisi se kam nahi hain (P_4)." "Main unhe strong banane ki koshish karti hoon ke wo duniya ke pressure ko samajhein (P_3)." "Unhe hamesha yeh sikhati hoon ke wo mere liye proud banain (P_2)."
3.3. Support Networks	Relying on Spouse	Support from Maternal Family	Finding Allies Among Friends	"Mere husband ne mujhe hamesha support kiya, chahe society kuch bhi kahe (P_6)." "Unhone hamesha mujhe kaha ke tumhare betiyan tumhari strength hain (P_4)." "Mujhe lagta hai ke unka saath mujhe strong banata hai (P_3)." "Mujhe meri maa hamesha samjhaati thi ke betiyan bhi Allah ka tohfa hain (P_5)." "Meri behne hamesha mere saath khadi hoti thi jab society mujhe criticize karti thi (P_6)." "Maika mujhe hamesha batata tha ke betiyan izzat aur dua ka zariya hain (P_2)." "Mujhe meri dost ne samjhaaya ke duniya kya kehti hai, tumhare betiyan priceless hain (P_4)." "Apni best friend se baat karke mujhe sukoon milta tha (P_3)." "Mujhe meri saheli hamesha positivity se bharti thi (P_5)."

Table 3: Main Themes and Sub Themes of Social Experiences of Mothers

Super ordinate theme	Sub Ordinate Subtheme	Emergent Themes	Verbal account
Societal Pressure	4.1. Cultural Expectations for Sons	<p>Sons as Social Stability</p> <p>Daughters as Burdens</p> <p>Honor Tied to Sons</p>	<p>"Vo mji khety k dekho Beto sy xindagi Hoti hy, betiyon ki tm shadi kr k bhej do gi, phir tm Kiya kro gi (P_2)."</p> <p>"Log beti ki MAA ko low smjhty hy, bety walo ko value dyty hy (P_2)."</p> <p>"Humary mashry ka concept hi yahi hy k, betiyon ko boj smjhty hy (P_5)."</p> <p>"Log khety k iski betiyan hi betiyan hy (P_7)."</p> <p>"Jab koi beti hoti hy to log bar bar koshish krty hy ki Allah tumhe beta dy (P_3)."</p> <p>"Logo ko lgta hy mery paas sirf betiyan hain to kuch missing hy (P_5)."</p> <p>"Log khety thy k beta hota to ghar ka naam rakhta (P_8)."</p> <p>"Ghr k log bar bar kehte hain ke tumhara khandan to sirf beta rakhega (P_6)."</p> <p>"Bohooooooooot xiyada mashry mei masail is liye bhi k beta ni Hy to hum apko chor dy gy (P_6)."</p>
	4.2. Pressure from Family and In-Laws	<p>Pressure for a Male Child</p> <p>Remarriage and Divorce Threats</p> <p>Extended Family Comments</p>	<p>"Koi bat ni phir sy bety k liye try krna , yei phirr sahii phirr sahii meri xindagi mei 12 saal chalta raha (P_5)."</p> <p>"Mery miyan ko un k dost ny mashwara diya k dosri shadi kr lo, aksr dosri biwi sy beta ho jata hy (P_2)."</p> <p>"5 beti k paidaish k bd sy logon ny mery husband ko dosri shadi krny k mashwary dyna shru kr diye (P_7)."</p> <p>"Aksr husband ya mother-in-law Keh ry hoty hy family mei k beta ni ho ra isko divorce dy (P_6)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe bolty thy k tumhara beta nahi hoga, aur miyan ko kehte thy dosri shadi karo (P_5)."</p> <p>"Ghr k log kehte hain ke tumhari saas ka beta ho gaya tha dusri biwi se (P_4)."</p> <p>"Mery sasural walay kehte thy k dekho tumhara beta nahi hua (P_5)."</p> <p>"Log kehte hain ke tumhare ghar beta nahi hai, is liye humare nazar mein value nahi (P_3)."</p> <p>"Log meri mother-in-law ko kehte thy tumhari bahu se to sirf betiyan hi hoti hain (P_2)."</p>

	<p>4.3. Comparison with Others</p>	<p>Pressure from Other Families</p> <p>Impact of Family Comparisons</p> <p>Eroding Self-Worth</p>	<p>"Dekho unky bhi char betiyon k bd beta ho gya (P_2)."</p> <p>"Yei bhi khethy k mery miyan ki Ami ko k Chachi ki bhi 10 betiyan Thi (P_2)."</p> <p>"Humary rishtedaron mei kisi ki bhi 2 betiyan nahi, hum hi alag hain (P_5)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe kehte hain dekho unke ghar beta ho gaya (P_6)."</p> <p>"Tension is bat ki k SB k bety hy, mery pas ni Hy (P_7)."</p> <p>"Meri saheli ka beta ho gaya, unhon ne mujhe specially bata diya (P_3)."</p> <p>"Apny lehaz sy ni logo k lehaz sy tension li (P_2)."</p> <p>"Log bar bar feel krany ki Koshish krty thy k dekho is k ghr betiyan hy bety ni Hy (P_2)."</p> <p>"Comparisons mujhe bohot depress karti thi (P_8)."</p>
<p>Familial and Societal Expectations</p>	<p>5.1. Cultural Beliefs and Pressure</p>	<p>Sons as Family Pillars</p> <p>Family Continuation</p>  <p>Sons as Economic Contributors</p>	<p>"Mery Ami ka phely din sy tha k bacha kro, bacha miyan biwi k rishty ko mazboot krta hy (P_5)."</p> <p>"Mery miyan or dewr do bhai hy, aise to tmhara khandan hi khtm ho Jai ga (P_2)."</p> <p>"Log kehte hain k beta ghar ke liye sahara hota hai, aur khandan ka naam rakhta hai (P_6)."</p> <p>"Agr unka beta hota to SB 9 behno k liye us ghr k darwazy khuly rehty (P_7)."</p> <p>"Beta hony sy miyan biwi ka rishta Bach skta hy (P_8)."</p> <p>"Beta na hone se log kehte hain k tumhara naam to khatam ho jayega (P_4)."</p> <p>"Bety ka hota hy k kma k ghr ly k ai ga, Sahara bny ga (P_2)."</p> <p>"Log kehte hain k beta kama kar ghar chalata hai (P_3)."</p> <p>"Beta na hone ka matlab hai tumhare bache tumhara sahara nahi banenge (P_6)."</p>
	<p>5.2. Judgment and Stigma for Mothers of Daughters</p>	<p>Social Stigmatization</p> <p>Family Discrimination</p> <p>Pressure from Relatives</p>	<p>"Betiyan ki paida hony pr aurto ko talaq ho jati hy bohoooooot dekha hy (P_2)."</p> <p>"Log smjhty hy jaise mj sy koi gunnah ho gya k Allah ny mjy betiyan di hy (P_5)."</p> <p>"Log kehte hain tumhari taqdeer kharab hai jo tumhare sirf betiyan hain (P_6)."</p> <p>"Mujhe meri saas ne hamesha kaha ke tumhari sirf betiyan hain, beta nahi hai (P_5)."</p> <p>"Mujhe meri nanad ne kaha ke tumhare ghar mein beta nahi hai to tumhari value kam hai (P_4)."</p> <p>"Log kehte hain tumhari betiyan tumhare liye nahi, paraye ghar ke liye hain (P_3)."</p> <p>"Mery miyan k cousin ne bola k beta hamesha ghar ka naam rakhta hai (P_4)."</p>

			<p>"Log kehte hain ke agar beta nahi hai to ghar incomplete hai (P_2)."</p> <p>"Humare rishtedar bar bar kehte hain ke beta hona zaroori hai (P_7)."</p>
	5.3. Gender-Based Expectations in Extended Families	<p>Son as a Family's Heir</p> <p>Pressure on mothers with Daughters</p> <p>Intergenerational Expectations</p>	<p>"Mere sasur ne mujhe hamesha kaha ke ghar ka waaris beta hi hota hai (P_4)."</p> <p>"Humare ghar mein khandan ke naam ke liye beta hona zaroori samjha jata hai (P_6)."</p> <p>"Sasural walay hamesha kehte hain ke beta naam rakhta hai (P_3)."</p> <p>"Log mujhe kehte hain ke tumhare sirf betiyan hain, tumhe beta hona chahiye (P_7)."</p> <p>"Mujhe meri saas ne bola ke tumhe dusri shadi karani chahiye beta ke liye (P_5)."</p> <p>"Betiyan ke saath log aurat ki izzat nahi karte (P_2)."</p> <p>"Mujhe meri maa ne hamesha kaha ke beta ghar ka sahara hota hai (P_3)."</p> <p>"Humare ghar mein hamesha kaha jata tha ke beta khandan ka naam rakhta hai (P_6)."</p> <p>"Betiyan ko paraya dhan samjha jata hai, aur beta ghar ka hota hai (P_5)."</p>
Role of Sons in Family Stability	6.1. Sons as Providers and Protectors	<p>Economic Stability</p>  <p>Physical Security</p> <p>Family Leadership</p>	<p>"Bety hota hy k kma k ghr ly k ai ga, Sahara bny ga (P_2)."</p> <p>"Log kehte hain k beta kama kar ghar chalata hai (P_3)."</p> <p>"Beta ghar ke liye financial backbone hota hai (P_6)."</p> <p>"Xindagi ka ap dekhy Kisi ko kuch ni pta hota, behno k Sr pr bhai ho to, kuch nii to tahafuz to apna smjhy gi na (P_7)."</p> <p>"Bhai betiyan ke liye ek protection hota hai (P_5)."</p> <p>"Mujhe lagta hai agar beta hota to betiyan ke liye security hoti (P_4)."</p> <p>"Log kehte hain ke beta ghar ka head hota hai, decision-making mein help karta hai (P_5)."</p> <p>"Beta ghar ka future plan karta hai (P_3)."</p> <p>"Beta ghar ko lead karta hai jab parents weak ho jaate hain (P_6)."</p>
	6.2. Family Continuity and Lineage	<p>Name Preservation</p> <p>Generational Roles</p>	<p>"Beta na hone se log kehte hain k tumhara naam to khatam ho jayega (P_4)."</p> <p>"Beta naam rakhta hai, betiyan to paraye ghar jaati hain (P_3)."</p> <p>"Mujhe hamesha log kehte hain k ghar ka khandan beta continue karta hai (P_6)."</p> <p>"Beta hone ka matlab hai ghar ka waaris tayar hai (P_5)."</p> <p>"Beta khandan ki zimmedari ko aage leke chalta hai (P_4)."</p> <p>"Mujhe lagta hai beta hona family tradition ka hissa hai (P_7)."</p>

		Sons as Patriarchs	"Beta ghar ka head hota hai jab father weak hote hain (P_6)." "Log kehte hain k ghar ka system beta chalat hai, betiyan nahi (P_3)." "Beta family ki decision-making mein help karta hai (P_5)."
	6.3. Sons as Symbols of Success	Status in Society Family's Public Image Benchmark of Fulfillment	"Log kehte hain beta hone ka matlab hai k tumne success achieve ki (P_6)." "Beta ghar ki prestige badhata hai (P_5)." "Beta hone se society mein izzat badhti hai (P_4)." "Beta hamesha family ki respect ka reason banta hai (P_7)." "Mujhe lagta hai ke log betiyon ko dekhar hamare status ko kam samajhte hain (P_2)." "Log kehte hain ke beta hone se family strong dikhai deti hai (P_3)." "Log kehte hain beta hona matlab hai ke tumhari family complete hai (P_4)." "Beta hone se mujhe lagta tha ke society mujhe accept karegi (P_6)." "Beta hone ko family ka poora hona samjha jata hai (P_5)."
Gender Preference and Societal Expectation	7.1. Gender Testing and Decision-Making	Impact of Gender Testing  Reproductive Choices Cultural Stigma Around Testing	"Dosri beti ki bad sy hr bachy pr jins maloom Kiya (P_6)." "CHOTI beti ki bar mgy pkka tha k beta ho ga... JB mgy pta chala k beti hy to mei gye or Kaha k isy Abort kr dy k yei beti hy (P_5)." "Gender test mujhe har bar karna parta tha kyunki pressure tha (P_3)." "Log mujhe kehte hain ke agar beti hai to abortion consider karo (P_6)." "Bahut se log pehle hi poochh Lete Hain jab unhen pata chalta hai ki beti hai to fir vah khatm kar dete Hain use (P_3)." "Gender knowledge mere decisions ko har pregnancy mein influence karta tha (P_4)." "Log kehte hain ke gender test karna galat hai, lekin beta hona zaroori hai (P_6)." "Mujhe samajh nahi aata tha ke testing ka kya faida jab log pressure banate hain (P_5)." "Gender test har waqt ek guilt aur hope ke saath hota tha (P_4)."
	7.2. Reproductive Rights and Pressures	Influence of Societal Norms	"Log kehte hain ke dusri shadi karo agar beta nahi ho raha (P_7)." "Log mujhe bar bar samjhate the ke beta hona ek zarurat hai (P_6)." "Mujhe lagta tha ke meri reproductive choice mere haath mein nahi (P_5)."

		Pressure to Abort Daughters	"Mujhe bar bar bola gaya ke abortion consider karo agar beti hai (P_6)." "Log kehte hain ke beta hone tak try karte raho (P_3)." "Abortion ka khayal hamesha society ke pressure ki wajah se aya (P_4)."
		Autonomy Challenges	"Mujhe lagta tha meri decision-making meri nahi, meri family ki thi (P_6)." "Log mujhe har bar pressurize karte hain ke beta hona zaroori hai (P_3)." "Reproductive choices har bar family ke influence mein hoti hain (P_5)."
	7.3. Systemic Gender Inequity	Preference for Sons	"Log khety k iski betiyan hi betiyan hy (P_7)." "Dusron ko dekhkar bete ki kami mahsus Hoti hai (P_3)." "Society sirf beton wali aurat ki izzat karti hai (P_6)."
		Bias in Family Dynamics	"Log meri saas ko bolte hain ke tumhare ghar ke waaris sirf beta ho sakte hain (P_5)." "Beta na hone se log kehte hain ke tumhare ghar incomplete hai (P_7)." "Family ke andar log mujhe kam samajhte hain kyunki sirf betiyan hain (P_4)."
		Unequal Treatment of Daughters	"Log mujhe kehte hain ke betiyan sirf paraye ghar ki hoti hain (P_3)." "Betiyan ke liye log zyada kuch nahi karte, beta zaroori hai (P_6)." "Log mujhe kehte hain ke tumhare ghar ka koi future nahi kyunki beta nahi hai (P_5)."

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study underscores the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms that valorize sons as economic and social assets while marginalizing daughters, reinforcing systemic gender biases (Basu & de Jong, 2010). Mothers of daughters face intense societal and familial pressures, including demands for remarriage or repeated pregnancies to produce sons, as exemplified by a participant’s account: “Mery miyan ko un k dost ny mashwara diya k dosri shadi kr lo, aksr dosri biwi sy beta ho jata hy” (P_2). These pressures align with Hesketh and Xing’s (2006) assertion that mothers are disproportionately blamed for their inability to bear sons, exacerbating emotional distress and perpetuating gender discrimination.

Mothers internalize societal stigma, leading to profound guilt and diminished self-worth, as articulated by one participant: “Mei khoud ko koosti thi k mei hi hn jiska beta ni Hy” (P_8). Such

experiences reflect Cronk’s (2007) argument that cultural norms historically favoring sons embed shame in maternal identities. The devaluation of daughters also correlates with heightened marital instability and loneliness, as daughters are perceived as transient members of the household (Das & Bagli, 2024; Niaz, 2004).

Despite these challenges, mothers exhibit resilience through spirituality, social support, and active advocacy for their daughters. Participants cited prayer as a source of solace (e.g., “Mujhe dua karne se sukoon milta hai” [P_3]), aligning with Krok’s (2008) findings on faith as a resilience-building tool. Mothers also countered societal devaluation by empowering their daughters, consistent with Martins and Gall’s (2021) emphasis on maternal advocacy. Support from family and friends further mitigated emotional struggles, echoing Le and Nguyen’s (2022) insights on the protective role of social networks.

IMPLICATIONS

This study highlights how patriarchal norms valorize sons as symbols of lineage and economic security, systemically marginalizing mothers of daughters and perpetuating gender inequality (Walby, 1990; Engels, 1884). These norms pressure mothers to internalize societal biases, contributing to skewed sex ratios, economic dependencies favoring sons, and psychological distress marked by guilt, anxiety, and stigma (Basu & de Jong, 2010; Niaz, 2004). To dismantle structural patriarchy, the study advocates for policy interventions such as educational incentives for daughters, legal reforms in inheritance rights, and penalties for sex-selective practices. Culturally, media campaigns and community dialogues could reframe daughter's value, challenging son preference (Hesketh & Xing, 2006; Das & Bagli, 2024).

The psychological toll on mothers underscores the need for mental health support tailored to patriarchal contexts. The research advances feminist scholarship by illustrating how patriarchal systems are sustained through maternal experiences, complicating narratives of oppression as solely male-dominated (Walby, 1990). It calls for intersectional studies to explore how class, education, and regional differences mediate these experiences, alongside comparative analyses of cross-cultural patriarchal structures (Le & Nguyen, 2022). Empowering mothers economically could reduce reliance on sons, shifting perceptions of daughters' worth. Ultimately, multi-sectoral efforts cultural, legal, and psychological are critical to celebrating daughters, prioritizing maternal well-being, and dismantling patriarchal norms (Martins & Gall, 2021).

LIMITATIONS

The study acknowledges significant limitations that affect its broader applicability and reliability. The small sample size and cultural specificity of the participants may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other socio-cultural contexts. While the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) offers deep insights into participant's experiences, its subjective nature makes the findings interpretive and context-dependent. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data risks recall bias or participants withholding personal details due to social or familial pressures. The absence of father's perspectives limits

the understanding of gender preferences and family dynamics. Furthermore, the study's focus on a specific cultural and religious context may not apply to nations with differing gender roles, norms, or values. These limitations highlight the need for caution when extending the results to other populations or settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research should expand on this work by comparing gender preferences across diverse socio-cultural contexts and incorporating perspectives from fathers and other family members to better understand family dynamics. Longitudinal studies could track changes in mother's emotional challenges, coping strategies, and societal perceptions as daughter's age. Mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative and qualitative data, would enhance insights into the frequency and depth of psychosocial issues. Additionally, studies should explore the generational transmission of gender norms, assess the impact of societal interventions (e.g., education campaigns), and examine how mental health services and policies can address gender biases to foster systemic change toward gender equity.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the psychosocial challenges faced by mothers of daughters in a culture with persistent son preference, revealing the emotional burden caused by societal blame, internalized guilt, marital instability, and fear of rejection. Despite these struggles, mothers demonstrated resilience through coping strategies like spirituality, family support, and protective parenting. The findings align with prior research, emphasizing how cultural norms, familial pressures, and systemic inequalities shape mother's experiences.

While acknowledging the study's limitations, it contributes insights into how gender bias affects mother's identities, emotional health, and domestic roles. The research calls for structural reforms including educational campaigns, policy changes, and mental health initiatives to dismantle patriarchal systems, reduce societal pressures, and foster environments where daughters are equally valued. Future studies should expand on these findings through broader perspectives and innovative methods to advance gender equity, aiming for a society that respects and celebrates daughters.

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