

Married Women's Second Childbirth in Contemporary China: the Effect of Son Preference, Education, and the Extended Family

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1. Aim

This paper aims to explain women's second birth in the context of fertility planning restriction by answering three questions. Firstly, does and how does son preference affect women's second childbirth? Secondly, what effect does living with an extended family structure have on women's decision to have the second child? Thirdly, how does married women's education affect their second childbirth in comparison with their spouses?

2. Data & Methods

For the purpose of the study, I used Event-History Analysis with the multivariate Cox hazard regression (semi-parametric) (Cox, 1972) models to analyze how independent variables affect the probability of women having a second child. This research is based on data from the 2012 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) with a sample size of 3,013.

3. Results

I found that son preference affects Chinese married women's likelihood of having second child through two mechanisms: the selection mechanism and the stimulation mechanism. Married women who prefer sons may either employ sex-selective technologies and abortions to make sure their only child is a boy, or try to have a boy by giving birth to a second child if their first is a girl, and they have no access or are unwilling to employ prenatal sex-selective methods. Moreover, living with an extended family is not associated significantly with a woman's chance of having a second child. The more highly educated an urban-dwelling woman is, the less likely she is to have a second child, although the opposite trend is observed in rural women. More importantly, women's spouses' education does not affect women's chance to give second childbirth significantly in China, regardless of women's education level. Please refer to Table 1 in the appendix for statistics.

4. Conclusion

This paper brings new insights to the research agenda on son preference, family structure, and gender equality (especially married women's relative position to men) within marriage. Moreover, aside from examining the relationship between women's education and the phenomenon in question, it also measures the relative women's education against that of men's. Although fertility decisions are commonly viewed seen as joint decisions made by the couple, this study shows that Chinese women play a more important role than men in deciding their fertility. This paper has important fertility policy implications in China.

References

Cox, D. (1972). Regression models and life tables. *Journal Of The Royal Statistical Society*, 34(2), 187-220.