

Gender of a Firstborn Child, Maternal Mental Health and Marital Disruption[※]

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Abstract

Although there have been many studies which associate gender of a firstborn child with divorce, little studies documented reasons why having a firstborn daughter triggers marital disruption and conflicts between wives and husbands. This paper examines how gender of a firstborn child affects marital disruption and mental health among parents. Using a new household survey in Japan, our cross sectional study finds fairly sizable effects from the gender of a firstborn child: mothers with a female firstborn child exhibit increasing likelihood of assaulting and threatening their husbands in the previous year, compared with those having a male firstborn child. Since gender of a firstborn child is not associated with all pre-determined covariates, the assignment mechanism seems to be random, indicating simple logistic regressions sufficiently capture the causal effects. Importantly, we find no effects on the husbands' behavior (e.g. assaulting their wives). In addition, results on the SF-8 mental component summary show having a firstborn daughter is associated with poor mental health among mothers. As a mechanism which potentially explains our findings, we find mothers with a firstborn daughter works harder and earns more income probably with a loss of marital happiness.

Keywords: Gender, SF-8; Domestic violence; J-SHINE

JEL Classification: J13, J16, I10

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