Son Preference, Parental Satisfaction, and Sex Ratio Transition

Junji Kageyama¹, Risa Hagiwara¹, Kazuma Sato², and Eriko Teramura¹

¹ Meikai University, ² Takushoku University

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General Question

• Does having sons translate into more satisfaction in a society where sons are preferred to daughters?
Country & Data

- South Korea
  - Nice satisfaction data are available
  - Sex ratio at birth is high → Sign of son preference

Figure 1: Change in SRB in Korea
Specific Questions

• Can we capture son preference using satisfaction data?
• If so, in which domains of life, e.g., financial domain, family domain, social domain, do sons make the parents more satisfied?
• Are the results obtained here consistent with the sex ratio transition (the rise and the fall of SRB)?
Literature

• Lee et. al. (2013)
  – Cross-sectional data targeted for the elderly in one particular island in South Korea.
  – Mixed gender preference

• Margolis & Myrskyla (2016)
  – German and British panel data
  – Mixed gender preference
Literature

• This study
  – Examines the impact of having sons on parental satisfaction using national-level panel data in a country with son preference,
  – Gets into the sources of son preference with the domain of life approach, and
  – Checks the consistency with the sex ratio transition.
Main Results

- At the timing of birth, sons better satisfy parents in the domains of income and relative relations.
- No advantage is found for daughters at the timing of birth.
- The results provide a hint for understanding the full cycle of the sex ratio transition.
Korean Labor & Income Panel Study

- Wave 1 in 1998, Wave 17 in 2014
- Overall Life Satisfaction (5-point scale)
- Domain-specific Satisfaction (5-point scale)
  - household income, family relations, leisure activities, housing environment, relations with relatives, and social relations
- This study uses
  - Married individuals aged 45 or less
  - 61,851 observations
1st Regression Analysis: Fertility Behavior

• Aim: to test if the probability of progressing to the next parity is higher for parents with only daughters than for parents with only sons.

• Result: Yes → consistent with son preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Children</th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only daughters</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>5.38***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both daughters and sons</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

– RE Logit model. Ref: Only sons. Demo-socioeconomic variables are controlled. Odds ratio for progressing to the next parity. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.
2nd Regression Analysis: Birth and Parenthood on Satisfaction

- Aim: to test the impacts of child birth and parenthood on satisfaction while controlling for the gender of children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Overall Life</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>.052***</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.046***</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>.040**</td>
<td>.035**</td>
<td>.044***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Son Birth</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.062**</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.020</td>
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<td>.049**</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenthood</td>
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<td>-.037*</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>-.171***</td>
<td>-.056***</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>-.032*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Son PH</td>
<td>-.049***</td>
<td>-.013</td>
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- FE OLS model. Demo-socioeconomic variables are controlled.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.
2nd Regression Analysis Result 1: Birth on Satisfaction

- At the timing of birth, sons better satisfy parents in the domains of income and relative relations.
- No advantage is found for daughters.

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- FE OLS model. Demo-socioeconomic variables are controlled.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.
2\textsuperscript{nd} Regression Analysis Result 2: Parenthood on Satisfaction

- Being a parent of sons lowers satisfaction in overall life and in the domains of relative and social relations.
- No disadvantage is found for daughters.

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- FE OLS model. Demo-socioeconomic variables are controlled.
  *** \( p<0.01 \), ** \( p<0.05 \), * \( p<0.1 \).
Remarks 1: Son Preference

• Son preference has its roots in the domains of income and relations with relatives.
  – This supports the idea that son preference derives from parental expectations that sons financially support the family, including aged parents, and represent the family in relative networks.

• However, the positive impact of having sons does not last long.
  – Overly high expectation? Boys are just terrible?
3rd Regression Analysis: Change in Son Preference

• Aim: to test if the impacts of having sons diminished.

• Top: 1st half. Bottom: 2nd half.

• Results: The positive impacts of son birth disappeared in the 2nd half. → consistent with the fall in SRB

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<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>0.0523*</td>
<td>-0.0214</td>
<td>0.0282</td>
<td>-0.00694</td>
<td>0.0254</td>
<td>0.0112</td>
<td>0.0160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Son Birth</td>
<td>-0.00556</td>
<td>0.0976**</td>
<td>-0.0112</td>
<td>0.0179</td>
<td>0.0355</td>
<td>0.0763*</td>
<td>0.0761**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>0.0528**</td>
<td>0.0300</td>
<td>0.0578***</td>
<td>0.00856</td>
<td>0.0433</td>
<td>0.0591***</td>
<td>0.0644***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Son Birth</td>
<td>0.0159</td>
<td>-0.00281</td>
<td>-0.0299</td>
<td>0.00912</td>
<td>-0.0142</td>
<td>-0.00376</td>
<td>-0.0445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Remarks 2: Sex Ratio Transition

- Economic development ignites the sex ratio transition.
  1) Low fertility → raises SRB in a country with son preference and prenatal sex-selective technology.
  2) Socioeconomic changes (e.g., introduction of SS) → expected roles of sons less valuable → weaker son preference → reduces SRB
- The ignition is the same, but the time lag in its impacts generates the rise and the fall in SRB.
Thank you

Junji Kageyama
kagejun@gmail.com