Son Preference, Fertility Decline and the Non-Missing Girls of Turkey

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The Paper Examines:

- Whether son presence exists among Turkish couples
- How it affects
  - Fertility behavior
  - Sex ratios
  - Investment in children
  - And child well being

Analyses and Data

- Using aggregate data from the Census
  - The paper shows that sex ratios in Turkey are quite balanced
- Estimates based on Turkish Demographic Health Surveys (1983, 1988, 2003, 2008) show consistent patterns with the aggregate data.

Son Preference

- Evidence of son preference:
  - Couples stop childbearing when they hit the target of having a son!
  - Specifically, upon having a son, families start utilizing methods of contraception.
- Is having a son endogenous?
  - No! Some extensive balancing tests provide compelling evidence that the gender of the baby is orthogonal to a number of observable family characteristics.

Fertility Implications of Son Preference

- Demand for sons lead to an increase in the number of children families have.

- Small families have more sons and large families have more daughters. Hence, although families prefer to have sons, the sex ratio at the aggregate is balanced.

Does son preference lead to male-biased allocative behavior?

- No statistically significant evidence of male-biased allocative behavior among the second born child.

- There is some evidence of male-biased allocative behavior among the third parity or later.

  - Having an older female sibling (vs. male sibling) seem to put girls at a disadvantage in comparison to boys.

- Son preference does not seem to be related to vaccination rates.

Final Points

- Very good paper!
  - Forthcoming at Demography: Good hit!
- The effect of son preference on fertility is nicely documented and it's is consistent with a theoretical framework.
- Secondary effects of son preference (i.e., on within family resource allocation) need more attention in future work. Studying the long-run effects may be very interesting.