The Effect of Parent Attitudes on Marriage Timing of Sons in Nepal

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Introduction

Even in a setting of high youth independence and emphasis on consent (e.g. the UK), research shows strong parental influences on their children’s marital behavior. We expect even stronger influences in societies with higher levels of parental authority over their children (e.g. South Asia).

Previous studies have focused only on mothers’ influences over their children. This is the first study that both mothers’ and fathers’ attitudes independently and in a non-western society (Nepal).

Theoretical Framework, cont.

• Mothers’ attitudes may have stronger influence due to spending more time with children or fathers may have more influence due to their decision-making role in the Nepali family, their control over resources and/or due to sons modeling after same sex parent
• Sons’ own attitudes may also influence their behavior, independent of parents
• The specific person whose attitude matters may depend on the substantive domain

Hypotheses

Attitude

Expected Influence on Sons

Large family size is desirable

Married sooner

Having more children is better than being rich

Married sooner

It is important for sons to work

Married later

Many parents should care for parents in old age

Married later

Men should make decisions in the household

Married sooner

If husband and wife cannot get along they should get divorced

Married later

It is ok for men to have sex before marriage if they have decided to marry

Married sooner

Setting & Data

• Specific attitudes can influence a wide range of behaviors
• Parents may influence children’s behavior through socialization or social control
• Mothers and fathers may hold different attitudes and their influence may work through different mechanisms (e.g., socialization, social control)

Theoretical Framework

Data from the Chitwan Valley Family Study (CVFS) in rural Nepal

• The main form of livelihood is subsistence agriculture
• Inheritance is important form of wealth for sons, adding to parental influence over their children’s behaviors
• Many marriages are arranged, though this has become less common over time
• Having an arranged marriage is much more common for girls than for boys.

Methods

• Logistic regression to estimate hazard models (multi-level by neighborhood)

Results

No Intergenerational Influence:

Mother’s Attitude

Father’s Attitude

Son’s Attitude

Son’s Marriage Behavior

Father’s Attitude

Son’s Attitude

Son’s Marriage Behavior

Mother’s Attitude

Son’s Attitude

Son’s Marriage Behavior

Father’s Attitude

Son’s Attitude

Son’s Marriage Behavior

Mother’s Attitude

Son’s Attitude

Son’s Marriage Behavior

Conclusions

• Mothers and fathers both have influence over sons’ marriage timing, but the level of influence varies across substantive domains of the attitudes.
• For some attitudes, sons’ own attitudes also have independent influences on their behavior. In some of these cases, only the son’s attitudes influence behavior, whereas in other cases, parents’ attitude works in conjunction with sons’ attitudes to influence sons’ behavior.
• Overall, these findings constitute strong new evidence of substantial influences of parental attitudes on demographic behaviors in settings very different than the US.

Acknowledgments:

We would like to thank the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NIH, HD046103, for supporting this project.

References: