Abstract:

The paper examines whether qualitative expressions of son preference translate into selective neglect of girls in Indian households and whether socioeconomic factors associated with greater son preference also predict selective neglect. The phrase “selective neglect” is used to capture a situation when parents systematically give lower care to girls relative to boys for reasons independent of individual characteristics or gender-based responsibilities of the child in the household. Immunization of young children being highly recommended, independently of need, provides a unique way to assess such discrimination. Using data from the National Family and Health Surveys (1999 and 2006), empirical results reveal that girls in son-preferring households are significantly [add number] less likely to be fully immunized than boys, whereas no discrimination is detectable for girls in neutral or girl-preferring households suffer. Variations in wealth, however, whether measured in absolute or relative terms have no distinguishable impact on immunization by sex. [results before inclusion of 2005 data and before modification of methodology on relative wealth calculation and multilevel analysis]

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