

Gender Gap, Intra Household Bargaining and Sex Selective Abortion in Albania

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1 Extended Abstract

In Albania the preference for male children has led to sex selective procedures. The most common one is sex selective abortion which leads to sex imbalance. The sex of the child can be known only after twelve weeks of pregnancy. As a result the decision for sex selective abortion has to be done after this time period. Fertility preferences can be done medically through fertility treatments, but in developing countries the cheapest most efficient way, still remains the sex selective abortion. Although in many countries abortion is legal, sex selective abortion remains illegal. The biological sex ratio is 104-105 male children per 100 female children, different from Albania where old age dependency and family line continuation are important. Sex ratio has reached 114.

The sex imbalance becomes problematic because of the consequences it can have on the population sex distribution but also for imbalances in investment of children and gender equality. Deciding on the sex of the child creates a bias towards men. The high number of males in confront to females, affects the marriage market by increasing the number of unmarried men, which delays marriage.

In this paper the cultural bias and the income benefit of having boys are modeled as a bias in preferences. Considering this, we try to solve the problematic of sex selective abortion by developing a minimalistic model which incorporates different utilities for

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boys and girls, the bargaining between family members and the decision about abortion, dependant on its cost.

The first channel we analyze is the investment in children, where boys receive more weight than girls in the preferences of parents (Selenica 1927 and Guilmoto 2013). We assume mother's preference toward children to be the same with the father's one. The second one will be on gender empowerment and the utility cost of abortion. This last one enters the utility function differently for partners and it affects the decision of continuing or terminating the pregnancy. Gender empowerment will involve decision making in the household and personal life. (Karl Kaser Patriarchy after patriarchy in the Balkans 2008)

In order to focus on the reasons of parents preference for boys, the model incorporates parent preferences for their children, the decisions based on cost of abortion and the gender equality. We consider families composed by two parents and two children. We show how boys and girls enter parents utility functions. Then we analyze the first and the second pregnancy by considering the utility of having the child of a specific sex and the expected utility of abortion in case of interruption of pregnancy. Abortion is associated to a cost, which influences the decision of the family regarding the interruption and the continuation of the pregnancy. It enters parents utility function with a different weight for the mother and the father.

The model we are considering will serve as an instrument to measure the sensitivity of abortion to gender gap policies and investment in children. We consider a family with a family planning of 2 children. During pregnancy, there is a probability p for the child to belong to the male sex and the probability $1 - p$ to belong to the female sex. Mothers and fathers face the same preferences towards male children. The same goes for female children. Parents face different abortion costs. The abortion cost faced by the father would be a fraction of the one faced by the mother.

The utility of the family will be the sum of the utilities of both parents considering different bargaining power for each of them. When during pregnancy the child is found to be male, considering a male preference, the pregnancy will continue. When the child is found to belong to the female sex, the mother will continue the pregnancy only when the utility of having a female child is greater than the expected utility of aborting a

child. After abortion, there will be another pregnancy.

The cost of abortion is distributed according to an exponential distribution. Family decisions will change according to the different intervals of the distribution. It includes different thresholds for which parents take different decisions according to these intervals. They have the choice to never abort, abort when the first child is a female, abort the second female child when the first child is a male or to always abort. These different intervals of cost of abortion are associated with different sex ratios. We calibrate the model and find the parameter of the exponential distribution. Then we do a sensitivity analysis of the children sex ratios with women empowerment and investment in children. For this calibration we use the Demographic and Health Survey data on Albania for the year 2008 by creating variables for the gender empowerment, investment in children and the sex ratio.

The Demographic and Health survey for Albania in 2008 survey is composed by questions answered by the female head of the family. The parameters we are interested in measuring are *wife's bargaining power*, *relative preference for children* and *sex ratio*. Wife's bargaining power index is composed by questions on final say for issues like own health care, making large household purchases, making household purchases for daily needs, visits to family and relatives, decision on what to do with money husband earns. A principal component analysis helps us decide at what weights to use this sub indexes. The relative preference for children is composed by questions if parents read, name, count, draw, tell stories, sing songs, play, take the child outside. These questions are answered for both female and male children. This parameter will be the ratio of the investment in the female child compared to the male one. The sex ratio parameter is composed by the total number of male children relative to the total number of female children. We follow a district analysis of the data.

When measuring the sensitivity of sex ratios with the gender gaps and the investment in children, we check if we can lower the disbalance male-female of children by lowering gender gap differences and equalizing investment in the children of the different sex. We conclude by proposing policies for balancing the sex ratio.

Key words: sex selective abortion, gender equality, investment in children, family decisions