

Reviews of ECONJOURNAL-D-23-00173R3

Social Support and Suicidal Ideation among Children of Cross-Border Married Couples

Round 1

Reviewer 1

The manuscript is a very interesting one, covering a number of topics of high relevance these days.

It is well structured and the theoretical part is quite acceptable, in the description and definition of the main concepts. The methodological part is a very complete one, and the methods used to find the appropriate results are acceptable. The conclusion is in line with the results

However in our opinion some points could be improved.

1 - Since the authors are dealing with a large amount of data, a selection of the variables could be done in order to enhance the importance of some variables in the final results. Should the authors agree, we think that the manuscript would largely benefit from a path analysis model including and testing the most relevant variables (suicidal ideation, type and level of social support, native/foreign mothers, age, sex, and so on).

2 - When the authors say : "We observe some differences between students with native and foreign-born mothers in terms of their parents' education levels and household economic statuses. Children with foreign-born mothers have worse health factors (i.e., height, weight, and self-perceived health), their fathers' and mothers' education levels are lower, and they are more likely to have lower household incomes and live apart from their mothers.", this is because in many cases immigration is due to a search of better life conditions, and some controlling of such variables would be a possibility to include in the model mentioned in the previous point.

3 - The conclusion could also be improved, in order to explain and relate the various results. Also, some results deserve a larger discussion (e.g. the larger percentages associated with teachers support when compared to the mothers support.

But a point regarding the fact that these results are pre-pandemic (2014-2017) should be stressed, and the consequences of such a phenomena should be discussed, even without data to support it.

In general, we think that the manuscript is well-written, and acceptable after these minor revisions.

Reviewer 2

Summary

- Treatment: Social support by mothers and teachers
- Outcomes: Suicidal ideation
- Method: Simple probit model
- Data: Korean Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Main finding: Looking for social support is negatively correlated with Suicidal ideation.

Overall assessment

This is an empirical paper that examines the relationship between social support and suicidal ideation. The focus is on adolescents in Korea. The authors compare children born to two native parents with children born to a mixed marriage with an immigrant mother. The latter group has been growing in recent years. The paper does a good job of explaining why this topic, and in particular the focus on mixed children, is of particular importance. I think that the estimates presented should be interpreted as (conditional) correlations, since the estimation model does not address any endogeneity concerns. My main criticism is that the authors (tend to) use causal language to interpret their results. I see two main ways forward. Either the authors solve the endogeneity problem(s), or they write a descriptive paper in which they avoid causal language. I think the latter is the more viable option.

Main Critique

The RHS-variables of primary interest are interactions between advising figures (such as father, mother or teacher) and a binary migration background indicator. In order to give a causal interpretation of the estimated coefficients of these interacted variables, all components of the interacted variables have to be exogenous; i.e. they must not be correlated with the error term in the probit model. The underlying question for the “advising figures” reads as follows: “Who do you usually talk to when you are concerned about something or are sad?”. Thus this variable measures students’ choices. I do not see how the exogeneity assumption can plausibly hold. It is equally hard to argue that migration background indicator is truly exogenous. To make my point clear, in the abstract the authors write “We find that the advice of teachers 4.9 percentage points more effective in reducing suicidal ideation among these children than among children with native Korean mothers.” There are many other interpretations that are consistent with the data. For example, one might conclude that children with less suicidal ideation are more likely to talk to their teacher when they feel sad, and that this relationship is quantitatively different between the two types of children. The authors should acknowledge that they cannot establish causality. They could a descriptive paper in which they avoid causal language. In such a paper, the role of control variable (see page 9) has to be re-considered.

Round 2

Reviewer 1

Dear author(s):

We see that suggested revisions have been accepted and corrections have been made. Regarding the path analysis of the model tested, we suggest its inclusion in a graphical manner, using a figure, what will greatly increase its understanding. Also, we recommend a reference to the software used (Amos, Mplus, EQS...).

Round 3

Editor

Following the revision, the paper is now more coherent in its purposes and the way the study is presented. Referees' suggestions have been taken on board.

Before acceptance for publication, Please conduct one further revision: please incorporate in the paper Referee 1's suggestions (inclusion of a graphical representation of the path analysis, and a reference to the software used). Please resubmit with these final changes so that we can proceed to an award of acceptance with no restriction.

Thanks so much and kind regards.