

Paternity Leave, Family Dynamics, and Children's Behavior

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Research Questions & Significance

- First empirical study examines impacts of PL in an Asian context where patriarchy remains strong and female labor force participation is high.
- Does paternity leave (PL) reduce children's behavior problems in Singapore?
- Do family dynamics mediate this relationship?

Singaporean Policy Context

- May 1, 2013 - Dec 31, 2016: 1-week paid PL
- From Jan 1 2017: 2 weeks paid PL

Theoretical Frameworks

Role theory

- PL promotes egalitarian gender relationship, thus reducing parents' stress levels due to role strains

Social capital theory

- PL allows greater father involvement and strengthens father-child attachment, thus accumulating family social capital for children's well-being.

Family systems theory

- PL improves partner relationships in a family unit which indirectly influence children's well-being.



Singapore Longitudinal EARly Development Study

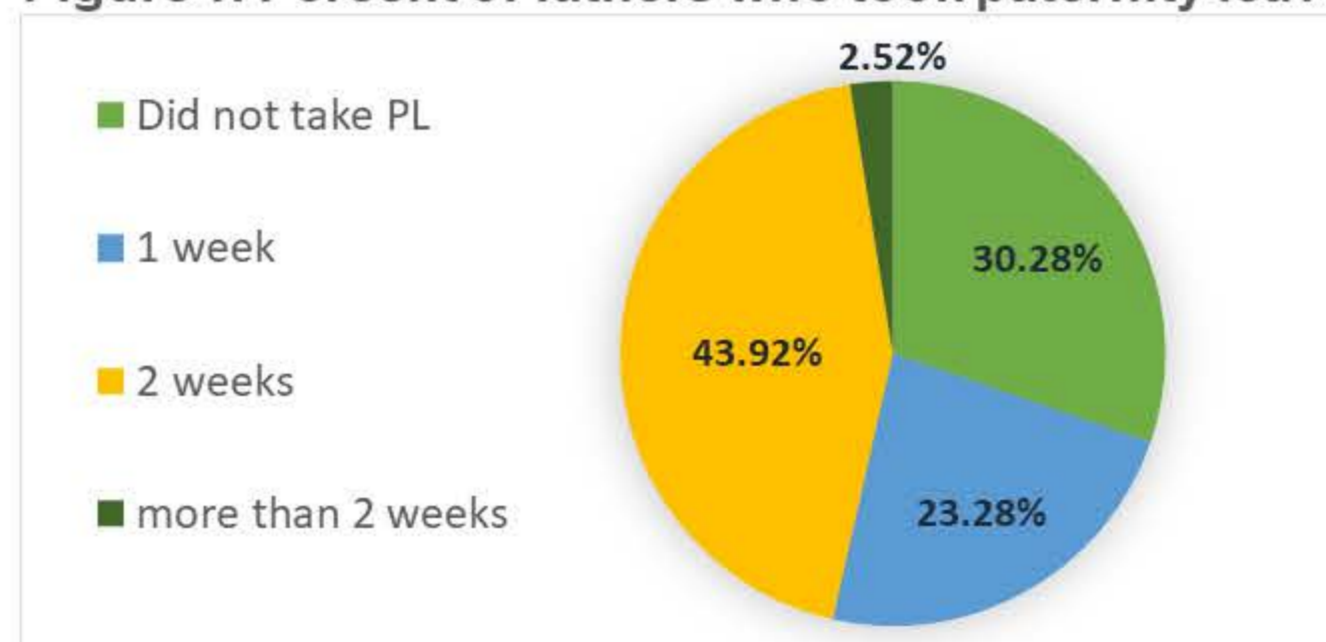
Research Framework



- Singapore Longitudinal Early Development Study (SG LEADS) (2018/2019).
- It is the first nationally representative data using a multi-stage stratified probability sampling and oversampled low-income groups.
- N=3,897 children (aged 0-6) from intact families where mothers are PCGs, born on or after May 1 2013.
- **Dependent variables:** children's externalizing and internalizing behavior problems
- **Independent variable:** PL (0= "did not take PL", 1= "1-week PL", "2=2 and more weeks PL")
- Multinomial logistic regression, OLS, KHB mediation analysis, propensity score matching

Results

Figure 1. Percent of fathers who took paternity leave



- Taking 2 weeks or more PL has significantly positive impact on children's socio-emotional development.
- Taking 2 weeks or more PL significantly improves family dynamics.
- However, 1-week PL could even increase a bit of parenting aggravation.
- Propensity score matching corroborated the OLS findings.

Table 1. Summary of mediating effects of taking 2 or more weeks PL on children's behavior problems using KHB method

| Mediators | EBPI | IBPI |
|------------------------|--------|--------|
| Family conflict | 24.21% | 9.25% |
| Marital satisfaction | 12.47% | 19.61% |
| Father-child closeness | 2.86% | 7.71% |
| Maternal depression | 11.02% | 13.67% |
| Parenting aggravation | 43.76% | 4.78% |
| Total mediation effect | 94.32% | 55.02% |

Policy Implications

- Relatively short PL (i.e. 2 weeks) can have a significantly positive impact on family relations and children's well-being.
- The benefits of PL has policy implications, especially for other Asian countries where patriarchy is more prevalent, female labor force participation is high, and fertility rates are low.

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