

The Influence of Fatherhood on Time Spent at Work

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Overview

Does fatherhood affect men's work hours? Men might work more hours when they have children in order to provide for the family. However, previous evidence is mixed. Using panel data, I summarize fathers' employment hours before and after the first birth. **I find no evidence that men's work hours change with the birth of their first child.**

Background

Previous research demonstrates that providing is a central part of fathers' identities (Christiansen and Palkovitz 2001), which suggests that men's work hours should increase with the birth of a child. At the same time, some men might cut back their hours in order to spend more time at home with the family. Previous empirical findings are mixed. Some studies find that fatherhood increases employment hours (Sanchez and Thomson 1997), but others find negative effects among fathers who express egalitarian gender role attitudes (Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000). The effect of fatherhood on employment hours also varies by race (Glauber and Gozjolko 2011).

To estimate a causal effect of fatherhood on employment hours, one must compare the observed employment hours of fathers with the unobserved counterfactual of what their hours would have been, had they not had a child. One way to estimate this counterfactual is to look for a change in the trajectory of men's employment hours at the time of the first birth.

Data

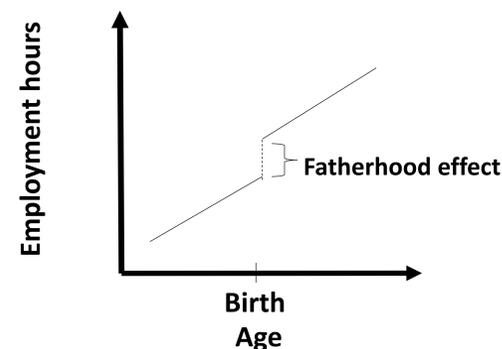
National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979 cohort

- Ages 14-22 in 1979
- Observed annually 1979-1994, biennially 1994-2010
- Restrictions: Only those who are ever observed to have a child, provide data on the first child's year of birth, and are currently employed
- **3,403 men**
- **40,103 person-year observations**

Prior Models

Previous studies assume a functional form for the association between age and employment hours. The fatherhood effect is an intercept shift in the trajectory of employment hours.

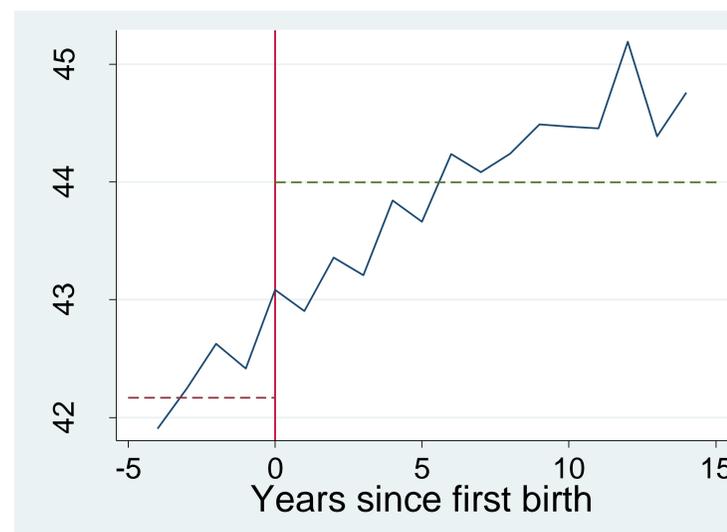
Figure 1. Conceptual model of the influence of fatherhood on employment hours



Results

Without assuming a parametric model, I report the mean employment hours for employed men by the number of years since the birth of the first child. The dotted lines reflect the effect one would estimate by ignoring men's overall hours trajectory. **I find no evidence that fatherhood affects men's employment hours, besides occurring during a period when employment hours are already increasing.**

Figure 2. Mean employment hours by years since first birth

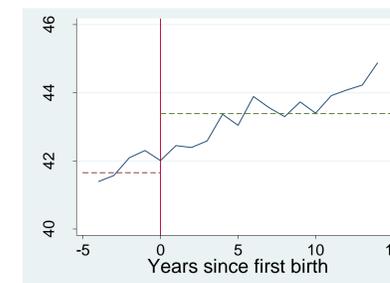


Moderators

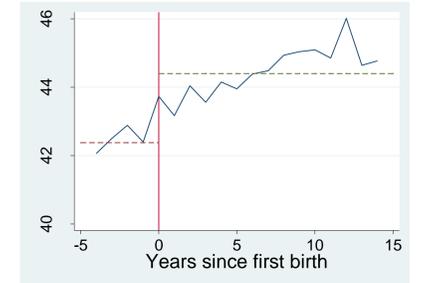
Average effects might mask different effects within subgroups. Contrary to prior findings, the figures below provide no compelling evidence that fatherhood affects men's employment hours differently by gender role attitudes or race.

Figure 3. Moderated effects

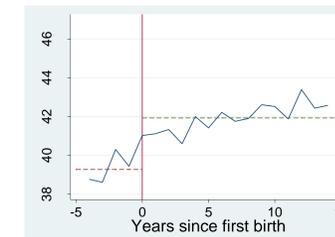
Gender-egalitarian



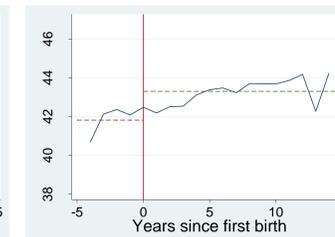
Gender-traditional



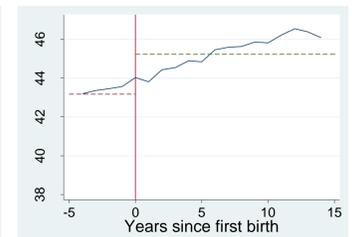
Black



Hispanic



White



Conclusions

Although the onset of fatherhood coincides with a period in which men's employment hours are increasing, **I find no evidence that fatherhood is associated with an additional change in work hours.**

Previous studies finding an effect may have been driven by model specifications which fail to account for nonlinear or heterogeneous effects of age. In future models, I hope to test the robustness of previous models to various assumptions about the functional form of the association between age and employment hours.

References

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