

## **Maternal Emotional Well-being and Child Development**

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**Abstract:** Mental health disorders, ranging from depression and anxiety to rarer conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorders, affect at least 20% of the adult population in countries such as the UK and the USA. They are also common among children, with almost half of 13-18 years old being affected at some point in their lives. The economic costs of depression from lost productivity have been estimated at around €76bn in Europe and \$31bn in the United States. There is however little research in economics which addresses the causes and consequences of mental health disorders. Of particular interest to education economists is the impact that maternal mental health might have on the process of human capital accumulation of their children. In this paper we estimate a model in which child cognitive and non-cognitive skills as well as maternal mental health change dynamically over time. We allow child skills to be influenced by maternal mental health directly and through parental investments. We also allow for feedback effects, i.e. the possibility that maternal mental health is itself a function of child development. We use longitudinal data from the UK Millennium Cohort study, which allows us to follow mothers and children from age 3 to age 11. As this survey collects information on the child's non-cognitive skills also from interviewers and teachers, we use these measures to assess to what extent mother-reported accounts of her child non-cognitive skills are influenced by maternal mental health. Our preliminary findings show that maternal mental health mainly affects child non-cognitive skills and that the magnitude of feedback effects is rather small. Considering non-mother-reported measures of child non-cognitive skills is shown to significantly attenuate the contribution of children non-cognitive skills to the formation of cognitive human capital.