

The Effects of Conjugal Bereavement on the Living Conditions and Health Status of Elderly Women: A Preliminary Analysis

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This paper studies the effects of conjugal bereavement on the living conditions and health of elderly women, using cross-sectional data from the National Survey on Family and the Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions. Its findings are as follows. First, the death of their spouse leads some elderly women to live with their children, but the rate at which this occurs is not high, suggesting that conjugal bereavement does not necessarily cause changes in household structure. Second, while the death of a spouse causes a decrease in income and consumption at the household level, there is no observed decrease in "equivalent consumption", an adjusted consumption index that takes into account household size. Third, conjugal bereavement may increase certain self-reported states of poor physical condition, hospital visits for certain lifestyle-related diseases, and irregular eating habits. Fourth, on the other hand, there is no significant deterioration in overall levels of health and stress. Taken as a whole, these results indicate that the survivors' pension system enables elderly widows to maintain a certain level of consumption, avoid having to live with their children, and avoid experiencing a deterioration in their health status, but the loss of an important partner may change widows' lifestyles in a manner that negatively affects some lifestyle-related health outcomes.