

Accepted Manuscript

Title: Parental human capital and child health at birth in India

Author: Md Nazmul Ahsan Riddhi Maharaj

PII: S1570-677X(17)30241-1

DOI: <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.ehb.2018.06.006>

Reference: EHB 720

To appear in: *Economics and Human Biology*

Received date: 22-9-2017

Revised date: 24-6-2018

Accepted date: 25-6-2018



Please cite this article as: Md Nazmul Ahsan, Riddhi Maharaj, Parental human capital and child health at birth in India, *Economics and Human Biology* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ehb.2018.06.006>

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Parental Human Capital and Child Health at Birth in India *

Md Nazmul Ahsan^{†‡}

Saint Louis University

Riddhi Maharaj[§]

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira

September 2017

Abstract

Health at birth shapes an individual's well-being over her life cycle. We categorize the Indian states into high and low infant mortality regions to capture the diverse disease environment and analyze the nature of the association between parental human capital and child survival and nutrition measures at birth. We restrict our analysis only to firstborns to avoid confounding from a number of factors including sex-selective abortions in the higher birth orders. We broadly find that parental human capital, especially maternal health, is a strong and significant predictor of a child's birth outcomes under adverse disease environment. In the rural areas of the high infant mortality states, a 10-centimeter increase in maternal height is associated with 1.7% lower probability of a child dying as a neonate and 5% increase in birth weight around the mean. These estimates suggest that an investment in human capital of the mothers from this

*Previously titled "Parental Health, Households, Communities and Fetal Health in India". We thank John Strauss, Anant Nyshadham, Jeffrey Nugent, Tridib Banerjee, Lori Beaman, Prashant Bharadwaj, Arun Chandrashekhar, Joseph R. Cummins, Andrew Foster, Amar Hamoudi, Adriana Lleras-Muney, Claus C Pörtner, Neeraj Sood, Duncan Thomas, Atheendar Venkataramani, Rakesh Banerjee, Echu Liu, Heather Bednarek, participants of UNU-WIDER 30th anniversary conference, American Society of Health Economics conference, and Informal Development Seminar at USC. We also thank the editor and three anonymous referees for their comments. The usual disclaimer applies.

[†]Corresponding author

[‡]Saint Louis University, Department of Economics, 3674 Lindell Blvd, DS Hall-346, St. Louis, MO 63108, USA. Email: ahsanm@slu.edu.

[§]Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math, Howrah; West Bengal, India; Pin: 711202. Email: riddhimaharaj.rkm@gmail.com.

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