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Women's schooling, fertility, and child health outcomes: Evidence from Uganda's free primary education program

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of women's education on both fertility and child health in Uganda. To identify causal effects, I exploit the timing of a national reform that eliminated primary school fees in 1997 to implement a regression discontinuity design. At the cutoff, the reform increased educational attainment by nearly one year on average, with impacts across all grade levels through the end of secondary school. Women with more schooling both delay and reduce overall fertility, increase early child health investments, and have less chronically malnourished children. In terms of mechanisms, women with additional schooling do not abstain more from sex as adolescents, but they are more likely to have used contraceptives before a first pregnancy and they delay marriage. Other downstream effects include improved employment outcomes and greater wealth.

Keywords: Education, Fertility, Child Health

JEL: O12, I12, I25, I38

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