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EDUCATION

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Ph.D. in SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (Econ Track, STEM), SIPA Expected, 2023
Fields: Health, Labor, Education and Development Economics
Courses: All Econ PhD core course sequences

M.PHIL., SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2021

MPA in ECONOMIC POLICY MANAGEMENT 2015

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

M.Sc., ECONOMICS (*with Very Great Distinction*) 2010

B.A., ECONOMICS (*with Great Distinction*) 2008

JOB MARKET PAPER

COLLEGE ADMISSION COMPETITION AND FIELD CHOICE

This paper studies whether college admission uncertainty affects students' college field choice in a field-specific college admission system. The study leverages a college admission policy reform in Ethiopia that substantially changed the ratio of college seats allocated to STEM and non-STEM college fields from 50:50 to 70:30 in favor of STEM fields. The reform resulted in a sizable decrease in the admission selectivity of college STEM fields. A reduced form estimate comparing field choices of cohorts before and after the policy reform shows that students are 23 percentage points more likely to choose the pre-college STEM track post-reform. A local estimate from a regression discontinuity design comparing the field choices of students below and above the pre-college admission cutoff point shows that our estimates are robust. The estimates are substantially larger among the marginal students, suggesting that the change in admission selectivity led to a significant sorting on overall ability. Moreover, the reform induced Roy(1951) type positive selection on skills valued in college STEM fields. Those induced by the reform to study STEM fields are better in skills valued in college STEM fields than students in non-STEM fields post-reform. On the other hand, non-STEM students have a relative advantage in skills valued more in social sciences and humanities fields. Overall, these results imply that admission uncertainty plays a crucial role in the field choice decision of students. However, students are not naively sorting into less selective college fields. Instead, the choices are consistent with their position

in the achievement distribution and relative skill advantage in different fields. The latter implies that students make a more informed and rational choice than the existing literature suggests.

WORKING PAPERS

MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES AND HEALTH LITERACY

Mobile technologies have considerable potential to improve access to health information. This study examines the effect of the fast spread of mobile technologies on health literacy in sub-Saharan Africa. Using Demographic and Health Surveys data from 25 sub-Saharan African countries and a historical mobile network coverage map, we investigate whether the fast expansion of 2G and 3G mobile technologies across Africa has led to improved health literacy in the continent. Using an IV approach for endogenous expansion of mobile networks across the continent, we find that the spread of mobile technology has led to large and significant improvements in health knowledge in sub-Saharan Africa. To be specific, access to 2G or 3G technology significantly decreases the proportion of individuals with misconceptions about diseases and health in general. Furthermore, we find that the benefits are substantial in regions where either or both of these technologies have been in use for an extended period. Consistent with the range of services it provides, 3G technology seems to have led to a more significant gain in health literacy in regions where the technology has been widely available. Robustness checks and falsification exercises show that these results are robust.

THE LONG REACH OF FRIENDSHIP: CHEATING IN COLLEGE ADMISSION EXAMS AND COLLEGE OUTCOMES

Using quasi-random exam room seats and exam booklet code assignments for more than two million students in the Ethiopian pre-college program, I estimate the extent of academic cheating in the high-stakes Ethiopian College Admission Exams. We study three outcome variables: subject-level exam scores, the likelihood of college admission, and the student-level score variation. The result shows that answer copying accounts for up to 5 percentage points of subject-level scores of students sitting in the neighborhood of high-achieving students. Overall, students sitting closer to a high achieving student are up to 13 percentage points more likely to be admitted to college than those sitting far from a high achieving student. We document considerable heterogeneity in cheating on several dimensions. Cheating is less likely to happen when the high-achieving student in the neighborhood is a female. We also find that cheating is more likely to happen when the cheating student and the high-achieving accomplice are acquaintances. We provide robustness checks. We also study the social cost of academic cheating by exploring the college-level outcomes such as drop-out and on-time graduation rates.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Labor Market Supply Shock and Firm Performances: Evidence from Ethiopia

Heat Stress and Cognitive Performance: Evidence from College Admission Exams

Spotting Academic Cheating in Aggregate Test Score Data: A Machine Learning Approach

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Columbia University , Research Assistant to Prof. Suresh Naidu	2019 – 2020
Columbia University , International Research Institute , Research Assistant	Summer 2017
Addis Ababa University , Assistant Professor	2015 – 2016
The Ethiopian Economics Association , Research Fellow	2011 – 2014
The National Bank of Ethiopia , Research Fellow	2010 – 2011

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

TEACHING ASSISTANT, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Economic Development, SIPA, Graduate Course, Spring 2022

Principles of Economics, Undergraduate, Department of Economics, Fall 2019

Microeconomics of Development, Undergraduate, Department of Economics, Fall 2019

Political Economy, Undergraduate, Department of Economics, Fall 2018

Macroeconomics Laboratory, SIPA, Graduate, Spring 2018

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

International Trade (Economics), Department of Economics, 2015 – 2016

HONORS AND AWARDS

Dissertation Fellowship , GSAS, Columbia University	2022
Dean's Fellow , GSAS, Columbia University	2016 – 2022
World Bank Scholar , The World Bank and Columbia University	2014 – 2015
AERC Fellowship , African Economic Research Consortium and AAU	2008 – 2010
TICA Fellowship , Turkish International Cooperation Agency and AAU	2007 – 2008

SKILLS AND OTHERS

PROGRAMMING: STATA (Advanced), R (Advanced), MATLAB (Intermediate),
ArcGIS (Intermediate), L^AT_EX(Advanced)

LANGUAGES: English, Oromo, Amharic

CITIZENSHIP: Ethiopian

REFERENCES

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