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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 Concerns and Field Choice

This paper studies how college admission selectivity affects the college field choices of students in a centralized, field-specific admission system. The study leverages a policy reform in Ethiopia that increased the share of college seats in public universities allocated to STEM fields by 20 percentage points. The reform resulted in a substantial decrease in the admission selectivity of STEM fields. Using a reduced form specification, I show that students are 24 percentage points more likely to choose a pre-college STEM track post-reform. The field choice response is heterogeneous: academically marginal students are significantly more likely to switch to STEM relative to infra-marginal students. Further, I show that the reform induced a positive selection on field-specific skills: those induced to choose the STEM track are relatively better in skills valued more in STEM fields than those who choose to remain in the non-STEM track. This sorting pattern resulted in a significant change in the peer quality of the pre-college academic tracks that is consistent with the predictions of a Roy model in which STEM is the most valued field, and skills are positively correlated. The results imply that admission concerns play a significant role in students' college field choices. However, students do not naively sort into less selective college fields. The choices they make are consistent with their relative position in the distribution of multi-dimensional skills. This suggests that students make relatively more informed and rational choices than the existing literature suggests.

WORKING PAPERS

Mobile Technologies and Health Literacy

Mobile technologies have considerable potential to improve access to health information. I study the extent to which the spread of mobile technologies improves health literacy in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). In particular, the study investigates the effect of the fast expansion of 2G and 3G mobile technologies on health literacy in the region. Using DHS data from 25 countries in SSA and a historical mobile network coverage map, I show that the widespread use of the technologies has led to significant improvements in health literacy in the region. Specifically, access to either technology significantly decreases misconceptions about diseases and health in general. 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 results in a larger gain in health literacy in places where it 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

This study estimates the extent of academic cheating in the high-stakes Ethiopian College Admission Exams. Using quasi-random exam room seats and exam booklet codes assignments for more than two million students, I study three outcome variables: subject-level exam score, the likelihood of college admission, and 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. Further, 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. I find substantial heterogeneity in cheating. Cheating is less likely to happen when the high-achieving student in the neighborhood is a female. On the other hand, cheating is more likely to happen when the cheating student and the high-achieving accomplice are acquaintances. I provide robustness checks. Finally, I study college-level outcomes such as drop-out and on-time graduation rates.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Labor Supply and Firm Performances: Evidence from College Admission Policy Reform in Ethiopia

Temperature Stress and Cognitive Performance

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

Birth Spacing and Children Outcomes: Evidence From NLSY [*Draft available on request*]

PRE DOCTORAL PUBLICATIONS

To be or not to be: The Dilemma of Africa's Economic Engagement with China and Other Emerging Economies, Journal of Africa Review, 5(2), 2013. (with Alemayehu Geda and Matias Aseffa)

Price Dynamics in Ethiopia, Ethiopian Journal of Economics 22(2), 109 - 130, 2015

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Columbia University, Research Assistant to Prof. Suresh Naidu 2019 – 2020

Columbia University,
International Research Institute, Research Assistant Summer 2017

Addis Ababa University, Lecturer 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

Lecturer, Addis Ababa University 2015 – 2016

Adjunct Lecturer, Addis Ababa University 2012 – 2014

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), LaTeX(Advanced), EViews

Languages: English, Oromo, Amharic

Citizenship: Ethiopian

REFERENCES

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