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Wealth, education, early feeding and overweight: Can we draw a relationship?

Alberto Prieto Patron and Patrick Detzel
Nestle Research Center, Switzerland

Recent studies have highlighted the role of education in the fight against excessive weight gain. However, the individual's eating and other habits typically develop early in life, hence introducing education after these patterns are formulated and its potential impact on weight gain. Changing people's habits has proven to be much more difficult than creating good habits at first. Therefore, instead of considering the effect of education on adults, we focused on the association between mothers' education, early feeding practices and children overweight controlling for wealth and other cofounders. We combined 45 nationally representative and standardized Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) spanning the period 2006-2015 which include more than 100,000 children. We split the child population into 3 age groups: 6 to 35 months old; 3 to 5 years old and; 6 to 9 years old. For children under the age of 3, there is 24 hours food intake information which is also included in the association analysis. We ran multilevel regression models with country and year fixed-effects: a binary logistic regression on overweight and a linear regression of z-score weight for age. Preliminary results showed that the strongest association between household wealth and child obesity rates was found in children from lower educated mothers. We failed to identify any early feeding type (from 6 to 35 months) which appears to provide a risk for overweight. These findings highlight the importance of education to break the cycle of developing unfavorable eating and health habits of children. Further work is in progress to test different econometric specifications.

Biography

Alberto Prieto Patron has completed his PhD at the University of Lausanne in Health Economics after finishing a Master's degree in Science of Economics at the University of Lausanne and a Bachelor's degree in Economics at the University of Guanajuato in Mexico. Previously working at Nestle Research Center, he has collaborated as external consultant with the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization. Additionally, he is the Programme Officer in Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunization (GAVI) and the Global Fund. He is originally from Mexico and back there, he has worked as a junior Legislative Advisor at the National Deputy Chamber.

alberto.prietopatron@rdls.nestle.com

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