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THE ADMINISTRATOR AND THE ADMINISTERED: DOES GENDER MATTER FOR EDUCATION?

Abstract:

Do female bureaucrats improve educational outcomes as compared to male bureaucrats? We study the enrollment of students into primary schools across the districts of India due to changes in district administrators or bureaucrats. Using administrative data on student enrollment from 2005-2017 and employment history and individual characteristics of bureaucrats, we estimate the effect of female administrators on student enrollment. Our results show that the districts, where female administrators are appointed, experience an average increase of 0.95% in enrollment in primary schools. Heterogeneity analysis shows that enrollment increases for higher grade classes, smaller and co-educational schools, schools located in rural areas and in states that perform relatively worse on women empowerment indicators, and only for female students. Results suggest that increased enrollment may be due to both improvements in infrastructure and the role-model effect. Although welfare improving, increase in enrollment is accompanied with un-intended consequences of increase in failure-rate of students at higher grades. The evidence demonstrates that individual characteristics of bureaucrats has important implications for development and providing equal opportunities for education for females.