



Mother education and children's well-being: evidence from four Pacific countries

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Paper summary in two slides (1/2)

Research questions

- ▶ Does a mother's education have a positive association with improved child well-being?
- ▶ What is the mechanism behind this association?

Background

- ▶ Females in the Pacific face challenges including domestic violence, vulnerable informal employment, high rates of childhood stunting and limited progress on achieving universal primary education.
- ▶ Extensive literature linking maternal education to better child development outcomes (e.g. Cuartas 2022, Jeong et al. 2017, McCoy 2015).
- ▶ No Pacific island studies, policy settings underdeveloped.



Paper summary in two slides (2/2)

Data and Method

- Use UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) household surveys for 2019-20.
- Descriptive (rather than causal) look at 4 pacific countries: Tonga, Kiribati, Samoa and Tuvalu.
 - Good sample of 6,714 with minimum 500 in any country.
- Follow Cuartas (2022) approach of linear estimation of 3 child well-being outcomes (incidence of stunting, overweight children and Early Childhood Development Index score) on mother's year of schooling and controls.
- Deploy IV (using peer mother education) in attempt to address identified endogeneity issues:
 - Unobserved ability, endowment effects, omitted variables on parenting approach

Contribution of this work

- Findings suggest that improving quantity of access to education, but not quality, may have limited returns on child wellbeing.
 - Additional education to the mother correlated with lower likelihood of stunting, higher Early Childhood Development Index scores, and with higher likelihood of children being overweight.



Some suggestions

Valuable (and understudied) topic. Has the potential for a welcome contribution to our understanding and that might be able to help inform decisionmakers

Five suggestions

1. Hard to claim anything definitive about mechanisms without a stronger link to causality.
2. Instead I'd suggest beefing up what you can report on the descriptives.
3. The descriptive story is stronger if able to compare the four countries' experience to the other 10 pacific island countries in MICS (individually or pooled) and broader experience.
Can you do anything about changes over time from previous waves with the survey?
4. A short assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the MICS dataset – and specifically how consistently it has been applied in study countries - would be handy.
5. Drafting needs a hard edit to remove the repetition.