

Impact of Conflict on Degree Choices: Evidence from Pakistan

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Abstract:

This paper tries to estimate the impact of conflict on degree choices at university level. By using admission data from 2014 till 2016 from a university in Pakistan, we estimate whether students exposed to conflict applied to university degrees differently compared to students not exposed to conflict. By using a linear probability model, and instrumenting for incidence of conflict to the distance between each district to the militant headquarters, we find that violence witnessed during higher secondary schooling led to a decline in the likelihood that a student applied to a maths degree by 10 per cent compared to a non-maths degree. Similarly, we find that violence witnessed during early years of schooling also led to a decline in the likelihood that a student applied to a maths degree by 38 per cent compared to a non-maths degree. A gender wise breakup shows that degree choices of only boys were impacted, whereas no significant impact was found on degree choices of girls. This disproportional impact of conflict on degree choices of boys but not girls is potentially attributed to the change in labor market prospects associated with each gender due to a violence-prone environment unfavorable for employment opportunities.

Keywords: Education, Conflict, Degree

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