The First 2,000 Days and Child Skills: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment of Home Visiting

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Abstract

Using a randomized experiment in Ireland, this study investigates the impact of sustained investment in parenting from pregnancy until age five on children’s development. Providing the Preparing for Life program, which incorporates a home visiting program, group parenting classes, and baby massage classes, to disadvantaged families raises children’s cognitive scores by one-third of a standard deviation on average (0.21-0.81) and non-cognitive scores by one-fifth of a standard deviation (0.19-0.41). The sizes of the effects exceed current meta-analytic estimations. Heterogeneous effects by gender indicate stronger cognitive gains for girls and stronger non-cognitive gains for boys. Results are robust to small sample size, differential attrition, multiple hypothesis testing, and contamination.

Keywords: empirics

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