

The Educational Toll of Anemia: Evidence from Adolescents in India

Abstract

A significant number of out-of-school adolescents and the increasing anemia prevalence pose a critical barrier to human capital development. We assess the impact of adolescent anemia on school enrollment in India by constructing a geographic panel dataset. We estimate a fixed effects instrumental variable model, leveraging the state-level beef ban legislation and baseline cluster-level anemia to generate instruments. We find that anemia reduces the likelihood of school enrollment by 3.9 percentage points. This effect is more pronounced among female adolescents, those from rural areas, and those residing in states with lower implementation of the national anti-anemia policy than their counterparts. Moreover, the effect is less pronounced for adolescents who are the children of the household head than for those who are not. Overall, the findings highlight the critical role of adolescent health, particularly anemia, in shaping educational outcomes and underscore the significance of targeted public health interventions to address structural health disparities.