

Propensity Scores and Bias in Political Participation: A Reevaluation

Jacob Lara
Texas AM University
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Abstract

Exploring the intricate link between college education and political participation, scrutinizing Kam and Palmer (2008) for their potential oversight of selection bias, and utilize propensity score matching to provide a nuanced understanding of education’s effect on civic engagement, laying a methodological groundwork for revealing education’s true influence on political activity.

Introduction

The paper scrutinizes the relationship between college education and political participation, using propensity score matching to address selection bias and provide insight into education’s real impact on civic engagement.

References

Henderson, J., Chatfield, S. (2011). Who matches? Propensity scores and bias in the causal effects of education on participation. The Journal of Politics, 73(3), 646-658. Kam, C., Palmer, C. (2008). Reconsidering the effects of education on political participation. The Journal of Politics, 70(4), 612-631.

Findings

The findings conclude a more accurate covariate balance as shown below with the ATC and ATT of the GenMatch method versus the previous matching method by Kam Palmer (2008).

Table: Covariate Balance of College Attenders and Nonattenders Before and After Matching

Covariate	KP P-Score	GenMatch	
		ATT	ATC
Student GPA	0.000	0.000	0.141
Student Gender	0.000	0.000	0.891
Student Race	0.005	0.000	0.229
Student Republican Party ID	0.000	0.000	0.324
Student Knowledge Index	0.000	0.000	0.093
Student College Plans	0.000	0.000	0.000
Parent Vote Participation	0.134	0.437	0.154
Parent Political Persuasion	0.000	0.000	0.854
Parent Participation Index	0.000	0.000	0.137
Parent Employment	0.000	0.000	0.670
Head of Household Education	0.000	0.000	0.179
Wife’s Education	0.306	0.000	0.140
Parent Income	0.148	0.000	0.000
Parent Homeownership	0.000	0.062	0.105
Parent Republican Party ID	0.000	0.000	0.078
Parent Knowledge Index	0.037	0.079	0.001

Methodology

The paper reexamines previous work on the impact of college education on political participation by employing advanced statistical methods to mitigate selection bias. Initially, the authors critique the application of propensity score matching in prior studies, identifying limitations in addressing overt bias. Subsequently, they introduce genetic matching alongside an extensive propensity score analysis, aiming for more accurate covariate balance. This methodological rigor is intended to provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the causal relationship between education and political activity.

Discussion/Conclusion

The study concludes that pre-adult conditions significantly influence college attendance, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the factors leading to higher education. It reaffirms the positive correlation between college education and political participation, suggesting the need for careful consideration of selection biases in observational research to accurately assess education’s impact on civic engagement.