Mini Op-Ed: Plus Version

**Name: [Matthew Luong]  
Topic: [11]**

*The following mini op-ed is based on the articles listed in the References section below.*

# **Mini Op-Ed**

Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are a powerful tool for establishing causality between interventions and outcomes. They can provide valuable insights into the impact of different interventions and help inform evidence-based decision-making for policymakers striving to implement effective and efficient policies. For example, RCTs have been used in countries like India to evaluate different interventions in the education sector. For evaluating policy effectiveness, RCTs are essential but may not be appropriate for all studies. By combining RCTs with other research designs, policymakers can learn about the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of subsidy programs and the optimal level of subsidy to achieve desired outcomes and improve the design and implementation of control programs. For example, empirical research on mosquito nets subsidy programs faces challenges due to observational data and selection bias, with limited variation in price due to subsidies. Randomized experiments can provide more reliable estimates of the impact of subsidy programs by manipulating prices and comparing outcomes. Additionally, the article emphasizes the importance of RCTs in designing welfare systems and measuring corruption in poorer countries. Despite RCTs becoming more popular in development economics and researchers becoming more experienced, they are still primarily used to test minor policy adjustments rather than significant reforms.

In addition to RCTs, they provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of strategies meant to increase patronage while addressing fairness, equality, and meritocracy issues. A recent news article illustrates the efforts made by The Chennai Metro Rail Limited to increase ridership by partnering with Chennai Super Kings and distributing free, non-transferable tickets to students, emphasizing the importance of patronage in driving public transportation. However, it should be noted that the patronage system can give rise to inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities, inefficient policies, and hinder political accountability and discourse on pressing issues.

**Word Count:** [293]

# **References**

Measure for measure; randomised controlled trials. (2015, Dec 12). The Economist, 417, 59-60. Retrieved from <http://proxy.lib.sfu.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/measure-randomised-controlled-trials/docview/1748568495/se-2>

Times of India (2023, April 4). CMRL banks on IPL, music events to boost patronage. TNN. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/cmrl-banks-on-ipl-music-events-to-boost-patronage/articleshow/99226626.cms>

# **Notes**

Tutorial notes:

First, I talked about how Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are a powerful tool for establishing causality between interventions and outcomes, and can provide valuable insights into policy effectiveness for evidence-based decision-making.

Second, I mentioned how Combining RCTs with other research designs can improve the understanding of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of subsidy programs and help policymakers optimize outcomes.

My third point I talked about Empirical research on subsidy programs for mosquito nets faces challenges such as observational data and selection bias, and RCTs can provide more reliable estimates of the impact of subsidy programs.

Then I wrapped up with how RCTs are becoming more popular in development economics, but they are still primarily used to test minor policy adjustments rather than significant reforms.

Logically I wanted to start by introducing RCTs as a powerful tool for evaluating policy effectiveness, followed by the benefits of combining RCTs with other research designs. The challenges of empirical research on subsidy programs are then presented, with RCTs offered as a solution. Finally, the text concludes by highlighting the growing popularity of RCTs while acknowledging their limitations in testing major policy reforms. Additionally, the text provides an example of the importance of patronage in driving public transportation and the potential issues it may create, demonstrating a separate but related point to the main discussion on RCTs.