

TOLGA BENZER
www.tolgabenzer.com
tolga.benzer@utu.fi
tolga.benzer@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Office Contact Information

Department of Economics
Turku School of Economics
University of Turku
Rehtorinpellonkatu 3
FI-20014 University of Turku

Personal Information:

Date of Birth: 30/05/1990
Citizenship: Turkish, Finnish(pending)
Tel.: +358-40-627-7881

updated: 9 September 2022

Employment:

Senior Researcher, **INVESThub**, University of Turku, 2022-
Postdoctoral Researcher, **Turku School of Economics**, University of Turku, 2022-

Education:

Ph.D. in Economics, **Aalto University School of Business**, 2022
Master of Arts in Economics and Finance, **Bogazici University**, 2015
Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering, **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**, 2013
Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering, **Istanbul Technical University**, 2013

Teaching and Research Fields:

Primary fields: Development Economics, Political Economics, Labor Economics
Secondary fields: Cultural Economics, Economic History

Working Papers:

“Removing Cultural Barriers to Education: State-run Islamic Schools and Girls’ Education in Turkey”

Abstract: This paper studies the impact of access to state-run modern Islamic schools on girls’ educational attainment, fertility, and labor market participation in Turkey. In contrast to secular schools, Islamic schools in Turkey offered a hybrid curriculum that also included religious instruction, a more conservative school environment, and a more tolerant attitude toward the use of headscarves. Islamic schools expanded rapidly in the mid-1970s, and girls achieved the legal right to attend these schools after a ruling by the secular highest administrative court in 1976. Exploiting the variation in exposure to Islamic schools across districts and cohorts, I find that girls exposed to Islamic schools were more likely to complete lower and upper secondary school, while the corresponding effects for boys were small and nonsignificant. Moreover, affected women had lower fertility and higher labor force participation during early adulthood. My results suggest that making educational institutions inclusive toward culturally excluded groups by eliminating cultural barriers to education help to keep these groups in school and integrate them into public life.

“Religious Schools and Voting: Evidence from State-run Islamic Schools and Political Islam in Turkey”

Abstract: This paper studies the impact of the establishment of state-run Islamic schools during the 1970s on electoral outcomes in Turkey. Exploiting the variation in exposure to Islamic schools across district centers and election years, I find that district centers with an Islamic school voted significantly

more for Islamist parties after exposure to Islamic schools. The effect appears after prolonged exposure to Islamic schools, once affected student cohorts came of voting age. The faster increase in Islamist support is more pronounced in district centers with initial lower attachment to secularist parties that were right-wing strongholds. Last, I provide evidence that the differential increase in support for Islamist parties was not driven by Islamic brotherhoods, geographic sorting, or economic liberalization. My findings indicate that policymakers with religious affiliations can utilize religious schooling as centers for the promotion of religious politics to achieve electoral success in secular electoral democracies.

“The Mission and the Brotherhood: The Role of Colonial Christian Missionaries on Contemporary Politics in Egypt”

Abstract: This paper studies the long-term impact of Christian missions in colonial Egypt on present-day electoral outcomes. I combine contemporary census and election data at the district level with historical information on the spatial distribution of Christian missionaries and Muslim Brotherhood branches in early twentieth-century Egypt. I document a robust negative association between proximity to historical Christian missions and the support for Muslim Brotherhood in the 2012 Egyptian presidential elections. I do not find any relationship between Christian missions and historical Muslim Brotherhood presence. Finally, I present evidence that missions’ lasting effect is partly explained by increased education and urbanization. My findings indicate that exposure to historical Christian missions may have repercussions in contemporary politics beyond political participation through voting behavior, therefore, shaping the modern-day political environment and institutions.

Presentations:

2021	ASREC Graduate Student Workshop, EEA-ESEM 2021, Helsinki GSE PhD Workshop, Helsinki GSE Lunch Seminar, Turku School of Economics
2020	Helsinki GSE PhD Workshop, Finnish Economic Association Conference
2019	Helsinki GSE PhD Workshop, Helsinki GSE Lunch Seminar

Teaching Experience:

Fall 2017-2020	Aalto University TA for Applied Microeconometrics I (graduate)
Spring 2018, 2019	Aalto University TA for Labor Economics (graduate)
Fall 2018	Aalto University TA for History of Economic Growth and Crises (graduate)
Spring 2020	Aalto University TA for Principles of Empirical Analysis (undergraduate)

Grants:

2021	The Finnish Cultural Foundation PhD Grant
2017-2020	OP Group Research Foundation PhD Grant
2019	HSE Support Foundation Summer School Grant
2016	Foundation for Economic Education PhD Grant

Computer Skills: Stata, QGIS, LaTeX, R (Basic)

Language Skills: Turkish (Native), English (Fluent), Finnish (Intermediate)