Early kindergarten, maternal labor supply and children’s outcomes: evidence from Italy

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November 16, 2017

Abstract

We analyze a reform that introduced early access to subsidized childcare for 2-year-old children in Italy, exploring the effects on several measures of maternal labor supply and on children’s cognitive outcomes. Our identification strategy exploits discontinuities in the eligibility rules and the staggered implementation of the reform. We find that the policy increased mothers’ participation in the labor market and lowered the reservation wage of the unemployed, thus increasing their likelihood of finding a job. At the same time, the newly introduced childcare arrangement did not affect children’s cognitive development, irrespective of their family background.

Keywords: Childcare; Female Labour Supply; Child Development; Public Services.

JEL Classification: H40; I21; J13; J21.

*The views expressed in the article are those of the authors only and do not involve the responsibility of the Bank of Italy. We are grateful to the co-editor, Magne Mogstad and to Rosario Ballatore, Andrea Brandolini, Alessandra Casarico, Federico Cingano, Rosa Ferrer, Francesco Figari, Jennifer Graves, Giacomo De Giorgi, Libertad Gonzales, Paola Profeta, Jesse Rothstein, Paolo Sestito, Marcos Vera-Hernández, Eliana Viviano, three anonymous referees and seminar participants at Bank of Italy, AIEL, EALE, ICEEE, COSME-FEDEA, Journées LAGV, IIPF, RES, Confindustria, Bocconi University, UPF, Exeter University, and the University of Padua. Finally, we would like to thank the ADELE Laboratory (Istat) andINVALSI for providing access to their data. All errors are ours.

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