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Trade Liberalization and Intergenerational Occupational Mobility in Urban India*

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Abstract

We exploit highly disaggregated occupation data to examine the impact of trade liberalization on intergenerational occupational mobility in urban India. We find that sons that live in urban Indian districts with a greater exposure to trade liberalization have a higher probability of being in a better occupation than their father. Taken together, our results allow us to make two new contributions to the literature on trade and inequality. First, we show that the same mechanism that causes greater cross-sectional inequality, higher relative demand for skill, also facilitates intergenerational occupational mobility. Second, we show that increased investment in education alone need not facilitate intergenerational occupational mobility. Instead, it only does so in urban districts where there has been a sufficient increase in the employment share of high-skill occupations.

Keywords: Trade and Labor Markets, Intergenerational Mobility.

JEL Codes: F14, F16, J62

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