

Abstract

This study leverages the educational reform of 1985 as a source of exogenous variation in female education, providing insights into the effect of maternal schooling on the probability of child mortality at age one or younger and age five or younger. Utilizing data from the five waves of the KDHS conducted in 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, and 2014, we employ a two-stage least-squares (2SLS) approach. Our findings indicate that women exposed to the 1985 policy change, on average, have approximately 1.87 more years of schooling compared to their counterparts. Moreover, each additional year of maternal schooling leads to a reduction in the likelihood of a child's death at age one or younger and at age five or younger by 0.6 and 0.9 percentage points, respectively. These results remain robust across a spectrum of robustness checks. Furthermore, we explore various potential mechanisms elucidating the influence of maternal education on child mortality. These mechanisms include examining fertility behavior, the likelihood of maternal engagement in the labor force, maternal health-seeking behaviors for children, and maternal involvement in household decision-making.

Keywords: DHS, maternal education, children mortality rates, Kenya, infant, under-five
JEL Classification Codes: I15, I25, J13