

# The impact of schools on the transmission of Sars-Cov-2: evidence from Italy

Salvatore Lattanzio (Bank of Italy)

Discussed by: Giulia Bovini (Bank of Italy)

# Takeaways from the paper

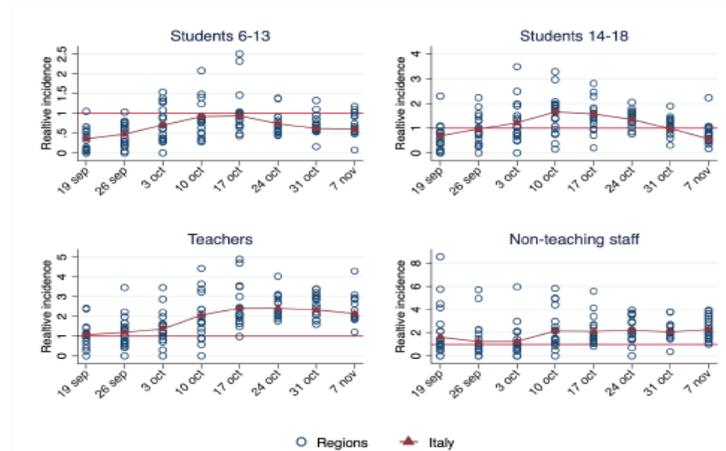
- The paper examines the role of schools for Covid-19 circulation in Italy by exploiting:
  - (i) the staggered re-opening of schools in Sep. 2020 across regions;
  - (ii) the natural experiment provided by Campania early school closures in Oct. 2020.
- The paper finds that:
  - regions that re-opened schools earlier witnessed over the Sep.-Nov. period a surge in total cases, test positivity rates and hospitalizations, but not in critically ill cases and deaths;
  - following school closures in mid-October, daily cases declined in Campania relative to its synesthetic control, especially among children aged 6-13;
  - infection incidence rates for teaching staff were higher than that for the general population in the fall of 2020.

# A few comments (1)

- School re-openings in mid-Sep. did not have a significant effect on ICU cases and deaths by Nov. 3
- To assess the benefits of school closures, it would be very important to understand whether this nil effect is driven by:
  - the concentration of additional cases among younger cohorts, less prone to become critically ill;
  - a too short time horizon, as it takes time for the infection to become severe or deadly.
- Hence, the paper could try to extend the analysis past Nov. 3 by comparing early and late re-openers that were subsequently subject to the *same* restrictions from Nov. 3 onward
  - E.g.: Piedmont re-opened schools on 14/09 and Calabria on 24/09; from Nov. 3 they were both classified as “red zones” until the end of the month
- It could also look at outcome variables at the incidence rates by age group that are only shown in the “Campania exercise”

# A few comments (2)

- There seems to be regional variation in the incidence of infections among students and teachers relative to the general population



- It could be interesting to explore whether part of this variation can be explained by differences in the characteristics of school buildings
- MIUR open data provides rich information about each school building (e.g. age, square footage, heating technology, reachability by public transportation, ...) that could be aggregated at regional level and correlated with relative incidence rates

# Mothers' labour market outcomes during the pandemic and support policies

Maria De Paola (National Institute of Social Security,  
University of Calabria, IZA)

Salvatore Lattanzio (Bank of Italy)

Discussed by: Giulia Bovini (Bank of Italy)

# Women and the Covid-19 crisis

- Examining the Covid crisis through the lens of gender is very important because:
  - effects in the labour market were particularly disruptive for workers in the service sector and on precarious contracts, who are in large part female;
  - prolonged school closures led to increased childcare responsibilities, which tend to fall disproportionately on women.
- It is therefore important to understand how demand and supply factors affected female employment throughout the crisis and whether there will be medium-term consequences

# The short-term earning penalty (1)

- The paper focuses on the non agricultural private sector and finds that: (i) short-term earnings penalty is larger for mothers than for fathers, but (ii) there are no large differences between mothers and non mothers



- Why is that the case?
  - Measurement error in the identification of non-mothers (maybe focus on women with high labour market attachment)?
  - Reduced labour demand from service sector matters more than reduced labour supply because of increased childcare duties?

# The short-term earning penalty (2)

- To give an idea about the relative importance of the various factors, it could be interesting to decompose the female-male gap in the earning penalty into what can be explained by:
  - gender differences in sectors and type of contracts;
  - number and age of children, take-up of parental leave.
- Running regressions separately for workers in “essential” and “non essential” sectors could also provide some interesting insight on what are the main drivers of the gap
- It would also be interesting to “include the 0s” into the regression, i.e. to also include month-years when a worker is not working at all, to assess the relative importance of adjustments along the extensive and intensive margins

# The take-up of family policies

- The paper explores the determinants of the take-up of families policies
  - *What?* Nothing, ad-hoc (partially paid) parental leave or baby sitter bonus?
  - *Who takes it?* The mother or the father?
- The result about leaves being more common among employees of large firms is very interesting for policy design, is it possible to explore that further?
- Among the determinants, it could be interesting to add:
  - beliefs about gender roles (can be constructed at the sector or geographical level using a Istat survey from 2011);
  - epidemiological situation: were leaves preferred in areas that experienced higher circulation of the virus?

# The impact of school closures on educational achievements

Tito Boeri

Paolo Pinotti

Discussed by: Giulia Bovini (Bank of Italy)

# Takeaways from the paper

- The paper explores the relationship between remote teaching and achievement as measured by INVALSI standardized tests, exploiting variation in school closures across regions and grades
- A difference-in-difference estimation yields mostly negative effects, although in some cases unstable across grades and specifications
- The effect of the pandemic on children' academic achievement and overall wellbeing is a crucial topic; as stressed by the authors, we need more data and more analysis

# Some aspects worth studying ...

- *From scores to skills:*
  - Fraction of students without the minimum skills and implicit dispersion
- *Heterogeneity of effects:* remote teaching increased the relevance of resources and support available at home
  - Family SES (current and past) and migration background
  - Quality of Internet connection in the ZIP code
- *What happened to previously academically resilient students?* How much in-person teaching and interactions help disadvantaged students to thrive?
- *Identify success stories and understand why*
- *Absences and drop-outs:* it would be more important than ever to merge INVALSI and MI data to study the socio-demographics characteristics and previous school career of students who *do not* take the test