Body Height and Labor Market Outcomes: Mendelian Randomization Results

Kamhong KAN
Director
Institute of Economics
Academia Sinica
Taiwan

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Abstract

This study examines the causal effect of body height on labor income. Positive relations between height and physio-economic outcomes, e.g., intelligence, income and health, have been found by scientists. However, these associations may not indicate causation. There may be unobserved variables, e.g., nutrition, occupation sorting or inborn health, etc., which are correlated with height and these physio-economic outcomes. Knowledge of the nature of the relationship between height and physio-economic outcomes is important for policy makers. If there is a causal effect of body height on physio-economic outcomes, then policies targeting the disadvantaged children should focus on their body height; otherwise, such public policies should focus on the problems causing the poor physio-economic outcomes. We identify the causal effect using genetic variants, i.e., Mendelian randomization, based on data from the Taiwan Biobank. Our findings indicate that for men, a one cm increase in body height raises income by about 2% and body height is unlikely to raise to labor market productivity. For women, body height does not have any effect on income.