



Radical Religious Rule and Human Capital: Evidence from the Taliban Control in Afghanistan (1996-2001)

By Nikita Brunner and Alexander Mihailov

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Department of Economics, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, RG6 6EL, UK

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Non-Technical Summary

- This paper estimates empirically in a robust way the effect of a radical religious rule, namely the Taliban control in most of the Afghan provinces between 1996 and 2001, on human capital accumulation.
- Human capital is proxied by three standard educational attainment variables, which are considered separately for women and men, as the Taliban rule particularly banned girls from schools after the age of 8 years.
- We use data for all provinces of Afghanistan, where two were not under Taliban rule in 1996-2001, and apply a difference-in-differences methodology, followed by a technique akin to an event study that goes deeper into some refinements.
- Our key contribution is to uncover that the negative human capital accumulation effect is mostly generated in the early childhood of women, and – less so – men: more precisely, at the start of schooling.
- Those girls who missed out on the chance of beginning education around the age of turning 6 years because of the Taliban ban were considerably disadvantaged in the long run.
- We quantify this “scarring” damage to be of the order of nearly 50% reduction in the mean value of their years of schooling, literacy probability and primary school completion probability, compared to women in the control provinces that were not under Taliban rule in 1996-2001.
- The policy relevance of our results is huge and immediate, in Afghanistan more directly where the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, forbid education of girls above sixth grade in March 2022 and banned women from all universities in December 2022, but also in many countries where radical religious doctrines still deprive many millions of children of their basic human right to education and, hence, better career and life prospects.

You can read the full paper [here](#).