

Authors

Alberto Chong
Georgia State University

Marco González Navarro
University of California, Berkeley

Dean Karlan
Northwestern University

Martín Valdivia
Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE)

Effectiveness and Spillovers of Online Sex Education: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Colombian Public Schools¹

Alberto Chong, *University of Ottawa*
Marco González-Navarro, *University of Toronto and J-PAL*
Dean Karlan, *Yale University, IPA and J-PAL*
Martín Valdivia, *Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo*

Abstract

Sexual health problems cause negative externalities from contagious diseases and public expenditure burdens from teenage pregnancies. In a randomized evaluation, we find that an online sexual health education course in Colombia leads to significant impacts on knowledge and attitudes but no impact on self-reported behavior, on average; although fewer STIs are reported for baseline sexually active females. To go beyond self-reported measures, we provide condom vouchers six months after the course to both treatment and control groups and estimate a 9 percentage point treatment effect (52% increase) on the likelihood of redemption. Using knowledge of friendship networks, we document a strong social reinforcement effect: the impacts of the course intensify when a larger fraction of a student's friends is also treated. In particular, when full sets of friends are treated we find significant reductions in sexually active, frequency of sex, and number of partners. Throughout the analysis we fail to find evidence of cross-classroom spillovers.

JEL CODES: O62, I2, H. Keywords: Online sex education, sexual health, field experiment.

¹ The authors acknowledge financial support from the Research Department and the Gender and Diversity Unit of the Inter-American Development Bank. This work would not have been possible without the sustained support of the ProTania staff in charge of implementing and monitoring the intervention, especially German López and Lyda Díaz. The authors also recognize the valuable research assistance from Angella García, César Mora, Juan Pablo Grampa, and Martín Sotoyoy, and project leadership by Rosamaria Sarmiento and Rachel Smith. All errors and omissions are the sole responsibility of the authors. All opinions are those of the authors, and not the lenders or participating organizations. The authors retained full intellectual freedom to report the results throughout the study.

Effectiveness and Spillovers of Online Sex Education: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Colombian Public Schools

Sexual health problems cause negative externalities from contagious diseases and public expenditure burdens from teenage pregnancies. In a randomized evaluation, we find that an online sexual health education course in Colombia leads to significant impacts on knowledge and attitudes but no impact on selfreported behavior, on average; although fewer STIs are

reported for baseline sexually active females. To go beyond self-reported measures, we provide condom vouchers six months after the course to both treatment and control groups and estimate a 9 percentage point treatment effect (52% increase) on the likelihood of redemption. Using knowledge of friendship networks, we document a strong social reinforcement effect: the impacts of the course intensify when a larger fraction of a student's friends is also treated. In particular, when full sets of friends are treated we find significant reductions in sexually active, frequency of sex, and number of partners. Throughout the analysis we fail to find evidence of cross-classroom spillovers.

October 01, 2013