

Seminari di Economia

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Ore 12:20 – Aula Magna

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Is there a Link between Body Mass Index, Students' Expectations and Cognitive Achievement?

Abstract – Empirical evidence consistently reveals that better educated individuals have lower average BMI and are less likely to become overweight or obese than those less educated, thus concluding that education protects against overweight and obesity. Also, some recent studies confirm the negative link between overweight and obesity and school outcomes. This evidence cast doubt on the direction of the causality. Disentangling whether education determines BMI or whether education is determined by BMI, especially in youth, or both are affected by pre-existing advantages is important for policy making. Using data from an online questionnaire to Catalan public secondary schools, we assess the impact of BMI on educational aspirations, intended enrolment in higher education, and cognitive outcomes. Our results show that overweight and obese adolescents are less likely to pursue higher education and perform worse in the school than their non-overweight counterparts. At this regard, we observe that being overweight is especially harmful for girls.