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Research Article

The Response of the Labor Force Participation Rate to an Epidemic: Evidence from a Cross-Country Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Coupled with data on the occurrence of historical epidemics, this study examines the impact of an epidemic on the labor force participation rate of the affected country. We find robust evidence that the outbreak of an epidemic alters human behavior and negatively affects the labor force participation rate. The negative impact could be attributed to cultural attitudes toward uncertainty avoidance. A country with a higher uncertainty avoidance index will suffer from a more significant decline in the labor force participation rate. The negative impact is more pronounced among males and younger workers in low- and middle-income countries.

KEYWORDS:

Epidemic

health

labor market

labor force participation rate

uncertainty avoidance

JEL CLASSIFICATION:

I12

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Additional information

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