Comparing China REACH and the Jamaica Home Visiting Program

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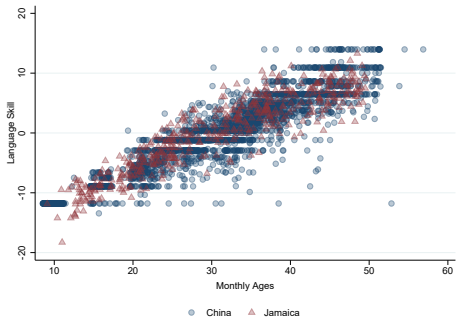
This paper summarizes empirical findings from a series of recent papers studying a replication of the Jamaica Reach Up and Learn home visiting program in China, China REACH, which is one of the largest early childhood interventions in the world.

Zhou et al. (2022) find China REACH intervention significantly improves children's multiple-skill development, especially for language and cognitive skills. The further question is how to compare the treatment effect sizes between the China REACH program and the Jamaica Reach Up and Learn program. To answer this question, we need to solve the issue that the two interventions use different tools for measuring skill development. For example, children in China REACH were evaluated by the Denver II test, and the Griffiths test was used to evaluate children in the Jamaican program. It is common that children from different interventions are evaluated by different assessment tools, which makes it hard to compare the intervention effects more precisely.

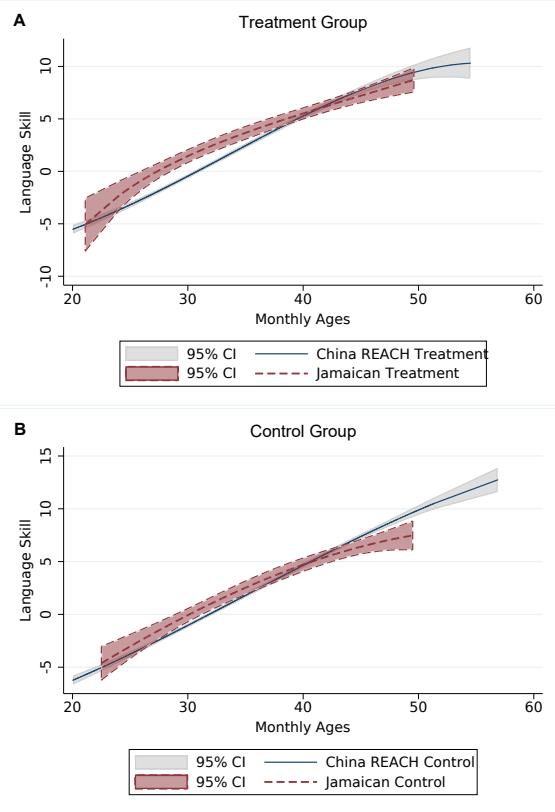
Figure 1: Language Skill Growth Curve Comparison



In this paper, we develop a method for comparing scores on different tests. To convert the assessment outcomes from different tests and link the different programs, we choose the items with the same content and examination criteria as anchors.

In Figure 1, we present the scatter plots

Figure 2: Language Skill Growth Curve Comparison by Treatment Status



of estimated individual latent language and cognitive skills for both the Jamaica Reach Up and China REACH interventions.

Figure 2 plots a fitted curve of language skill growth curves by treatment status for both programs. We find that the skill growth curves are not statistically significantly different between the China REACH and Jamaican Reach Up and Learn interventions.

China REACH intervention collects more detailed information than is available in the original program, which makes it feasible to extend current literature to measure latent skills and to understand the skill formation process. Heckman and Zhou (2022) find evidence that dynamic complementarity does not operate uniformly across ability groups. In China REACH program, Medium- and low-ability children display strong dynamic complementarity effects, but high-ability children do not. Dynamic complementarity in the China REACH program ensures that early investment improves the productivity of investment at later ages, especially for Medium- and low-ability children.

China REACH shows that the beneficial impacts from the Jamaican program can be reproduced in a program at scale at least through the early ages. Skill requirements for being a trained home visitor are low. The cost per pupil is roughly $500 per year. This is promising for the scaled program.

References

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