An Early Assessment of Extension of Compulsory School Attendance in Turkey: Evidence from a Natural Experiment

Mehmet Alper Dinçer
Bilge Erten

Discussant: Huzeyfe Torun

October 16, 2015

Research Questions:

- Does CSL in 2012 affect high scool attendance in Turkey?

- Does high school attendance have a causal effect on child labor and idleness?

Methodology:

- RDD using the CSL in 2012
  - extends compulsory schooling from 8 to 12 years
  - those born after January 1998 are treated
  - those born before 1998 are untreated

Identifying Assumption:

Two cohorts born one month apart do not display any systematic differences other than being exposed to the CSL or not.

Data:

- HLFS 2014
  - Used for most of the outcomes
  - Month of birth available
- HLFS 2013
  - Used for distance high school attendance outcome
- National Education Statistics
  - Used for descriptive statistics and supporting evidence
- 23,809 teenagers born in 1997-2000 from 2014 survey

Findings:

- The 2012 reform
  - increased high school attendance by 3.8 percent
    - Positive effect on vocational high school attendance
    - No effect or negative effect on academic high school attendance
  - reduced the likelihood of working for a wage in non-agricultural sectors
    - For boys reduces the likelihod of working for a wage in the industrial sector
    - For girls reduces the likelihood of working for wage in the services sector
  - reduced female idleness, had no effect on male idleness
    - tighter labor market for boys

COMMENTS

1. Framing of the Research Question:

- Does CSL in 2012 affect high scool attendance in Turkey?

- Does high school attendance have a causal effect on child labor and idleness?
  - The effects on schooling and child labor are simultaneously caused by the reform
  - Yet, we cannot comfortably argue that schooling causes lower child labor
  - Schooling, labor, and idleness are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive activities
  - Any policy that affects one, automatically affects others. This does not mean a causal relationship from one to others.

2. Methodology and Empirical Analysis:

- **Cutoff date**
  - January 1998 is not included in the treatment group, why? It s just like February 1998 in terms of being treated.
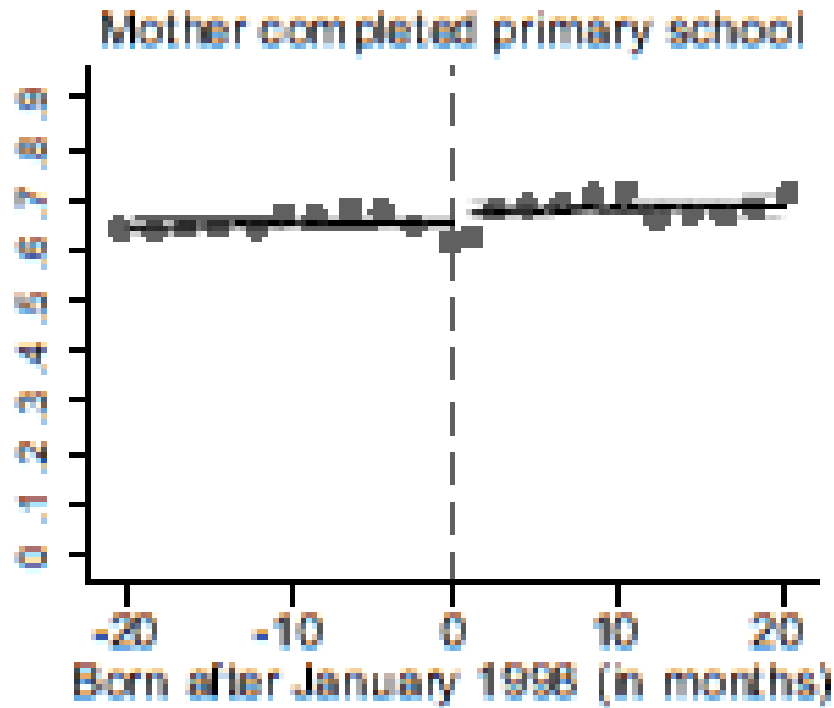
- **Identifying Assumption:**
  - «We conclude that the predetermined covariates appear balanced around the threshold, which validates our RD design.»
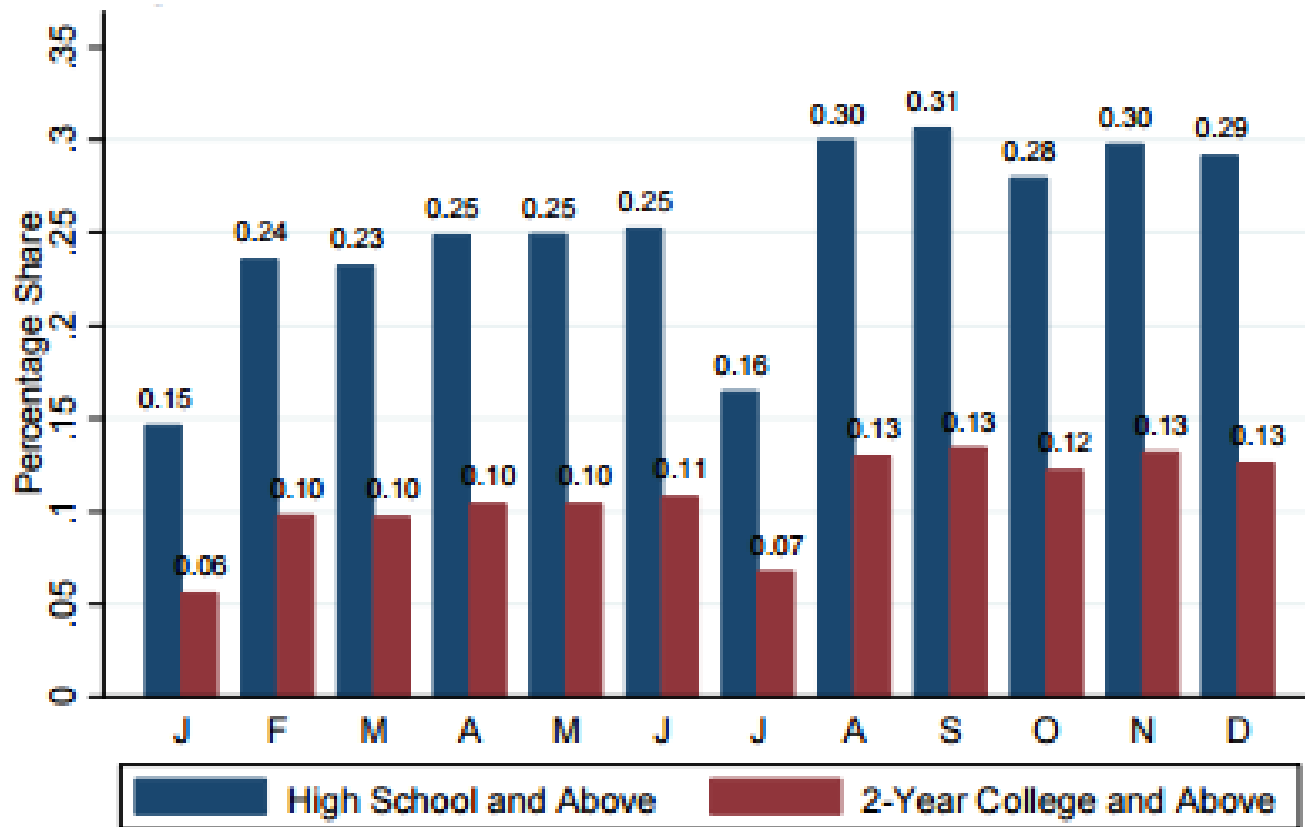
Graphs in Figure 3 are so small to see the pattern before and after the cutoff date

Also combining two months of birth in a single data point is againts the spirit of this exercise.

Predetermined covariates of December born individuals are significantly different from those born in January.
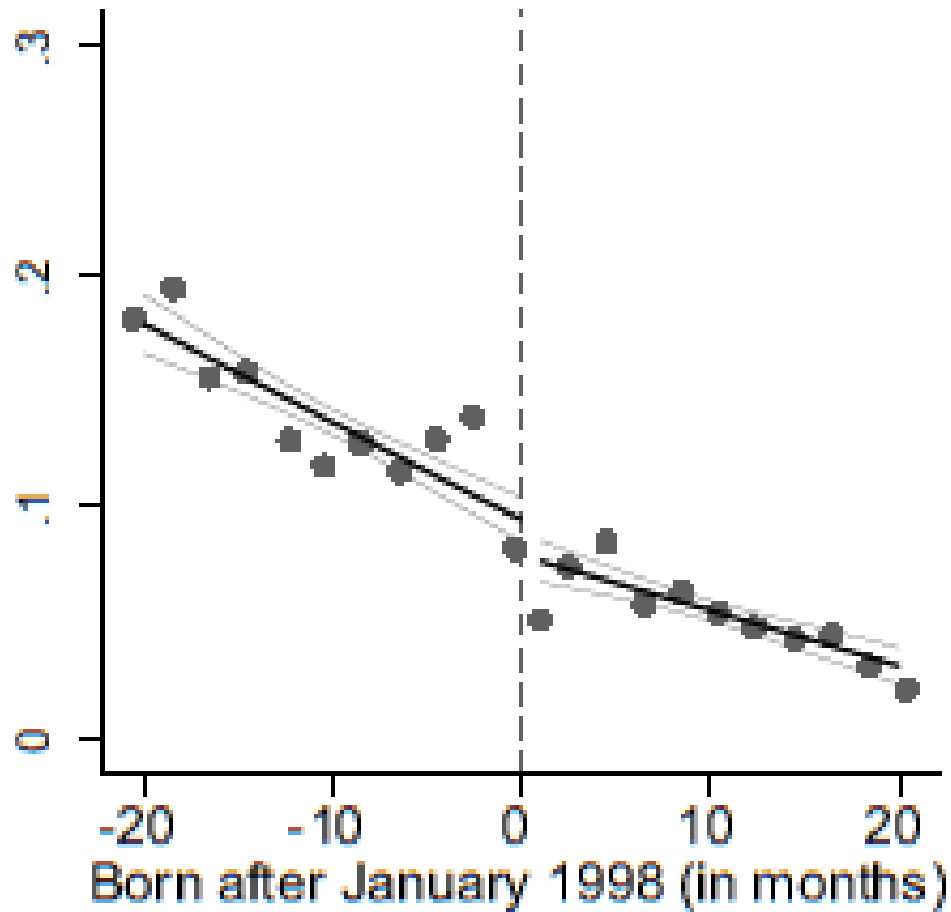

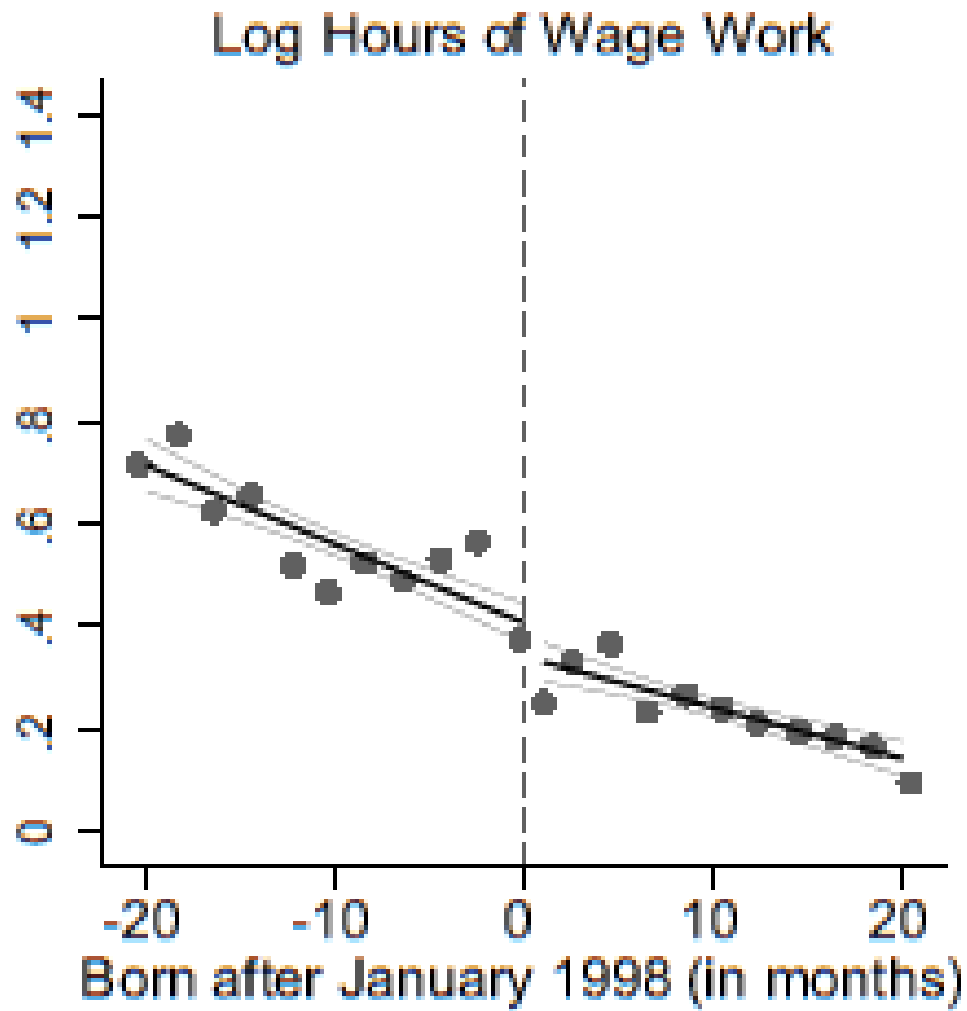Figure 5: **Educational attainment across months of birth.**

• **Controlling for Trends**

– The graphs in Figure 4 show that the forcing variable, month of birth, does not follow a smooth trend, especially for labor market outcomes

Comments

Non-agricultural Employment in Wage Work

Log Hours of Wage Work

Born after January 1998 (in months)

- In 2014, some of treatment group, those who were born in 1998 and 1999, did not complete 15, whereas all of the control group, those who were born in 1996 and 1997 had completed 15.

- Working age restrictions may contaminate the estimates. Treatment group may work less simply because half of them are not allowed to legally work anyway.

- **Minor Comments**
  - What about those who do not have parents at home, dropped from the sample?
  - Why Nuts 1 with 12 regions instead of Nuts 2 with 26 regions?