

LEARNING THE HARD WAY: THE EFFECT OF VIOLENT CONFLICT ON STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

We study the effect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on various education outcomes for Palestinian high school students in the West Bank during the Second Intifada (2000-2006). Exploiting within-school variation in the number of conflict-related Palestinian fatalities during the academic year, we show that the conflict reduces the probability of passing the final exam, the total test score, and the probability of being admitted to university. The effect of conflict varies with the type and the timing of the violent events the student is exposed to and it is not significant for students in the upper tail of the test score distribution. We discuss various possible transmission mechanisms explaining our main result. Evidence suggests a role for both the conflict-induced deterioration of school infrastructures and the worsening in students' psychological well-being due to direct exposure to violent events. (JEL: I20, O12, O15, F51)

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