

Seminar Economics of the Public Sector

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Agenda of Today

- 1 Tips for your Research Paper
- 2 Q&A

Paper Structure and Guidelines

A research paper has typically the following structure (minor variations are possible):

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Data and empirical strategy
- Results
- Robustness
- (Discussion)
- Conclusion

Maximum 20 pages including everything (title page, tables, figures, references, appendices) with reasonable font and margins.

Use an appropriate writing style, following academic standards (no colloquial expressions!).

Don't forget to add (correct) references when needed.

Introduction

- Present your research question and explain why it is important to answer it.
- Discuss the academic relevance of your paper.
- Provide a clear overview of:
 - ① Methodology
 - ② Results
 - ③ (Robustness)
- **Tip:** Put some extra effort in writing your introduction; first impressions are important (also) for academic papers!

Literature review

- ➊ Give an overview of the literature (empirical and theoretical) that is related to your paper.
- ➋ Look out for key papers, preferably from good journals.
- ➌ Briefly describe:
 - ➊ The main results
 - ➋ The data used
 - ➌ Potential limitations?
 - ➍ How your paper is different
- ➍ Discuss the economic mechanisms through which your independent variable may possibly affect your dependent variable.
- ➎ **Tip:** Do not forget to connect your research question to the relevant theoretical literature!

Data and empirical strategy

- First, describe the data, then the methodology used.
- Provide enough descriptive statistics of the data (histograms, tables, etc.). Think carefully about the most effective descriptives to include.
- Discuss the methodology you are using.
- Introduce the equation(s) that you will estimate.
- Explain the meaning of each term of the equation you write down (including subscripts).
- If you perform additional tests or regressions, explain these in detail.
- Link each regression/test with your research question (what is the coefficient of interest?).
- **Tip:** Do not forget to discuss potential sources of endogeneity (be specific!).
- **Extra tip:** Provide a table of descriptive statistics comparing the treated and control groups (if applicable).

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

		Children who lost a grandparent		
	(1) All children	(2) Treatment	(3) Control	(4) Difference
<i>Child characteristics</i>				
Age	11.46	11.46	11.45	-0.01
Boy (%)	49.74	49.65	49.69	0.04
Migrant background (%)	19.87	9.87	9.56	-0.31
Oldest child (%)	47.03	53.05	52.43	-0.62
<i>Household characteristics</i>				
No. of children	2.56	2.53	2.53	-0.00
Single-parent (%)	13.04	11.22	11.34	0.12
Disposable yearly income (€)	44,747	46,380	46,250	-130
N	1,101,571	17,214	16,808	34,022

Notes: Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the main background characteristics. Column 1 includes the baseline sample, which consists of the population of children who made the track placement test between 2005/2006 and 2013/2014. Column 2 and 3 include from the baseline sample those children who respectively lost a grandparent in the three months before and after the track placement test is conducted. Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Results

- Present and discuss your main results and the results of any additional tests you execute.
- Interpret the estimated coefficients (are the coefficients of interest significantly different from zero?).
- It is fine if you do not find significant coefficients. In this case, is it a precisely estimated zero?
- Discuss how the results help you answer your research question.
- **Tip:** When interpreting results, focus not only on statistical significance but also on economic significance:
 - ① How many standard deviation changes in Y are associated with one standard deviation change in X ?
 - ② Is the magnitude of your results relevant for a policy maker?
 - ③ How do your findings compare with similar studies or policies?
- **Extra tip:** Explore the heterogeneity of the treatment effect (for example, by adding interaction terms or performing analysis on sub-samples).

Robustness

- Reflect on the choices made to obtain your final results (e.g., dropping outliers, including certain controls, selecting specific years).
- Assess whether your results are robust to these choices.
- Ideally, your robustness checks should also address potential threats to identification.
- Explain what obtaining similar (or different) results with alternative specifications implies.
- **Tip:** Be critical of your own approach. If your results are not robust to different specifications, provide an explanation for these differences.

Discussion and conclusion

- Are your results surprising given your expectations and the existing literature? Explain why.
- Identify any endogeneity issues or limitations that were not addressed in your robustness checks.
- Conclude by summarizing your results and situate them in the literature.
- Discuss the main takeaways of your paper and their implications for policy.
- **Tip:** Consider the pros and cons of the model you have chosen (e.g., what are the issues with SCM?)

Q & A

