



Family planning and the mortality risk of children: What can we learn from the Indonesian experience?

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The Indonesian family planning program is regarded as a highly successful program of its kind that dramatically increased contraceptive prevalence within a short period of time. Using the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS), this paper empirically tests the relationship between contraceptive use and infant and child mortality. Access to modern contraceptives allows couples to attain optimal spacing between births and restrict excess fertility. This could affect infant health by improving the health of the mother at the time of delivery. Furthermore, better timing and spacing of births would allow for better allocation of resources towards children, leading to positive child health outcomes and lower likelihood of death. As a single equation regression framework to estimate the effect of contraceptive use on mortality outcomes of children can lead to biased estimates due to unobserved individual heterogeneity, a bivariate probit framework is used with equations for both mortality and contraception. Furthermore, the presence of village contraceptive distribution centres is used as an exclusion restriction for identification of the role of contraceptive use on infant and child mortality. The results show that contraceptive use is associated with a four percentage reduction in the likelihood of child mortality, but there is no relationship between contraceptive use and infant mortality. The ability of couples to plan births and better allocate resources towards children through contraceptive use lowers the risk of child mortality, but access to contraceptives by itself plays a limited role in lowering infant mortality as long as the birth process remains risky