Abstract

This dissertation contributes to the ongoing dialogue on the credibility revolution in economics, a movement initiated by Edward Leamer's critical examination of empirical research in the early 1980s. This work delves into the core issues of meta-research, replicability, and the prevalence of publication biases and p-hacking within the published research through a series of detailed analyses. The first study revisits Burgess and Pande's influential analysis on the impact of India's state-led bank expansion on poverty, revealing that the purported significant effect diminishes when accounting for more comprehensive policy contexts. This finding under- scores the necessity of considering external policy influences to ensure the robustness of empirical results.

The second investigation analyzes the Economic Policy Uncertainty (EPU) indices of Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, finding that apparent trends in these indices stem from methodological choices rather than actual economic uncertainty. By applying alternative normalization techniques, this study demonstrates how such methodological nuances can lead to markedly different interpretations of economic phenomena, such as Brexit or the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lastly, an expansive analysis of 20,000 studies assesses the extent of publication bias and p-hacking in economic research. This evaluation reveals that p-hacking is notably more prevalent than previously understood, suggesting a significant contribution to the overall selection bias in the literature. I find that selective reporting within studies is more prevalent than publication bias arising from selection among studies. This finding underscores the considerable influence of practices such as p-hacking and method-searching, suggesting that they contribute significantly to selection bias in the economic literature and could affect the perceived reliability of published findings.

This dissertation advocates for a shift within the research community towards embracing replication studies, publishing findings regardless of the significance levels, and possibly adopting pre-registration practices to guarantee publication. Such measures are proposed as essential steps to discourage p-hacking and enhance the credibility of economic research.

Title: Essays on Research Reproducibility in Economics