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Lieu(x)

Pôle Tertiaire - Site La Rotonde - 26 avenue Léon Blum - 63000 Clermont-Ferrand

Salle 212

Séminaire recherche. Polygyny and Farm Households'
Resilience to Climate Shocks.

Polygyny and Farm Households' Resilience to Climate Shocks

RÉSUMÉ

Climate change and weather shocks pose significant challenges to household food and income security, especially in communities dependent on rainfed agriculture for their livelihoods. Interestingly, observational evidence shows that countries most affected by climate shocks such as drought are overrepresented in those still reporting a high prevalence of polygyny---a marriage practice that has virtually disappeared in most regions but persists in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, the literature has only given minimal attention to this feature of polygyny's prevalence. This paper provides the first evidence on whether rural communities where polygyny is prevalent are more resilient to the adverse effects of drought. In so doing, we leverage the spatial variation in polygyny's prevalence across Mali's rural communes and the quasi-randomness of drought episodes to explain polygyny's prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa. We find that households are more resilient to drought-induced crop failure in Mali's communes where polygyny is more prevalent. Moreover, we demonstrate that, in such communes, drought increases households' use of hired labor and raises the incidence of child marriage. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that polygyny generates mutual insurance opportunities in village economies faced with the adverse effects of climate shocks such as drought.



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