

Impact of HIV/aids epidemic on human capital development in West Africa

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Abstract

West Africa occupies the third position with respect to the burden of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) globally, after Southern and East Africa. About 5 million adults and children are infected with the disease in the subregion, while HIV prevalence in the general population hovers around 2% and 5%. This paper attempts to investigate the impact of HIV/AIDS epidemic on human capital development in 11 West African countries over the period 1990 to 2011. The study used a dynamic panel data modeling approach, using first difference, difference generalized methods of moment, and system generalized methods of moment estimating techniques. Four measures of HIV/AIDS and 2 human capital measures were used in the study. The findings revealed that HIV/AIDS pandemic had negative and significant impact on human capital in West Africa. However, the statistical significance was more pronounced on life expectancy (a measure of human capital), while the negative impact on school enrolment (another human capital measure) was not significant. It is therefore recommended that the spread of HIV/AIDS disease in West Africa should be effectively controlled, while the number of infected persons undergoing antiretroviral therapy in the subregion should be increased to a near 100% coverage.