Evaluating Public Policies And Implementation Using Regression Discontinuities

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Developing nations decision-makers are under increasing pressure to provide credible evidence on effectiveness of publicly funded social assistance programs. Since access to range of social services and benefits is usually need-based, a plausible evaluation strategy is the regression discontinuity design (RDD). In this paper we provide an overview of the RDD approach to evaluation policy interventions, discussing its particular strengths as well as highlighting practical issues related to operationalization of RDD. Of salience for public policy, the paper disambiguates a particular strength of this study design that has been hitherto underappreciated in the literature, its unique ability in legitimating rigorous use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of impact assessment to inform and in turn be informed by the theory and practice of policy implementation. Finally, in light of the very rapid burgeoning of the RDD literature, we provide an "RDD Cheatsheet" using a range of software tools in *R*, that gives an easy to follow checklist when designing, implementing and reporting evaluations based on this design in developing country settings.