



October 2020

Topics for Bachelor Theses at the chair of Prof. Vollmer

The list below gives topic ideas for Bachelor theses. The thesis can be written in German or English. Bachelor theses are typically a literature review of the theoretical and empirical research on the topic.

In case you are interested in writing your thesis on one of the proposed topics please contact the respective PhD student directly via Email. You can also make your own proposition. In the latter case please choose the PhD students working in a closely related field or contact Prof. Vollmer (Sebastian.vollmer@wiwi.uni-goettingen.de) directly.

For Master thesis requests please contact Prof. Vollmer directly.

Lisa Bogler (lisa.bogler@cemis.uni-goettingen.de)
Participatory learning and action <i>Participatory learning and action (PLA) programmes engage local communities in prioritising problems and developing solutions to address these. Describe the concept behind this approach to development and the success or failure of past PLA programmes. What is the effect of PLA programmes on health and economic outcomes? What are factors that are relevant to the success of PLA?</i>
Influencing hygiene behaviour <i>Many interventions that aim to improve health require a change in behaviour. What type of health interventions have been successful or unsuccessful in changing hygiene behaviour (e.g. hand washing with soap or open defecation)? What makes these interventions successful? A literature review on this topic could focus on low- and middle-income countries or specify a certain behaviour change.</i>
Teachers' attendance in school <i>Teachers' absenteeism is a challenge in many low- and middle-income countries. What factors influence whether teachers come to school to teach? What type of interventions have been successful or unsuccessful in reducing rates of teachers' absenteeism?</i>
Christian Bommer (christian.bommer@wiwi.uni-goettingen.de)
Causality and quasi-experiments in public health research <i>Quasi-experimental methods may help to generate causal estimates if randomized controlled trials are infeasible. Recent studies have therefore advocated for their use in epidemiological and public health research. Students will summarize the debate on causal inference in public health settings and discuss the strength and weakness of quasi-experiments in this context.</i>
The political economy of humanitarian aid <i>Political and economic bias in developing aid is well-documented. Students will investigate whether these biases extend to humanitarian aid and discuss in what ways humanitarian</i>

aid and developing aid may differ.

The global burden of disease

The definition of fair and balanced public health goals requires a good understanding of the relative suffering caused by different diseases across populations. The “Global Burden of Disease” project attempts to meet this standard by providing transparent epidemiological estimates for a wide range of diseases. Students should critically examine ethical, technical and practical aspects of this project and discuss whether it indeed can contribute to a fair global health agenda. Finally, students should investigate to which extent these estimates are actually able to influence national and multilateral decision makers in practice.

Nitya Mittal (nitya.mittal@uni-goettingen.de)

Which health information is the most effective?

Many health interventions designed by state or researchers have an information component. This component varies across interventions on many counts, such as kind of information provided, the targeted recipient of the information, the channels through which information is provided and the intensity of information dissemination. The evidence on effectiveness of the information on improving health outcomes is mixed. The student should analyse the literature to draw conclusions about the most effective intervention, which has a potential of replication in different settings, and what are the pitfalls with other interventions (focusing on interventions targeted to improve health outcomes of young children).

Health outcomes – what matters most

While there is an agreement on what factors affect health outcome, there is no consensus on their relative importance. Additionally, it is accepted that these factors are complementary to each other, and focusing on one is not adequate. However, which combinations are best, is not well known. The thesis should answer the above question based on existing literature.

Ida G. Monfared (ida.gohardoustmonfared@uni-goettingen.de)

CF 2007, a high profile flawed model

Since the publication of Christakis and Fowler in 2007, their work has received a large amount of appraisals as well as criticism. Despite its flaws, how this work gained such a popularity in the first place? This should be followed by a systematic critical review of arguments against and pro the CF model and their validity. What are recent proposed models that might explain the relationship between network and health behaviour and what is the evidence that they are better than the one proposed by CF?

Why obesity is becoming an epidemic?

Spread of obesity seems to be the consequence of food industrialization. On the social side, however, consumers’ behaviour has equally changed. Based on key points of change in food industry alongside literature from changes in public behaviour, a bachelor thesis is expected to gather evidence from developed countries, flagging historic turning points and summarise causal theories proposed in literature. This should be followed by identifying patterns in developing countries where there is a risk for obesity to become an epidemic in the close future.

Success and Failure of Health Policies

To start, a bachelor thesis should review and summarise the health policies that helped to reduce tobacco consumption, their success rate globally and with examples from various countries. Then focusing on recent policies on promoting healthy eating and exercise, the question is that is it plausible to expect the same rate of success for these policies in combating obesity? The argument should be supported by examples and evidence from field experiments.

Chicgoua Noubactep (cnoubac@gwdg.de)

Iron supplementation for the treatment of iron deficiency: The state-of-the-art knowledge

The bachelor thesis should systematically summarise evidence on the effectiveness of iron supplementation for the treatment of iron deficiency. It should consider metabolic channels as well as implementation of iron supplementation programmes.

Anna Reuter (anna.reuter@uni-goettingen.de)

Parental health shocks and children's education

Parental health shocks disturb the household's resource allocation immensely and can thus affect children's school attendance and educational attainment. A bachelor thesis on this topic should analyze how children's education can be and actually is affected with respect to a specific type of health shock and/or study region.

Does provision of information impact knowledge?

Providing the population with information has become immensely cheap over the past decades. This triggered a large number of information interventions. However, the effectiveness of these interventions seems to be mixed. A bachelor thesis on this topic should systematically review the evidence on the impact of information interventions on knowledge and could focus on specific targets (e.g. within education or health) or designs (e.g. text messages, public announcements or letters).

Patterns of information avoidance

Coming from traditional microeconomic models, we would assume that individuals would prefer to be better informed such that they can make optimal decisions. In reality, we regularly observe an avoidance behavior: People prefer to not know whether they have a serious disease or how healthy their food is. A bachelor thesis on this topic should systematically review the patterns of information avoidance observed in a specific domain (e.g. obtaining health status information).

Ann-Charline Weber (ann-charline.weber@uni-goettingen.de)

Improving access to basic education in countries of the Global South

In some regions, there is still a substantial number of school-aged children not in school. Many different interventions try to improve access, increasing enrolment and attendance. A bachelor thesis can review existing literature, comparing the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different interventions.

Improving learning outcomes in primary schools in countries of the Global South

In several regions, the quality of public basic education is poor and test scores are often low. Many different interventions try to improve learning outcomes, the results are mixed. A bachelor thesis can review existing literature, comparing effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different interventions.

Community involvement in improving basic education

Should communities be involved in the management of schools? And if so, how?

Many interventions try to involve the community in the delivery of public services with the aim to enhance sustainability and need-based allocation of funds. This approach is also used in different interventions targeting basic education. However, evidence about the effectiveness is mixed. A bachelor thesis can review existing literature to answer these questions.