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Does Uneven Proximity to Higher Education Oases Drive Inequality in Higher Education? The Application of Coarsened Exact Matching in Taiwan

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In this study, we use village-level data to examine the impact of geographic proximity on inequality in higher education. We define higher education oases as the area collectively constructed by all the universities within a 15-km travel distance radius from research-intensive universities. Based on the coarsened exact matching method, we identified villages with comparable socioeconomic statistics that differed only in terms of their proximity to highly concentrated higher education resources, thus mimicking a treatment and a control group. Evidence based on this quasi-experimental design shows that villages located in higher education oases have a significantly higher percentage of residents aged 25–34 who have earned a master's degree or above compared to those not located in higher education oases. However, there is no significant difference in the percentage of residents aged 20–24 with a bachelor's degree or above

between the two groups of villages. This study sheds light on the impact of the geography of opportunity on inequality in higher education in Taiwan.

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