Gendered Social Norms
What do we know and what are we doing to change them?

____________________

Ashwini Deshpande,
Professor of Economics and Director, CEDA
Ashoka University
What do we know about the role of norms when it comes to women’s outcomes and gender equity in South Asia?

South Asia: “patriarchal, patrilocal, patrilineal belt” OR “belt of classic patriarchy”

Despite differences in religious practices, economic structures and political regimes, common features:

- the practice of female seclusion,
- patrilineal inheritance,
- patriarchal family norms,
- patrilocal marriage patterns,
- strong son preference & discrimination against daughters.
Participation in Economic Activities: LFP

- India: two issues related to FLFP numbers
- Low level
  - Unpaid work in family enterprises not counted: economic work, not “care”
  - Constraints?
- “Norms that Matter” (work with Naila Kabeer, 2020): Reproductive Labour: Domestic Chores (Link)
- Kabeer, Deshpande and Assad (2019): Women's access to market opportunities in South Asia and the Middle East & North Africa: barriers, opportunities and policy challenges. (Link)
Norms: The Male Breadwinner Model

Note: This figure presents the proportion of men who would prefer the women in their family to stay at home and take care of the house and children.
Female to Male ratio of time devoted to unpaid work

- India (and Pakistan) among the least egalitarian
- Indian women do at least 10 times as much domestic chores as men.
- Bangladesh much better: effect of increased FLFP?

Source: OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (2014)  OurWorldInData.org/women-in-the-labor-force-determinants/ • CC BY
Discontinuous Work:
“Dropping Out, Being Pushed Out or Can’t Get In?” (with Jitendra Singh)

- Decline: no. of women hasn’t declined, time working has
  - Dropping Out, being pushed out or can’t get in? (work with Jitendra Singh)
  - 14.5% over 4 years; 44% at least once
- [Link for paper]
M/F LFPR, 2019: South Asia remains a challenge as far as FLFP is concerned

LFP by Sex and Region: 1990-2013:

Ratio of female to male labor force participation rates (%), 2019
The female-to-male ratio of labor force participation rates is calculated by dividing the labor force participation rate among women, by the corresponding rate for men. The labor force participation rate is defined as the proportion of the population ages 15+ that is economically active. All figures correspond to modeled ILO estimates (see source for details).

Source: World Bank based on data from the International Labour Organization
OurWorldInData.org/female-labor-force-participation-key-facts - CC BY

FIGURE 1: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE BY SEX AND REGION, 1990-2013
Time spent on unpaid work, per day, men vs women

Average minutes spent on unpaid work or study, per day, by sex (ages 15-65). Unpaid work activities include: routine housework; care for household members; child care; adult care; care for non-household members; volunteering; travel related to household activities; other unpaid work. Estimates come from time-use surveys and include both weekdays and weekends. The survey years differ across countries. See the source description for the survey year used for each country.
Gender Gap in Leisure Time

Gender gap in leisure time

Average minutes spent on leisure activities, per day, by sex (ages 15-65). For most countries surveys were conducted between 2009 and 2016, but surveys for some countries are older.

Source: OECD Gender Data
Note: Leisure activities include: sports, attending events, visiting friends, watching TV and other leisure activities.

CC BY
Weekly hours dedicated to home production in US, by gender, 1900 to 2005

Weekly hours worked for the population older than 14 years. Home production includes: planning, purchasing goods and services, care of children and adults (in and outside the household), general cleaning, care and repair of the house and grounds (including yard work, but excluding gardening), preparing and clearing food, making, mending, and laundering of clothing and other household textiles.

Source: Ramey and Francis (2009)

OurWorldInData.org/working-hours/ - CC BY
How do norms interact with other barriers to gender equity?

- Gender parity in the world of work is unlikely to be achieved without parity in unpaid work within the domestic domain.
- Key drivers for gender parity in the labour market:
  - Importance of policies which reduce the burden of, and redistribute responsibility for, unpaid domestic work.
  - Along with the policies to close gender gaps in education, financial and digital inclusion, legal protection.
Changing Norms: Son Preference in India

• Son Preference: material basis: patrilocality + old age support
• Daughters “paraya dhan”. Spending on them akin to “watering the neighbour’s garden”
  • adverse sex ratio, female foeticide, lower attention to female health; discriminatory property rights:
• India: lower fertility, increasing education (M-F gaps significantly narrowed, educational hypogamy)
• Paradox: strong SP + small family size: either SSA OR “unwanted? daughters
• Change in S. Korea: increasing FLFP, urbanisation: daughters can provide old age support as well as sons.
• Challenge in India: low FLFP, economic independence
Can norms be changed and how?

- How did norms change in Europe and the US? 20th century: ↑ in LFPR of married women (extensive margin: no. of women) but intensive margin?
- 21st century: increase plateaued + intensive margin (hrs worked) ↓
- Increased female LFP led to changes in the domestic sphere, or the other way around?
- Employment: Need focus on demand side, not supply-side constraints.
- Better data: measure hours worked for pay; measure “who does work” (DMAS pilot)
- What are the constraints that prevent jobs from going to women?
  - Gender discrimination (overt or covert; direct or indirect): sensitization and stronger laws
  - Transport, sanitation bottlenecks
- Women increasingly involved in rural SH groups+ livelihoods programmes
- Representation of women in decision making positions: govt & corporate