

SESSION 2: MEASURING SOCIAL NORMS

9th South Asia Economic Policy Network Conference
on Social Norms and Gender Equality

Isis Gaddis, May 12, 2022

Recap of the session

- 4 excellent and insightful contributions
- Cover a broad range of topics
 - RCT of an intervention to increase teachers' support for women's rights through a visual narrative and gender rights curriculum (Mehmood, Naseer and Chen 2022; Pakistan)
 - Analysis of the intersectionality of caste, class and gender; pluralistic ignorance (Dasgupta and Datta 2022; India)
 - Validation study of the G-NORM (Gender Norms) scale to measure gender norms (Sedlander et al. 2022; Nepal)
 - Analysis of the relationship between gender role attitudes and employment outcomes / between mobility constraints and sexual harassment in public spaces (Mancini and Orlando 2022; Pakistan)
- Common thread: novel measures of gender role attitudes/social norms on gender
 - Survey measures of gender attitudes, Implicit Association Tests (gender IAT) and revealed preference measures (i.e., teachers' willingness to sign petitions, students' behavior in strategic games)
 - Vignettes
 - G-NORM scale
 - Specialized modules in multi-topic household surveys
- Testimony of recent progress towards the measurement of gender role attitudes and social norms on gender

Reflections on policy implications

- Even short interventions can shift gender role attitudes and behaviors
 - A one-time movie screening + discussion + Q&A (< 5 hours in total) in Pakistan was able to affect teachers' and students' attitudes on gender and students' behaviors in strategic games 10 months post interventions
 - Points to the important role of TV/social media
- Need to engage men and boys
 - Study in Peshawar shows husbands, fathers and fathers in-law are the key decision makers on women's work, education and marriage decisions
- Intersectionality matters and requires consideration in development programming
 - Studies for Nepal and India both show that gender norms vary significantly by caste, wealth, etc.
- Collectively, the studies (and related literature) suggest that we may have to rethink how we roll out and target development programs
 - More 'big push' interventions that can lead to a new (more egalitarian) equilibrium
 - Though this may conflict with other principles, e.g., equitable geographic targeting

Areas for future research

- How to avoid social desirability bias in surveys in contexts with traditional norms?
 - Evidence that women often respond negatively to survey questions about “work” and “employment” (even if engaged in these activities) if there is stigma attached
 - May lead to an overestimation of the relationship between social norms and employment (or other relevant outcomes)
- What norms are binding for specific outcomes?
 - Different norms can produce similar outcomes (e.g., male breadwinner model, female seclusion → employment)
- Who is the ‘reference group’ for a given social norm? Does it change with media access?
- At what ages are norms most malleable? What is the best age to intervene?
 - Recently, a lot of emphasis on adolescents. What about younger children?
- What is the relationship between legislative reforms and social norms change?
 - Suggestive evidence that laws ‘lead’ social norms, but legislative reforms often also reflect societal change
 - Is enforcement the missing link?
- Why are regressive gender norms more binding for some outcomes than others?
 - Recent South Asia Economic Focus chapter ‘Reshaping Norms’ argues that regressive gender attitudes have not been a binding constraint for women’s educational attainment (in several South Asian countries)
 - What makes education so different from employment?



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