

Unbundling Female Empowerment

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20th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development

ISI Delhi – December 18-20 2025

Global Development Policy Agenda



Global Development Policy Agenda



Global Development Policy Agenda



Press release

New Generation Equality accountability report reveals record-breaking USD 50.3 billion in gender equality commitments

The multistakeholder initiative has yielded groundbreaking progress on global women's rights since its launch in 2021.

19 SEPTEMBER 2024

Global Development Policy Agenda

Western states increasingly allocated substantial portions of official development assistance (ODA) to gender-related initiatives

- First Nordic countries and Canada
- France, Canada, Luxembourg, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands
- *Feminist Foreign Policy*



Policy Explosion

Past few decades have witnessed unprecedented initiatives:

- Legal reforms
- National-level mandates
- Local-level policies
- NGO driven interventions

Focused on all domains of female empowerment

- Economic empowerment
- Political empowerment
- Social empowerment

Significant research by economists devoted to empirically identify consequences of these programs and initiatives

Policy Explosion - India

73rd Amendment to the Constitution (1993)

- 1/3 Reserved Seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions — Now 1/2
- Women's Reservation Act (2023): 1/3 Lok Sabha

Gender quotas

- IITs: *Supernumerary Seats* (SSS)
- Police Recruitment & Military
- MGNREGA

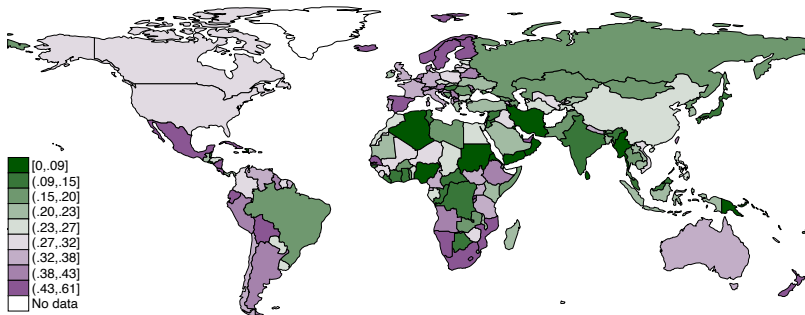
Laws:

- Prohibiting: Dowry (1961); Child marriage (2006); Pre-natal diagnostics (1994); IPV (2005)
- Equal remuneration (1975); Inheritance (2005); Maternity leave (1961); Workplace harassment (2013)

Numerous government-led programmes & countless NGOs devoting their efforts to the plight of women and girls

Female Political Participation

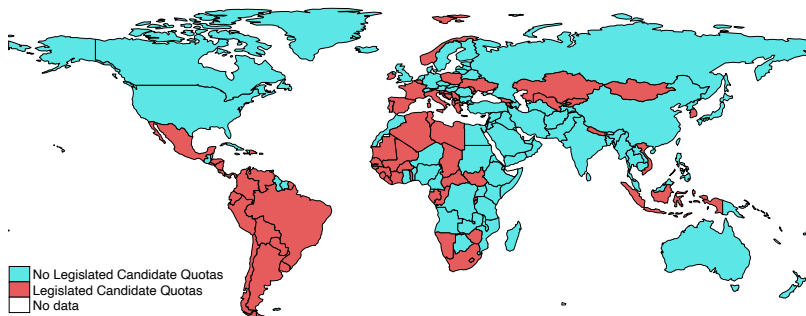
Female Parliamentary Seats



Data Sources: World Bank Data.

Female Political Participation

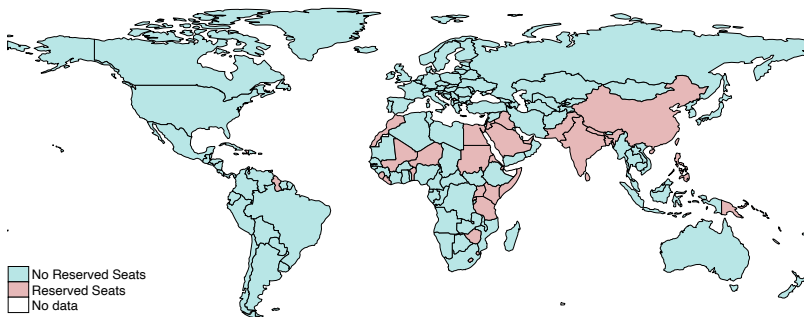
Female Legislated Candidate Quotas



Data Sources: Gender Quotas Database

Female Political Participation

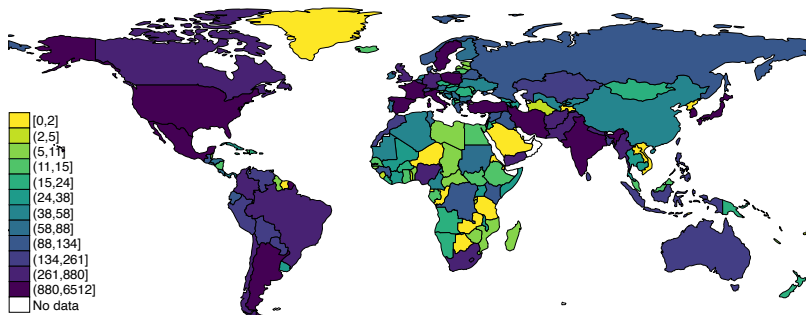
Female Reserved Seats



Data Sources: Gender Quotas Database

Female Political Participation

Female Protests

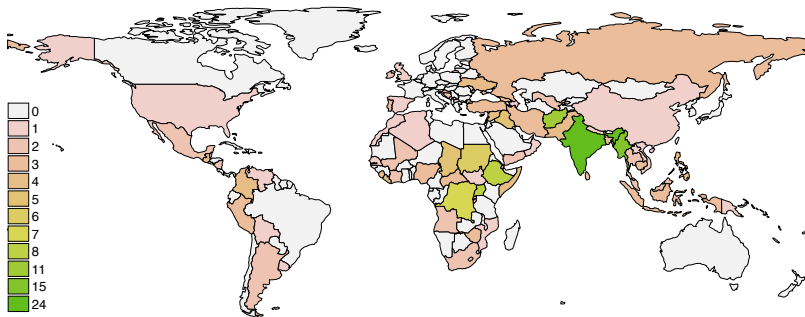


Data Sources: ACLED Database

Total female demonstrations 2020 - 2024: ≈ 6000 in India

Female Political Participation

Female Rebels

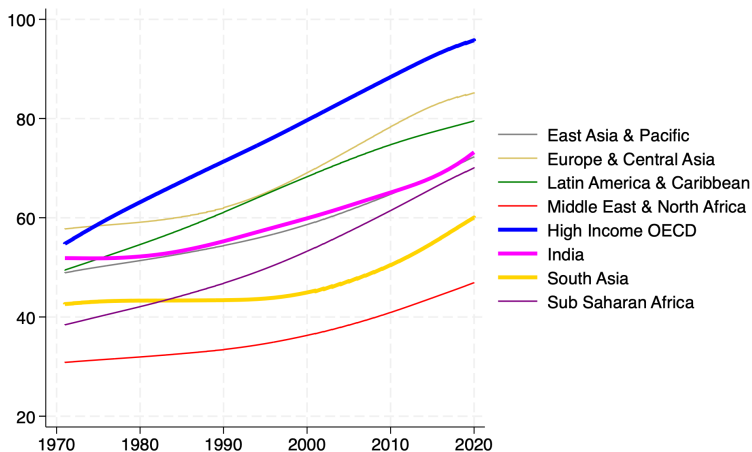


Data Sources: WAAR Database

Women's Activities in Armed Rebellion 1946-2015: 26 Groups in India

Legal Rights

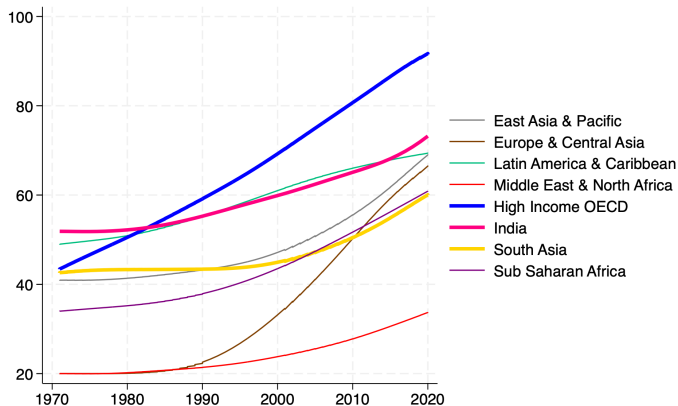
Equal Rights Index



Data Source: Women, Business, and the Law (WBL)

Legal Rights

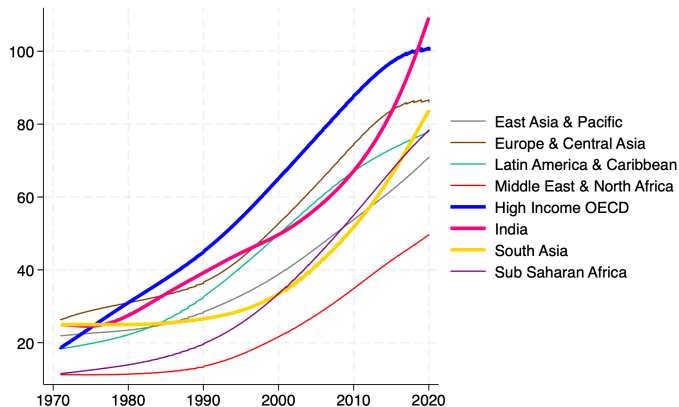
Equal Rights to Remuneration



Equal pay; work at night; dangerous jobs; industrial jobs

Legal Rights

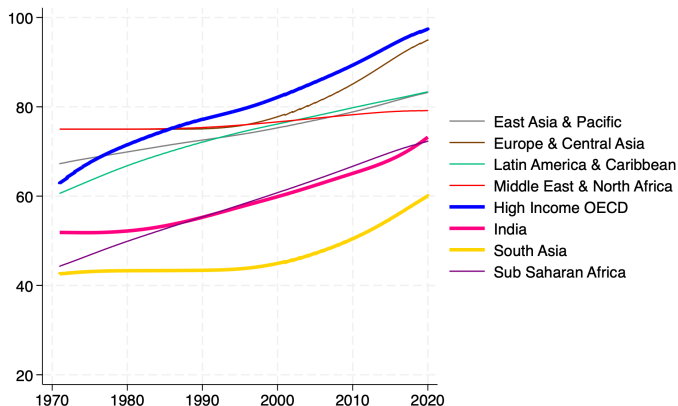
Workplace Rights



Laws against employment discrimination; sexual harassment in the workplace

Legal Rights

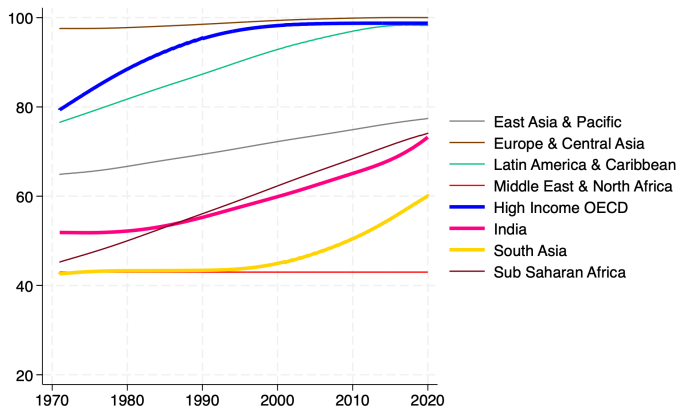
Equal Rights to Entrepreneurship



Equal access to credit; sign a contract; register a business; open a bank account

Legal Rights

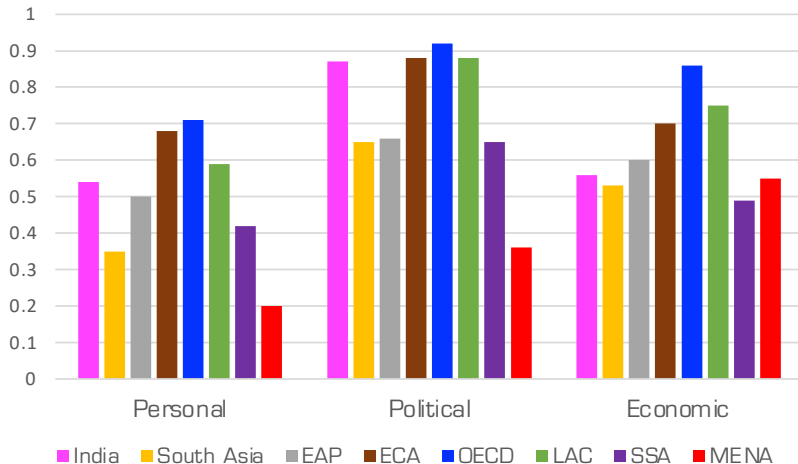
Equal Rights to Family Assets



Equal inheritance rights; marital property ownership; valuation of non-monetary contributions

De Facto Rights

Customary Rights

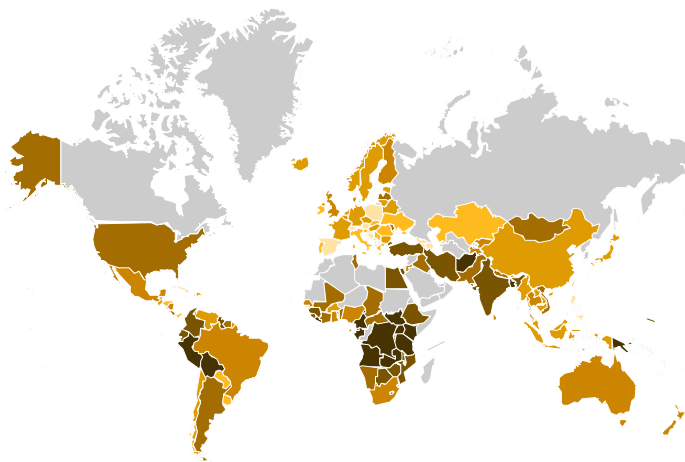


A world map illustrating the distribution of four types of political systems. The map is color-coded: light yellow for Liberal Democracy, medium yellow for Hybrid Regime, dark brown for Authoritarianism, and grey for No Data. Liberal Democracy is prevalent in North America, Western Europe, and parts of South America and Asia. Hybrid Regimes are found in various regions including Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia and Europe. Authoritarianism is concentrated in Russia, China, and several countries in Africa and Asia. No Data is shown for Greenland and several countries in Africa and Asia.



Stagnation

IPV Experience



Percent 10%



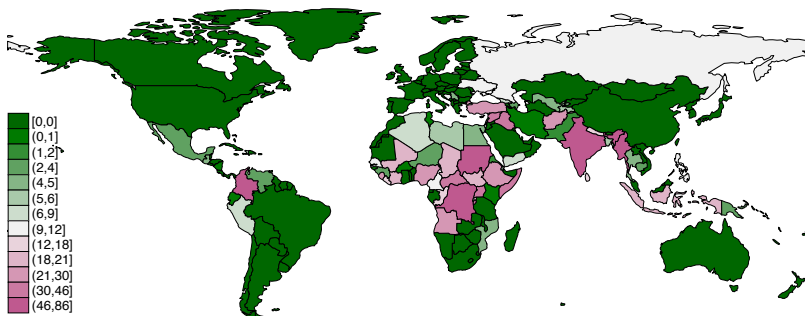
53%

Data not available



Stagnation

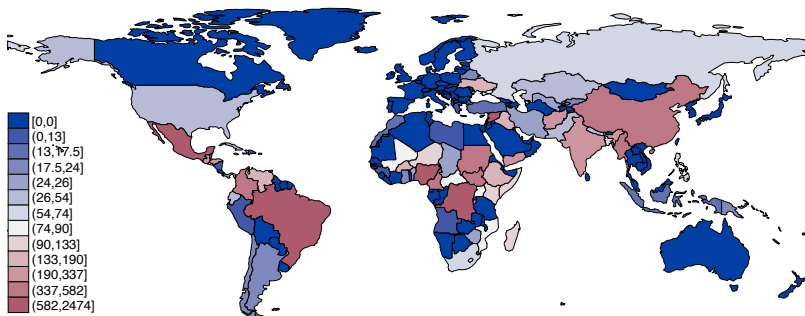
Gender Based Violence in Conflict



Data Source: SVAC - Sexual Violence in Conflict

Stagnation

Gender Based Political Violence



Data Source: ACLED. Targeted political violence against women; mob violence; State repression; female politicians

Economic Development

Humanitarian perspective:

- greater gender equality in all aspects of life should be an end in itself

Policy initiatives motivated by links with female empowerment and poverty reduction

Landmark Declaration of the United Nations:

- gender equality as a way to “combat poverty, hunger, disease” and “stimulate sustainable development”

Government of Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy

- gender equality “is the most effective way to address the root causes of poverty”

Economic Development

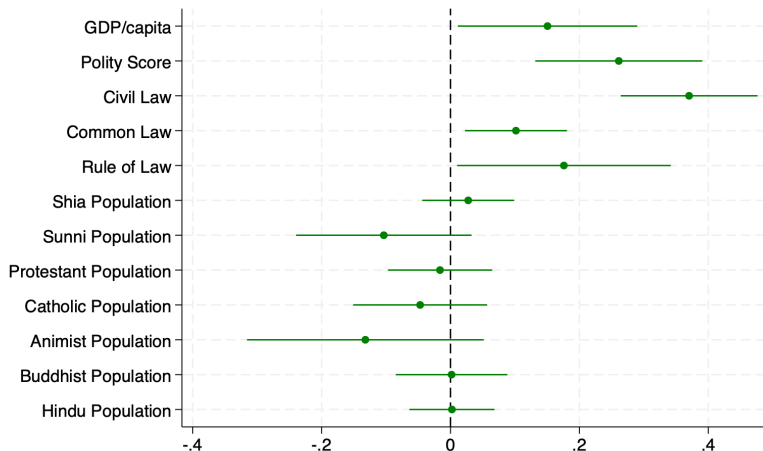


Economic Development



Economic Development

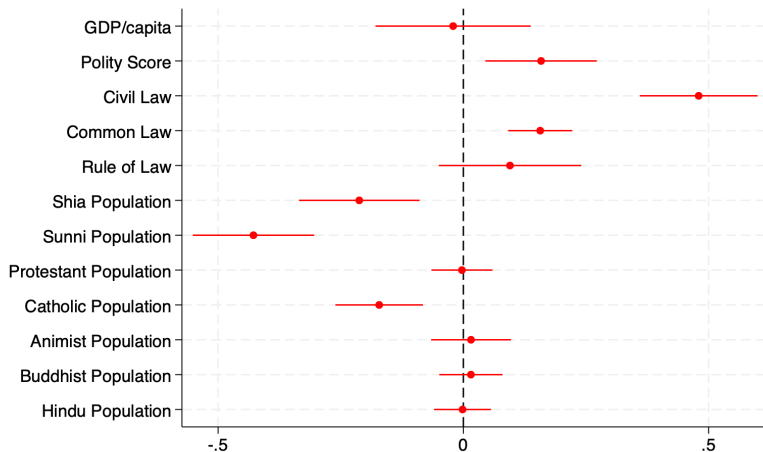
Economic Rights



Source: Anderson (2025)

Economic Development

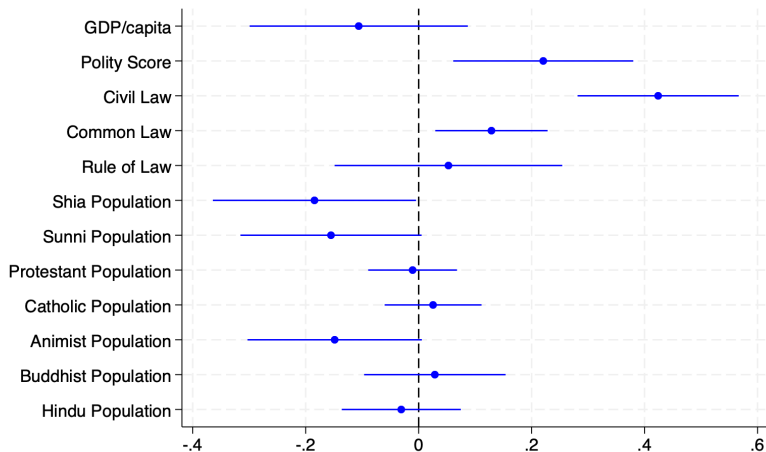
Personal Rights



Source: Anderson (2025)

Economic Development

Civil Rights



Source: Anderson (2025)

UNBUNDLING FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

Unbundling Female Empowerment

To achieve the next stage of improvements

- Need to increase our understanding of complex feedback mechanisms inherent in reaching gender equality
- Female empowerment is a multi-faceted concept - not well understood how various dimensions interact and co-evolve with each other and with society more broadly
- Many policy objectives presume that different measures of female empowerment work in tandem
- Instead useful to conceptually “unbundle” female empowerment in a systematic way across multiple domains: within the household, society as a whole, and via the dynamics of norm formation
- Overlooking these interactions across dimensions has the potential to lead policy astray

COMPLEXITY OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Complexity of Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment - development policy advanced most

Explosion of policies aimed at directing resources to women

- conditional/unconditional transfers
- micro-credit schemes
- savings accounts
- assets
- knowledge, and skills

When evaluating these policies

- Important to recognize - marriage is almost universal in poor countries - women reside in joint households
- Any policy directly targeting women also impinges on dynamics of household behaviour
- Effects of a single policy can be complex
- Targeting individual women can have broader societal impacts

Conceptual Framework

Standard collective model

- Household decision, $x \in X$ (wives prefer higher x)
- μ is wife's 'bargaining power'
- μ increases with wife's outside options

$$x^* \in \arg \max_{x \in X} (1 - \mu) \cdot U_h(x) + \mu \cdot U_w(x)$$

- Household members have conflicting preferences over goods x
- Household decision making is resolved through bargaining process – strength of one member's relative bargaining power inside the household
- Quality of their outside opportunities leads to a household allocation in greater accord with their preferences
- Giving women access to economic opportunities will increase her agency within the household

Conceptual Framework

Model tested by identifying factors that affect threat points:

- external transfer payments; social programs; assets before marriage; marriage payments; inherited assets; legal rights; community norms; randomly controlled interventions

Vast empirical support:

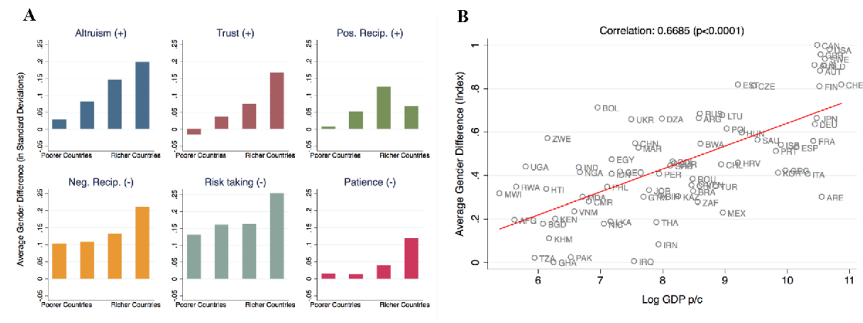
- “threat points” (outside options) influence household decisions and negotiated allocations
- increase in women’s relative outside option leads to household allocations in greater accord with women’s preferences

Argument – relative female empowerment leads to improved economic development

- rests on assumption (and accompanying evidence) that women and men have different preferences
- women allocate relatively more household resources to children’s education and health than will men
- both crucial determinants of human capital formation – proximate cause of economic development

Conceptual Framework

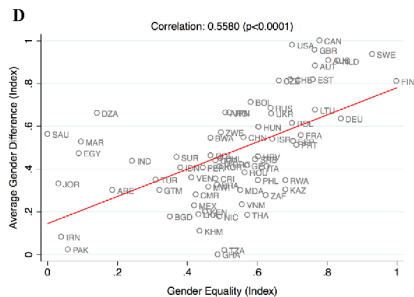
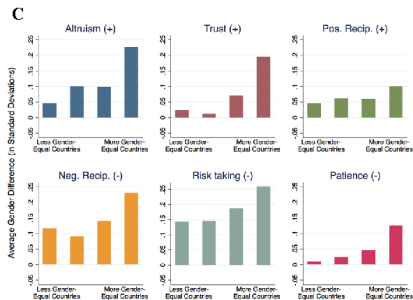
Gender Preferences Gap and Economic Development



Source: Falk and Hermle (2018)

Conceptual Framework

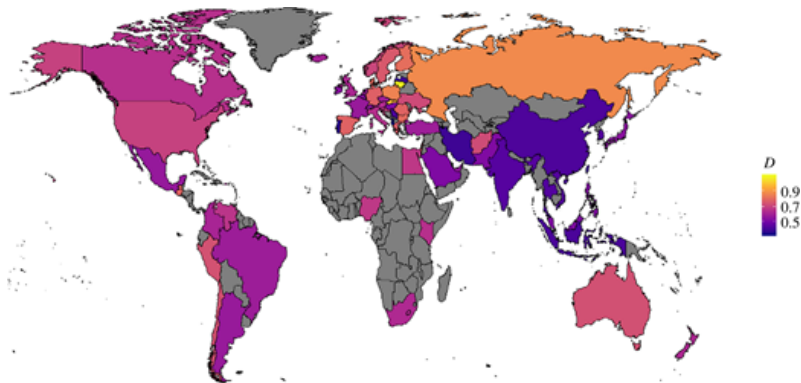
Gender Preferences Gap and Gender Equality



Source: Falk and Hermle (2018)

Conceptual Framework

Sex Differences in Moral Judgements



Source: Atari et al (2020) Women score higher on: Care, Fairness, and Purity. Country-level sex differences in moral judgements are larger in individualist, Western, and gender-equal societies.

Targeted Benefits

Targeted benefits of programs realized

Conditional cash transfer (CTT) programs:

- Main poverty-alleviation tool in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Mexico's PROGRESA (Oportunidades) program - model for over 60 countries
- Targets mothers of young children
- Increased child health and education (Parker and Todd 2017)

Microfinance:

- Small loans to female micro-entrepreneurs
- More than 200 million clients worldwide
- Helps women grow their individual businesses (Banerjee et al. 2015; Pomeranz 2014)

Skills training (soft and hard)/information dissemination:

- Business/financial skills training (De Mel et al. 2014 and Valdivia 2015, Field et al. (2013) Field et al. (2016))
- Negotiation/Life skills (Ashraf et al. 2020, Bandiera et al. 2020)

Targeted Benefits

National-level law reforms to improve rights of women:

- Inheritance Rights
- Divorce/Custody Laws
- Marital Property Rights
- Prohibition of Harmful Norms (Dowry, FGM, Child Marriage ...)
(Review: Anderson and Bidner 2023)

Female Political Quotas:

- Public goods; female education; female entrepreneurship, female political engagement; perceptions of women
(Review: Anderson 2025)

Community Development SHGs/CDDs:

- Financial inclusion
- Social capital
- Civic engagement
(Review: Anderson 2025)

Targeted Benefits - India

Law Amendments - Inheritance & Dowry

- female labour supply, autonomy, education
(Heath and Tan 2020; Deininger et al. 2013; Roy 2015; Bose & Das 2017; Calvi and Keskar 2023)

Panchayat reservations:

- public goods; accountability; female education, aspirations, NREGS, entrepreneurship, child marriage; land rights; political participation; perceptions
(Chattopadhyay & Duflo 2004; Deininger et al. 2015; Beaman et al. 2009; Beaman et al. 2012; Castilla 2018; Ghani et al., 2014, Bose & Das, 2018, Brule 2020; Bhavnani 2009; Beaman et al. 2009)

MGNREGS equal wages and employment:

- female labour force participation, food security, autonomy
(Khera & Nayak 2009, Carswell & De Neve 2013, Afridi et al. 2016)

Targeted Benefits - India

SHGs - National Rural Livelihoods Mission

- female savings, empowerment, risk-pooling, civic engagement (Desai & Joshi 2013; Hoffmann et al. 2017; Kumar et al. 2021; Feigenberg et al. 2013; Feigenberg et al. 2014; Kumar et al. 2019; Desai & Joshi 2014; Prillaman 2023)

Microfinance and skills-based training

- entrepreneurial activity (Banerjee et al. 2015; Field et al. 2013; Desai & Joshi 2014; Field et al. 2016)

Life skills, mentoring, communication training

- education; aspirations; female employment (Edmonds et al. 2023; Kala & McKelway 2025)

Unintended Consequences

Potential backlash effects:

Policies targeted to improving women's position increased gender-based violence

- Access to wage income/education:

(Erten and Keskin 2021; Bhalotra et al. 2019; Alesina et al. 2021; Heath 2014; Bloch & Rao 2002; Luke and Munshi 2011; Amaral et al. 2015; Chin 2012; Finnoff 2012; Guarnieri & Rainer 2021; Amaral et al. 2015)

- Cash transfers [conditional & unconditional]:

(Angelucci 2008; Bobonis et al. 2013, 2015)

- Micro-credit:

(De & Christian 2020; Koenig et al. 2003; Murshid 2016; Halder)

- Skills/Business training:

(Gibbs et al. 2020; Bulte & Lensink 2019)

- Legal reforms:

(Garica-Ramos 2021; Calvi & Keskar 2023; Bhalotra et al. 2020)

Unintended Consequences - India

Increased Gender Based Violence:

- **Higher relative income**
(Bloch & Rao 2002; Luke & Munshi 2011; Chin 2012)
- **Employment** (Amaral et al. 2015; Kishor & Johnson 2004; Bhalotra et al. 2021)
- **Financial Inclusion**
(Shreemoyee et al. 2025)]
- **Dowry Amendment**
(Calvi & Keskar 2023)
- **Hindu Succession Act**
(Bhalotra et al. 2020; Rosenblum 2015; Anderson & Genicot 2015)

Experimental Research (Cullen et al. 2024):

- Men financially penalize women who participated in empowerment programs
- Social image concerns for men

Hidden Conflict

Conceptual household bargaining framework:

- Economic resources directly into hands of women – increase her agency within her household
- Reality is more complicated

Potential for heightened household conflict appears pervasive

- May strengthen men's incentives to use violence (or threats) to control or diminish these newly obtained resources
- Challenging socially prescribed dominance of men – trigger a male backlash

Women's empowerment ultimately driven not only by individual access to choices but also societal acceptance of those choices

Hidden Conflict

Standard household bargaining model - assumes members have full information and perfectly communicate

Significant empirical and experimental evidence to the contrary

Different information sets:

- Women behave differently if husbands are present or not (Ashraf 2009; Ashraf, Field, and Lee 2014)
- Husbands' full information on wives' access to resources can worsen outcomes for her (Eswaran & Malhotra 2011; Heath 2014; Tur-Prats 2021)

Willingness to conceal information

- Women hide money from husbands: (Anderson and Baland 2002; Dupas and Robinson 2013; Fiala 2018; Fafchamps et al. 2014; Riley 2024; Schaner 2017)
- Husbands withhold information on opportunities from wives (Lowe and McKelway 2021)

Family capture of women targeted grants

(de Mel et al. 2009; Friedson-Ridenour and Peirotti 2019; Bernhardt et al. 2019; Banerjee et al. 2015)

Hidden Conflict

Recent JPAL study (Chang et al. 2020):

- Evaluating all RCTs on women's economic empowerment interventions
- Most successful programs for improving women's economic empowerment
- Designed to enable women to **hide** decisions from their spouses

One approach: Avoid increasing conflict in the household

- Hide newly accrued resources from husbands
- Female-owned bank/mobile-money accounts; in-kind transfers for female-use only
- Skills-based training cannot be as easily expropriated
- Community-based interventions (SHGs) may witness less conflict than individual targeting?

Long-term development strategy?

- Hiding information from other household members not conducive to healthy household dynamics
- May also lead to significant unintended consequences

GENDER BIASED NORMS AND BEHAVIOURS

Gender Biased Norms

Unintended consequences - rooted in sticky gender-biased norms

- Gendered norms can be construed as zero-sum
- If more is given to women this often comes at the expense of men

New policy approach — change norms directly

Exposure to less-biased gender norms - dramatic change

- **Updating Stereotypes/Role Incongruity**
(Fernandez et al. 2004; Chen & Ge 2018; Kawaguchi & Miyazaki 2009; Farre et al. 2023; Khanna & Pandey 2024; Anukriti et al. 2020)
- **Updating Misperceptions**
(Bordalo et al. 2019, Bursztyn et al. 2020; Bursztyn et al. 2023; Cortes et al. 2022; Bernhardt et al. 2018; Cameron et al. 2025)
- **Influence of Peers/Leaders**
(Fogli & Veldcamp 2011; Cavapozzi et al. 2021; Agte & Bernhardt 2023; Beaman et al. 2012; Beaman et al. 2009)
- **Entertainment/Education**
(Dhar et al. 2022; Jensen & Oster 2009; La Ferrara et al. 2012; Dean and Jayachandran 2019; Sharma 2022; McKelway 2023; Leventhal et al. 2015)

Gender Biased Norms - India

Interventions that shift beliefs

- Entertainment (Jensen & Oster 2009)
- Role models (Agte & Bernhardt 2023; Beaman et al. 2012)
- Experience agency (Field et al. 2021)
- Education (Dhar et al. 2022; Leventhal et al. 2015; Sharma 2022; Jejeebhoy et al. 2017)

Light-touch interventions informing family members on the benefits of female employment - no significant change

- Dean & Jayachandran 2019; McKelway 2023; Fleming et al. 2018

Regressive Norms

Re-emergence of regressive gender norms?

- *haq tyag* (sacrifice of rights) in India
- Bride capture/kidnapping in the Caucasus and Central Asia
- Increasing seclusion in South Asia (*Sanskritization?*)
- Increasing veiling in Muslim urban centers

Differences in which types of values and beliefs stagnate and which are easily responsive to changes in incentives and opportunities

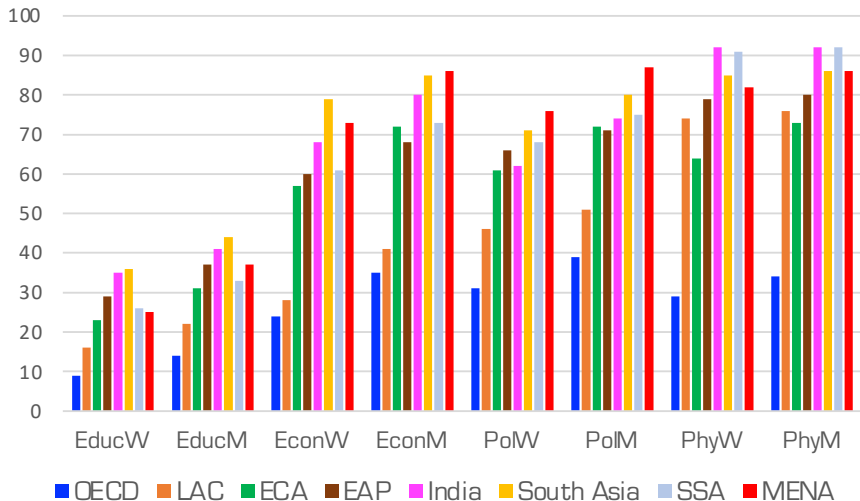
- attitudes towards sexual morality and abortion exhibit lowest degree of convergence
- followed by religious and family attitudes (vs. cooperation/trust/fairness...) (Giavazzi et al. 2019)

Milder version of harmful norm?

- milder FGM relative to social ostracisation of breaking norm entirely (Gulesci et al. 2025; Efferson et al. 2020)

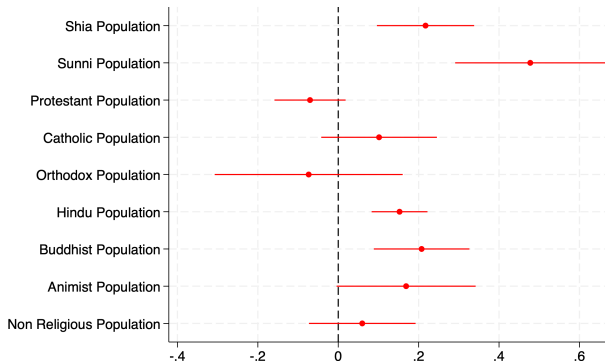
Different Domains of Gender Bias

Gender Bias by Region



Different Determinants of Gender Bias

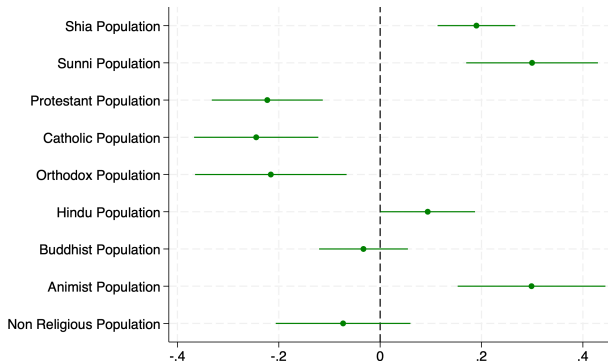
Education Bias - Religious Determinants



Source: Anderson (2025)

Different Determinants of Gender Bias

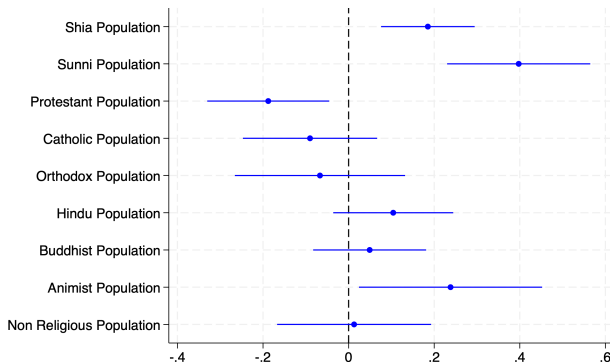
Economic Bias - Religious Determinants



Source: Anderson (2025)

Different Determinants of Gender Bias

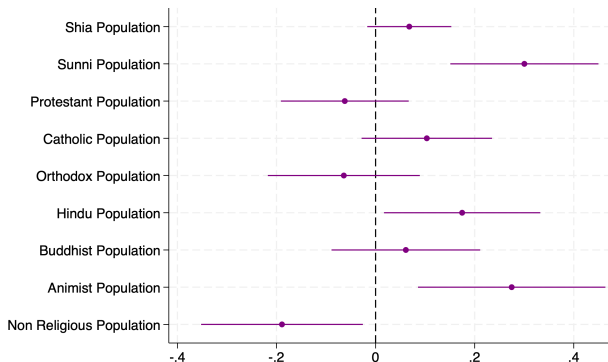
Political Bias - Religious Determinants



Source: Anderson (2025)

Different Determinants of Gender Bias

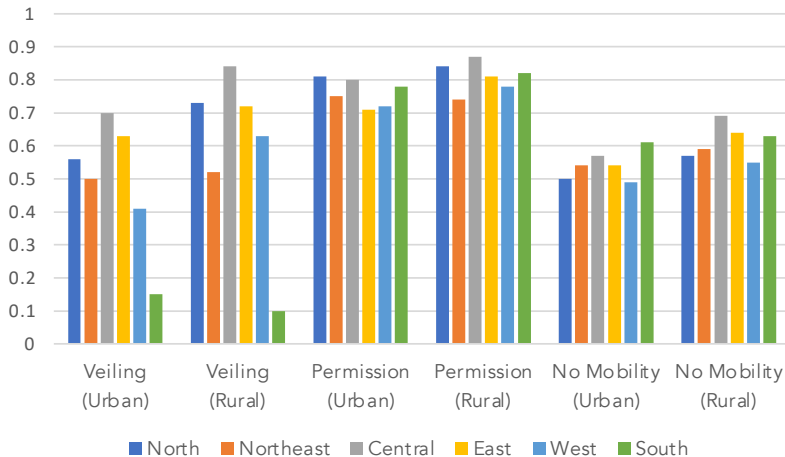
Physical Bias - Religious Determinants



Source: Anderson (2025)

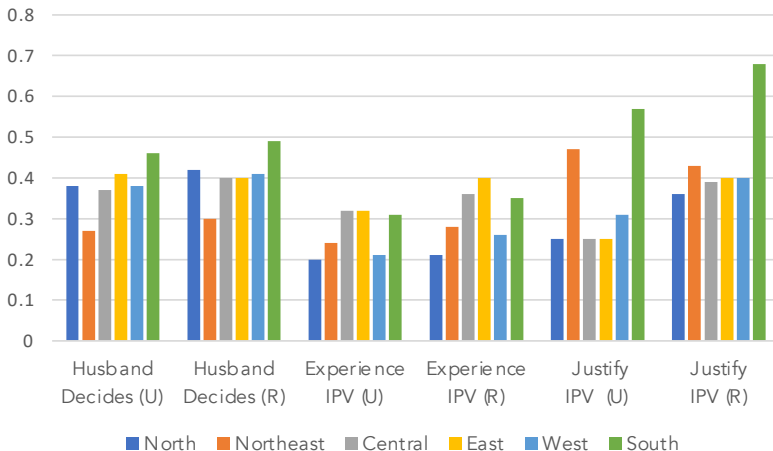
Unbundled Gender Norms

Gendered Norms by Indian Regions



Unbundled Gender Norms

Gendered Beliefs by Indian Regions



Unbundled Norms

Gendered norms across distinct domains experienced differently for women and men – can have distinct trajectories

Implicit in much conceptual thinking in economics – gender positive norms should move in tandem

- Standard bargaining framework: improving women's position in society positively impacts women's position within her household

Expect otherwise:

- Practicing seclusion does not necessarily imply women have little influence within own household
- Shifting religious versus social norms
- Gender-specific social punishment from breaking a gender-biased norm
- Men (or women) might punish more
- Gender biased norms: (veiling, female genital mutilation, dowry violence) supported by women - directly involved in their perpetration

FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Feedback Mechanisms

Co-evolution of different dimensions of female empowerment is complex

Gender equality: zero-sum – **Backlash?**

Important to appreciate complex feedback mechanisms inherent in shifting long-standing societal norms

Our understanding in economics of these complex interactions is relatively nascent

- Some long-term changes may not require risking major turmoil, others may lead to significant social upheaval
- Disruptions with respect to norms about gender tend to have greater contact with the personal lives of individuals
- Family behaviours often held sacred and slowest to evolve

Harm and Harmony

Anderson and Bidner (2025)

- Consider relationship between female empowerment and intimate partner violence (IPV)
- female empowerment = relative household decision making power

Uncover a non-monotonic relationship

- 744,354 women across 45 low-income countries

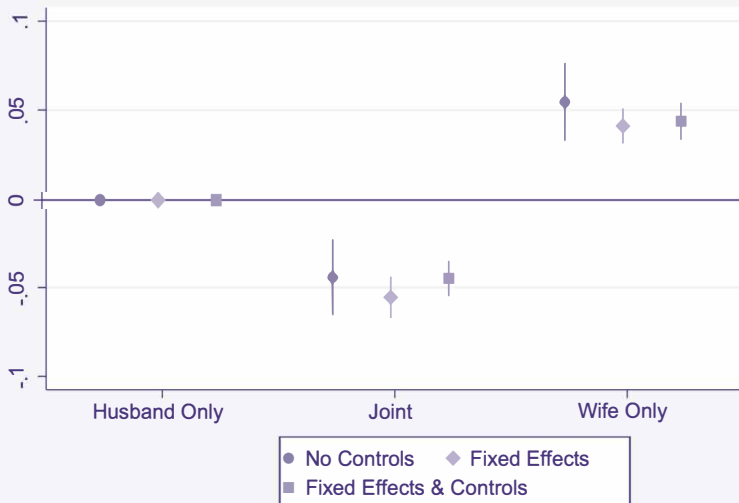
Outcome variable: IPV

- Emotional, Physical, Sexual

Explanatory variable: female relative decision making power

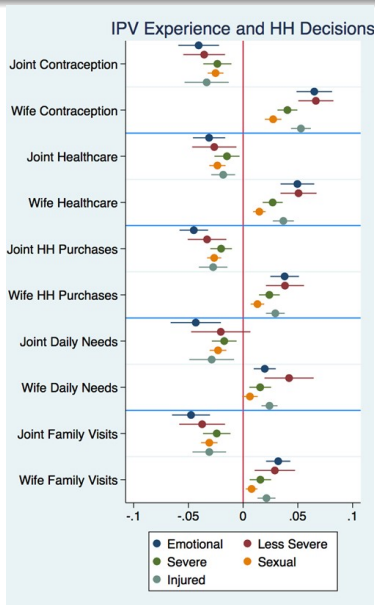
- "Who usually decides on X?"
- (i) Husband alone
- (ii) Jointly (husband and wife together)
- (iii) Wife alone

Empirical Pattern: U-Shape

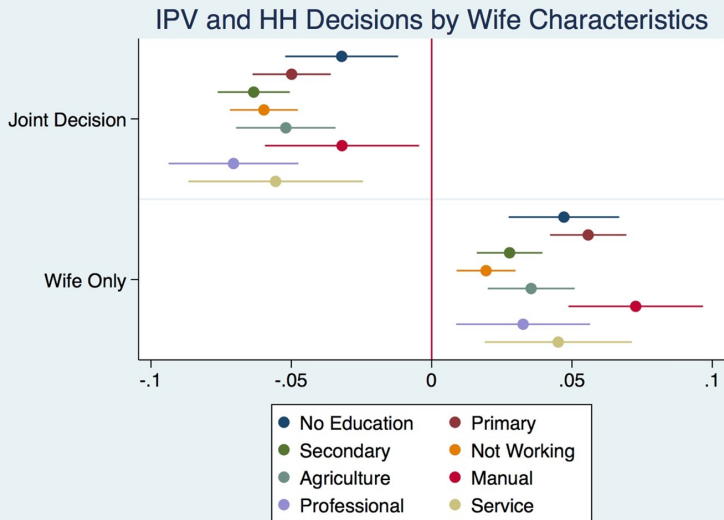


Notes: Household decision concerns Large Purchases.
Dependent variable is: Any IPV

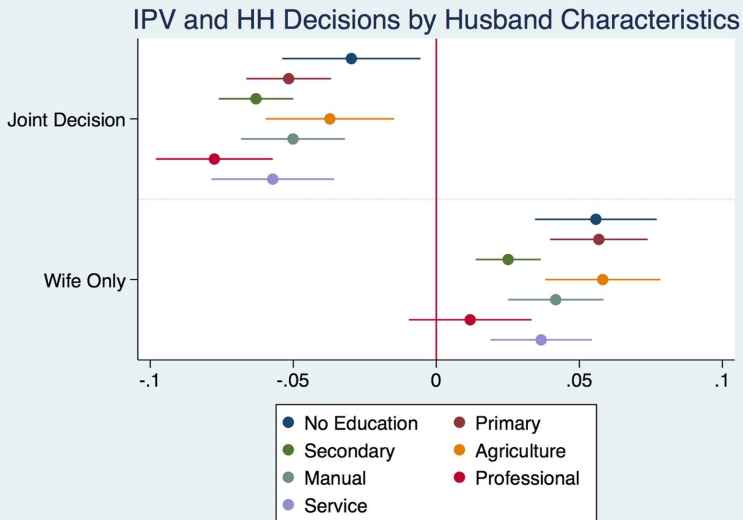
Empirical Pattern: U-Shape



Empirical Pattern: U-Shape

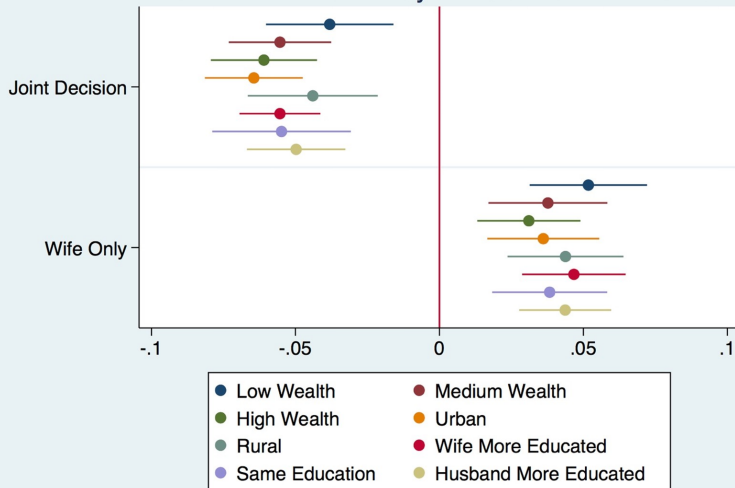


Empirical Pattern: U-Shape



Empirical Pattern: U-Shape

IPV and HH Decisions by Household Characteristics



Existing Approaches

Non-monotonicity inconsistent with existing theories

Standard collective model

- Household decision, $x \in X$
- μ is wife's 'bargaining power'

$$x^* \in \arg \max_{x \in X} (1 - \mu) \cdot U_h(x) + \mu \cdot U_w(x)$$

Incorporating IPV? Existing approaches

- **Bargaining:** More powerful wives can demand better treatment
- **Backlash:** Husbands use IPV to regain power from wives

Existing Approaches: Bargaining

Features

- IPV directly affects utilities ($\uparrow U_h, \downarrow U_w$)
- IPV is an outcome of household bargaining

$$(x^*, \text{IPV}^*) \in \arg \max_{x, \text{IPV}} (1 - \mu) \cdot U_h(x, \text{IPV}) + \mu \cdot U_w(x, \text{IPV})$$

Prediction: IPV *decreases* with μ

- More powerful wives can demand better treatment

Existing Approaches: Backlash

Features

- IPV is costly for husband
- IPV augments bargaining power: $\tilde{\mu} = \tilde{\mu}(\mu, \text{IPV})$
 - with $\tilde{\mu}_1 > 0$, $\tilde{\mu}_2 < 0$

$$x^* \in \arg \max_{x \in X} (1 - \tilde{\mu}) \cdot U_h(x) + \tilde{\mu} \cdot U_w(x)$$

Prediction: IPV *increases* with μ

- Husband attempts to regain power via violence

Existing Economic Approaches: Summary

Bargaining:

- Predicts IPV *decreases* as wives participate more in decisions
- *Expressive* motive
- Men enjoy IPV?

Backlash:

- Predicts IPV *increases* as wives participate more in decisions
- *Instrumental* motive
- Mere *threats* of IPV insufficient?
- IPV is off the equilibrium path behaviour (Fearon 1995)

Empirical Pattern: Implications

Key takeaways

- 1 Robust non-monotonic U-shaped relationship between decision making power and IPV across many contexts
- 2 Relationship holds with "bargaining controls"
 - holds by female characteristics (education, occupation)
 - holds by male characteristics (education, occupation)
 - holds by relative characteristics (and household)

Develop new framework: Distinguish between decision making and bargaining power

- Decision making regime is akin to societal norms - like patriarchy
- Patriarchal men can choose to delegate decision power to women
- Bargaining power improved by female outside options

Conceptual Framework - Policy Implications

Unbundling pro-women policies

- Patriarchal norms - men are main household decision-makers and wives must obey - does not necessarily imply women have no agency
- Distinguish between female aspirations and economic agency
- Distinguish between pro women norms and anti-toxic masculinity norms
- Shifting patriarchal norms with indirect policy instruments?

Unintended consequences?

Overview of Model

Two departures from standard collective model

- Explicit concern with *set of decision-makers*
 - husband and wife (joint), husband only, wife only
 - 'bargaining power' applies only in joint decision-making
- Model conflict directly
 - allocations may trigger aggrievement (\Rightarrow IPV)
 - if allocation falls short of endogenous benchmark
 - benchmark: outcome if included in decision

Aggrievement

Shares features with:

Benchmarks

(Akerlof & Yellen 1991, Hart & Moore 2008)

- “In simple English, if people do not get what they think they deserve they get angry.”

Agency and Freedom of Choice

(Sen 1999)

- “deserve” related to inclusion in decision-making
- autonomy is a key psychological need: Self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci 2000)

Family conflict paradigm

(Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz 1980)

- IPV as response to ‘stress’
(Card & Dahl 2011, Fox et al. 2002, Gelles 1976, Angelucci 2008)

Model

Agents Household $\{w, h\}$

Outcomes Household allocation: $x \in [0, 1]$

Determined by (exogenous) set of decision-makers: $d \subseteq \{w, h\}$

Payoffs For $i \in \{w, h\}$, $d \in \{\{w\}, \{w, h\}, \{h\}\}$, and $\bar{u}^d = (\bar{u}_w^d, \bar{u}_h^d)$:

$$U_i(x|\bar{u}^d) = u_i(x) - C(x|\bar{u}^d) \cdot c$$

$u_i(x)$: consumption payoff

$$u_w(x) = v(x)$$

$$u_h(x) = v(1 - x)$$

$C(x|\bar{u}^d)$: probability of household conflict

$$\text{IPV}^d(x) \propto C(x|\bar{u}^d)$$

Model

Household Conflict

$$U_i(x|\bar{u}^d) = u_i(x) - C(x|\bar{u}^d) \cdot c$$

$$C(x|\bar{u}^d) = 1 - \pi_w(r_w(x|\bar{u}_w^d)) \cdot \pi_h(r_h(x|\bar{u}_h^d))$$

Probability x is ‘acceptable’ to $i \in \{w, h\}$ given r :

- $r_i(x|\bar{u}_i^d) \equiv \frac{u_i(x)}{\bar{u}_i^d}$: consumption utility relative to benchmark utility
- Less conflict if individuals receive allocation closer to what they feel they deserve

Equilibrium

Definition. An *equilibrium* is a set of allocations and benchmark utilities

$$x^* \equiv \{x^{\{w\}}, x^{\{w,h\}}, x^{\{h\}}\}$$

$$\bar{u}^* \equiv \{(\bar{u}_w^{\{w\}}, \bar{u}_h^{\{w\}}), (\bar{u}_w^{\{w,h\}}, \bar{u}_h^{\{w,h\}}), (\bar{u}_w^{\{h\}}, \bar{u}_h^{\{h\}})\},$$

such that for each $d \subseteq \{w, h\}$:

- 1 x^d is a **bargaining allocation** given benchmarks \bar{u}^* , and
- 2 $(\bar{u}_w^d, \bar{u}_h^d)$ are **inclusion benchmarks** given allocations x^* .

Allocations given benchmarks

Definition. The *bargaining allocation* in regime d , given benchmark utilities $\bar{u}^d \equiv (\bar{u}_w^d, \bar{u}_h^d)$, satisfies:

$$x^d \in \arg \max_x \tilde{\mu}^d \cdot U_w(x|\bar{u}^d) + (1 - \tilde{\mu}^d) \cdot U_h(x|\bar{u}^d)$$

where $\tilde{\mu}^{\{w\}} = 1$, $\tilde{\mu}^{\{w,h\}} = \mu \in (0, 1)$, $\tilde{\mu}^{\{h\}} = 0$.

That is:

$$\begin{aligned} x^{\{w\}} &\in \arg \max_x U_w(x|\bar{u}^{\{w\}}) \\ x^{\{w,h\}} &\in \arg \max_x \mu \cdot U_w(x|\bar{u}^{\{w,h\}}) + (1 - \mu) \cdot U_h(x|\bar{u}^{\{w,h\}}) \\ x^{\{h\}} &\in \arg \max_x U_h(x|\bar{u}^{\{h\}}) \end{aligned}$$

Note:

- decision regime relevant for utility weight *and* benchmarks
- distinction between bargaining power and decision power

Benchmarks given allocations

Definition. Given allocations $\{x^{\{w\}}, x^{\{w,h\}}, x^{\{h\}}\}$, the *inclusion benchmark* utility for i in regime d is:

$$\bar{u}_i^d = u_i(x^{d \cup \{i\}})$$

That is:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{u}_w^{\{h\}} &= u_w(x^{\{w,h\}}), & \bar{u}_h^{\{h\}} &= u_h(x^{\{h\}}) \\ \bar{u}_w^{\{w,h\}} &= u_w(x^{\{w,h\}}), & \bar{u}_h^{\{w,h\}} &= u_h(x^{\{w,h\}}) \\ \bar{u}_w^{\{w\}} &= u_w(x^{\{w\}}), & \bar{u}_h^{\{w\}} &= u_h(x^{\{w,h\}})\end{aligned}$$

Note:

- role of ‘agency’

Allocations and Decision Regime

Proposition. A unique equilibrium exists.

Proposition. Being included in household decisions leads to a preferred allocation:

$$0 < x^{\{h\}} < x^{\{w,h\}} < x^{\{w\}} < 1$$

Intuition

- Lone decision-maker trades off better allocation with more conflict

IPV and Decision Regime

Proposition. IPV is lowest in the joint-decision regime:

$$\text{IPV}^{\{w,h\}} < \min\{\text{IPV}^{\{w\}}, \text{IPV}^{\{h\}}\}$$

Intuition

- Compare ‘joint regime’ to ‘husband decides’ regime
 - h gets his benchmark in both cases
 - w gets her benchmark when $d = \{w, h\}$
 - w gets *less* than her benchmark when $d = \{h\}$ (since $x^{\{h\}} < x^{\{w,h\}}$)

Note: Not mechanical

- Suppose in ‘husband decides’ regime
 - He can choose $x^{\{h\}} > x^{\{w,h\}}$; IPV would be higher in $\{w, h\}$ than $\{h\}$
 - But not optimal in equilibrium

Complex Consequences of Policy

What is the effect of improving female empowerment on IPV and female welfare?

- Increasing μ - women's outside options
- Increasing women's aspirations (generalize benchmark)

What is the effect of interventions aimed at conflict resolution on IPV and female welfare?

- Increase legal repercussions of IPV
- Facilitate reporting of IPV
- Anti-toxic-masculinity campaigns
- Targeted discouragement of violent reactions from husbands

Effect of Wife Bargaining Power (μ) on IPV

Joint Regime. An increase in μ raises $x^{\{w,h\}}$ but does not affect $IPV^{\{w,h\}}$

- $x^{\{w,h\}}$: standard
- $IPV^{\{w,h\}}$: utilities always at benchmark

Husband Regime. An increase in μ raises $IPV^{\{h\}}$ and lowers $x^{\{h\}}$

- μ raises benchmark \bar{u}_w
- a higher \bar{u}_w increases conflict at each x
- relatively more costly for husband to appease wife
- h trades off better allocation for more conflict

Wife Regime. An increase in μ lowers $IPV^{\{w\}}$ and lowers $x^{\{w\}}$

- μ lowers benchmark \bar{u}_h
- relatively less costly for wife to appease husband
- w forgoes better allocation for less conflict

Empirical Implications

Increasing μ increases IPV in husband-decision making regime

- When men hold traditional views (Atkinson et al. 2005)
- When husbands hold gender-biased views (Angelucci 2005)
- Traditional gender norms (less acceptable for women to work outside the home) (Tur-Prats 2021)
- Low female education and early marriage (Heath 2014)
- Unequal access to divorce (Balhotra et al. 2021)

Increasing μ decreases IPV when wives involved in decision regime

- With economic equality in the household (Chin 2012)
- With training programs encouraging gender equality (Kim et al. 2009; Gupta et al. 2013; Pronyk et al. 2006)
- For highly educated women (Garcia-Ramos 2021)

Pro-Women Policy Implications

Womens' Beliefs and Aspirations:

- Same effect as increasing μ - improves wife's benchmark
- Wife is 'doubly'-harmed in husband decision regime, $\{h\}$

Policies that affect conflict intensity c :

- Legal repercussions for IPV
- Facilitate reporting for IPV
- Wife should be made better off as long as her c does not become too large

Policies that affect conflict resolution

- Anti-toxic-masculinity campaigns (targeted discouragement of violent reactions from husbands)
- Can make wives worse off if increases costs to husbands to appease wives
- Depends on conflict function

Changing Patriarchy with Policy

Endogenous Decision Regimes

Husband Decides

- 'Husband decides' is *not* always his most preferred regime
- Chosen regime does not 'align' with wife's bargaining power
 - e.g. husband prefers $\{w, h\}$ to $\{h\}$ for μ sufficiently small

Female Decides

- Can optimally delegate decision making to husband (low μ)
- Policies that force the decision-maker: CCT programs to women
 - could increase IPV

Main decision makers can optimally delegate decision making

- Found in experimental settings (Abbink et al. 2020, Bakhtiar et al. 2022, Hohn et al. 2022)

Policy instruments (e.g. μ) have potential to shift long standing norms (Patriarchy)

LESSONS FROM THE WEST

Lessons from the West

Widely hypothesized – roots of gender inequality stem from sexual division of labour

- Contribution that women make to subsistence varies across societies but sexual division of labour is a universal
- gender differentiation exacerbated with economic development and technological change
- Not until modern times - sexual division of labour was seriously challenged

Goldin (2014):

“Of the many advances in society and the economy in the last century, the converging roles of men and women are among the grandest”

Policy forums focused on directions of social change

- Gender role and norms in high-income countries used as benchmarks

Lessons from the West

Goldin (1994): U-shaped relationship between LFP of married women and economic development

Women participate extensively in economic production when it is primarily agricultural and at home

Female participation decreases as society industrializes:

- household income effects
- social stigma against women working outside of the home (and interacting with other males)
- comparative advantage in child rearing

Upward swing:

- increased education
- growth in the service sector associated with structural transformation
- women having a comparative advantage in mentally intensive jobs compared to physically intensive ones
- reduced social stigma attached to service jobs

Lessons from the West

Goldin (2006): **“The Quiet Revolution”**

“Evolutionary Phase”:

- Women entered the labor force out of necessity
- Women married young
- Their identity was formed after marriage
- Remained highly influenced by their husbands

“Revolutionary Phase”:

- Women employed in part because occupation and employment defined their fundamental identity and societal worth
- Women married later
- Identity formation preceding marriage
- Less directly influenced by their husbands

Lessons from the West

Revolutionary Phase - Akerlof and Kranton (2000):

- Women's movement impacted the labour market
- Reshaped societal notions of femininity
- Removed gender associations from tasks

Dichotomy suggests:

- Revolutionary phase more likely to lead to fundamental changes in women's relative welfare
- Accelerating this phase?
- Change norms directly in ways that coincide with the West?

Transplanting Gender Roles

Under which conditions transplanting gender role and norms from one society work to improve gender norms in another society?

Differences in timing? Deopke et al. (2012) [U.S. and U.K.]

- (i) economic rights
- (ii) political rights
- (iii) equal treatment in the labour market
- (iv) greater control over their own bodies

Using template of pro-women shifts in the West should not necessarily serve as a normative guide for policy elsewhere

- Timing of structural changes is different (service sector, educational opportunities)
- Legal context is markedly different (Inherited at Independence)
- Inherently gender biased norms co-exist: purdah, sex-selective abortion, dowry violence, female genital mutilation, child marriage

Economic Role of Women

Research in economics:

Begins with premise that distinct economic roles by gender are at the heart of gender inequality

Sexual division of labour is a universal
(likely originating from pair bonding and task specialization most compatible with child care)

– consequent social subjugation of females need not necessarily transpire

- Little research in economics aimed at addressing this most fundamental question
- Need explorations into what purposes cultural beliefs and customs promulgating the inferiority of females serve
- Not obvious that advocating identical economic roles for men and women will necessarily lead to disappearance of gender inequality across all domains

Role of Identity

Identity

Sense of belonging to a particular social category

■ Gender Identity:

Male Breadwinner Norm/Husband Higher Occupational Status:
– significant evidence in all countries

Change in self-worth and belonging can manifest in complex ways: often trade-offs

- Bursztyn et al. 2017: Elite MBA students
- Professionally ambitious women avoid activities which help their careers to avoid signaling traits penalized in marriage market

■ Cultural Identity:

- Seclusion: Upper caste Hindu norm — Lower caste women imitate
- Veiling: Strategy for integration — enabling women to take up outside opportunities while preserving reputation within community
- Female Genital Mutilation — Concern for group identity helping to sustain a harmful tradition

Economic Role of Women

Role of identity in this process could be crucial

Goldin (2014): emphasizes how final stage of the "revolution" in the West was concomitant with women's social identity embracing career aspirations

- came at a cost to women's identity as mother
- conceivable that this identity transformation is not as welcome in other contexts
- instead - role of mother persists as a more encompassing component of women's self worth

Worthwhile to broaden our vision for eradicating gender biased beliefs beyond requirement for women to take on similar economic roles as men?

THE END - THANK YOU!