

Information, Norms, and Female Employment: An Experiment in India

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 - In large part because of strong social norms (Jayachandran 2021)
- However, the fact that many women aren't employed could mean families simply lack information
 - E.g. what female workplaces are like, or how women's work would affect household life
 - Many jobs for women in developing countries are new and unfamiliar, since expansion of such jobs a key part of development (Goldin 1995, Heath & Jayachandran 2018)
- Addressing information constraints much easier than norms

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 - This paper: low-cost video intervention that provided promotional information on new job for women

Experiment in Rural Uttar Pradesh, India



- Partner with one of India's largest carpet producers
- Program to train and employ women as carpet weavers
 - Women paid salary during training
- Worked with firm as it introduced program in 6 villages
- Sample: 490 married women, aged 18-40, from the villages

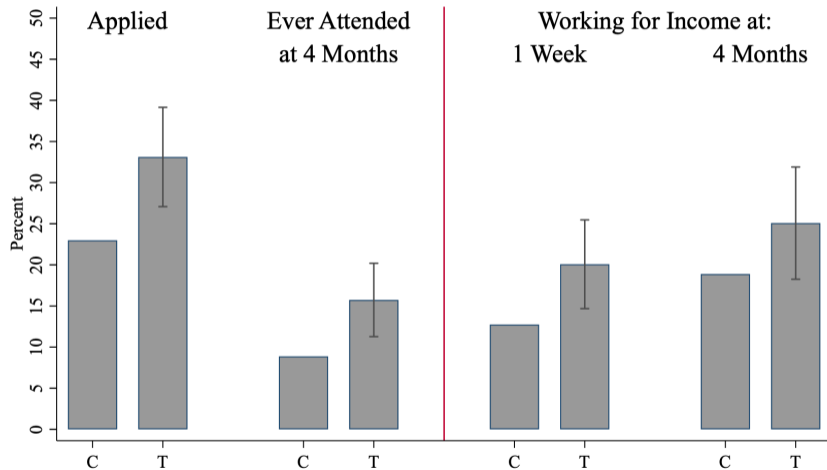
Promotion Intervention

- Video with promotional information on program
 - Six minutes
 - Firsthand accounts interspersed with shots of workplace
- Randomize whether husbands and parents-in-law saw video
 - Have a lot of control, often oppose women's employment (Lowe & McKelway 2022); men worldwide less supportive of women working than women (Bursztyn et al. 2023)
 - Control: basic details
 - Treatment: basic details and promotion
- All women given basic details and promotion



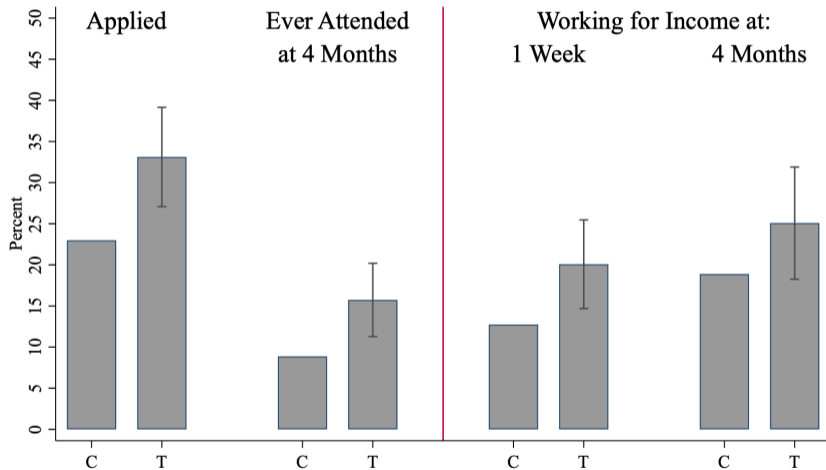
Treatment Increased Women's Employment in the Short Run

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N = 490, 490, 416, and 391. Strata FE and PDS Lasso variables included. Standard errors clustered by HH. Bars denote 90% CIs.

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Why so effective?

- Firsthand accounts lent credibility
- Seeing workplace
- Two types of info spread well in video

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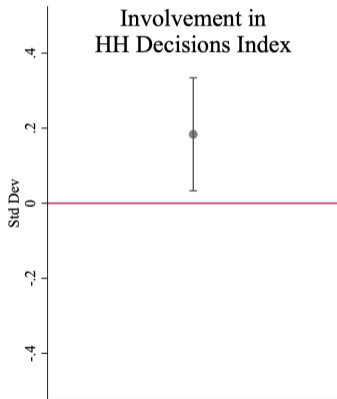
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Two measures of empowerment in the household at 4 months:

1. Index of women's reports of who makes 7 different HH decisions
2. Incentivized choice
 - Women entered into lottery, the prize was their choice between:
 1. Husband's allocation of 500 rupees across women's and men's goods
 2. Husband's allocation of $500 - P$ after discussion with woman. $P = 0, 50, \text{ or } 100$ (randomized).
 - Greater bargaining power has ambiguous prediction for discussion choice
 - More control in discussion \rightarrow choose discussion
 - More control outside discussion \rightarrow discussion not worth time and effort
 - Price varies strength of two forces
 - Higher price \rightarrow less money to be bargained over \rightarrow first force weaker
 - More bargaining power could make discussion more likely at low prices, but less likely at high prices

Treatment Raised Women's Empowerment in the Household



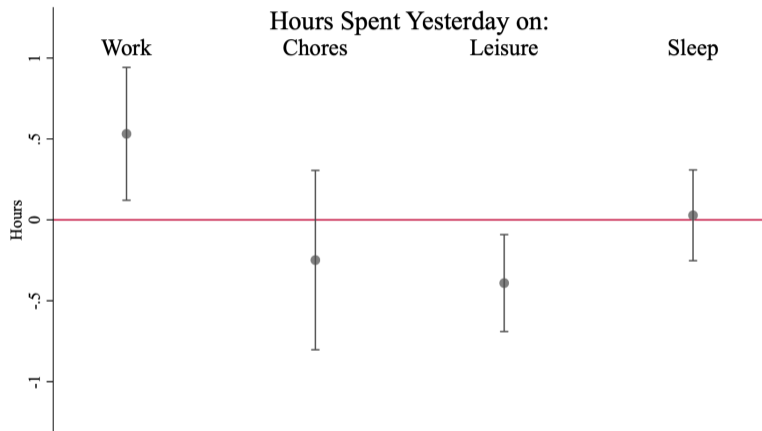
N = 490. Strata FE and PDS Lasso variables included. Standard errors clustered by HH. Bars denote 90% CIs.



N = 353. Strata FE and PDS Lasso variables included. Standard errors clustered by HH. Bars denote 90% CIs.

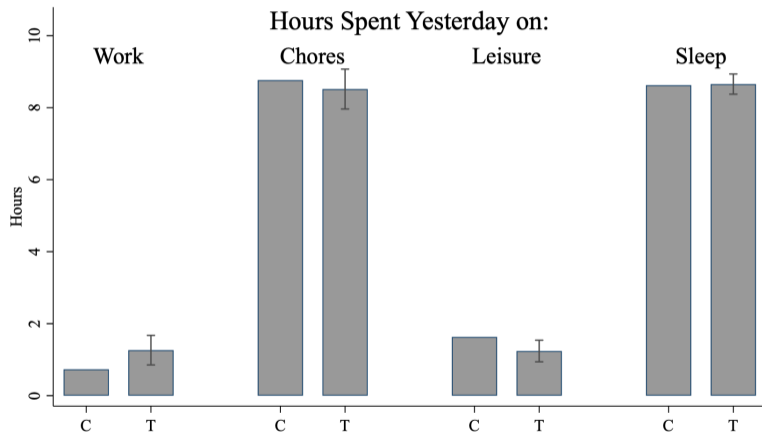
Effects on Women's Time Use at 4 Months

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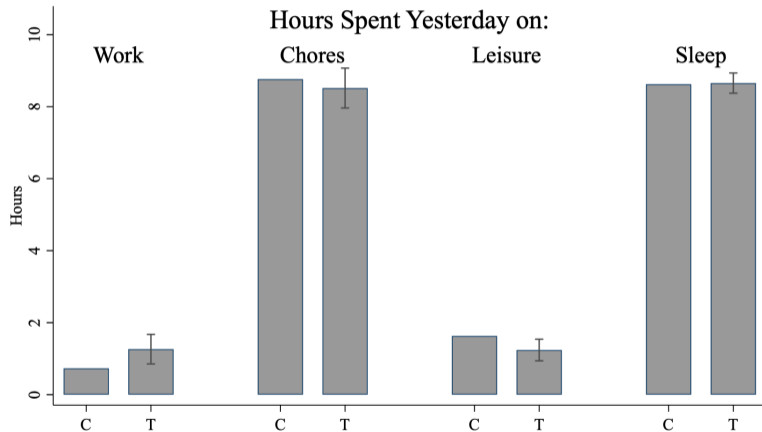
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Effects on Women's Time Use at 4 Months



Why were chores not reallocated?

- Strong norms that women internalize
- Over 80% said woman's main role should be housework
- No treatment effect

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- No effects on employment at 1 year
 - True for program participation and general employment
- Why? Doing chores and work may have been unsustainable
- Treated women who left work between short- and long-run endlines were the ones who spent more time on chores in short run
- No evidence for other potential explanations for fading of employment effect
 - No evidence for: spillovers to control, women disliking work, select group surveyed at 1 year

Conclusion

- An information intervention increased women's employment in the short run
 - Despite strong social norms that constrain it
- Policymakers or firms could implement such interventions at low cost
 - E.g. in brochures or advertisements
- However, interventions may need to also address norms to achieve longer-term effects
 - Particularly the norm of women as homemakers

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Thank you!