

International Women's Day

8 March 2022

Social Norms as a Barrier to Women's Employment

Keynote by Seema Jayachandran

Q&A & Chat

Q&A:

1. (To Seema) Could you please talk about the matter of prestige and its role in not sending women, especially educated women to work? In the Indian context it may be perceived as a higher status if the family can "afford" to withdraw their women from the labour force. (Also, lower class families may want to appear more wealthy and imitate this behaviour too especially as soon as the family's income increases). Thanks. (Ekaterina Zhelenkova)
2. Thanks for the excellent webinar. Building on Willa's point about potential "backfire" of attempts to change norms, there can be a tension between changing norms and adapting to norms. This comes up, for example, in debates about women-only transport, one of the potential interventions mentioned by Seema. Some argue that women-only buses, metro cars, etc., reinforce the norm that women should not travel with men. There are other examples. Seema (and others), can you discuss this tension? (David A Lam)
3. thank you all for the discussion panels. please, I direct my question to the first speaker, how do you intend to create a platform to change the mindset of women who stigmatize other fellow women who are below their class and status? because we have seen women hardly support each other, hence their poor participation in all levels of spheres life. (Monica Akokuwebe)
4. to the first speaker, do you think your findings can be generalised to other African countries that has diverse cultures, backgrounds, religions and ethnicities. how do you close such gaps in your work (Monica Akokuwebe)
5. to the last speaker, family core values are important but in the contemporary times, we have lost the traditional sense of core family values, and this has affected family relationship strain, what will be the norms that can be built along policy interventions to revive the core values of families. (Monica Akokuwebe)
6. Dr Kobiane's presentation raises an interesting question about robustly attributing changes in behavior to changes in social norms, especially as norms are one of many potential and interrelated determinants of behavior. Key issues seem to be how we measure norms, among which groups, and more firmly establishing a causal relationship here. Do the panelists have suggestions have suggestions on resolving these issues? (Jeffrey Edmeades)
7. please, to all the discussants, especially Seema... During your presentation, you didn't lay emphasis on family background and parental upbringing as these can build a certain negative or positive norms in one when growing up and in their mindset. the norms are not only social, but also involves religious, cultural and family norms. we cannot classify all these as social norms... (Monica Akokuwebe)

Chat:

1. Of interest to the group: <https://www.igwg.org/2022/03/igwg-2021-plenary-meeting-report/> (Saumya RamaRao)
2. I agree with David Lam's point about interventions that are gender transformative and those that accede to existing gender norms. At this stage, the field is moving strongly on gender transformative interventions. (Saumya RamaRao)
3. Also of potential interest to the group: <https://www.alignplatform.org/>, including the Social Norms Atlas. Key resource for thinking about measurement of social norms: https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/resources_for_measuring_social_norms_guide_final.pdf (Jeffrey Edmeades)
4. Reinforcing 'positive' social norms can be an effective way of counteracting 'negative' norms. But care must be taken to not reinforce or validate inequality and inequitable structures/norms. Ideally, we'd be aiming to be gender-transformative in all our social norm programming. (Jeffrey Edmeades)