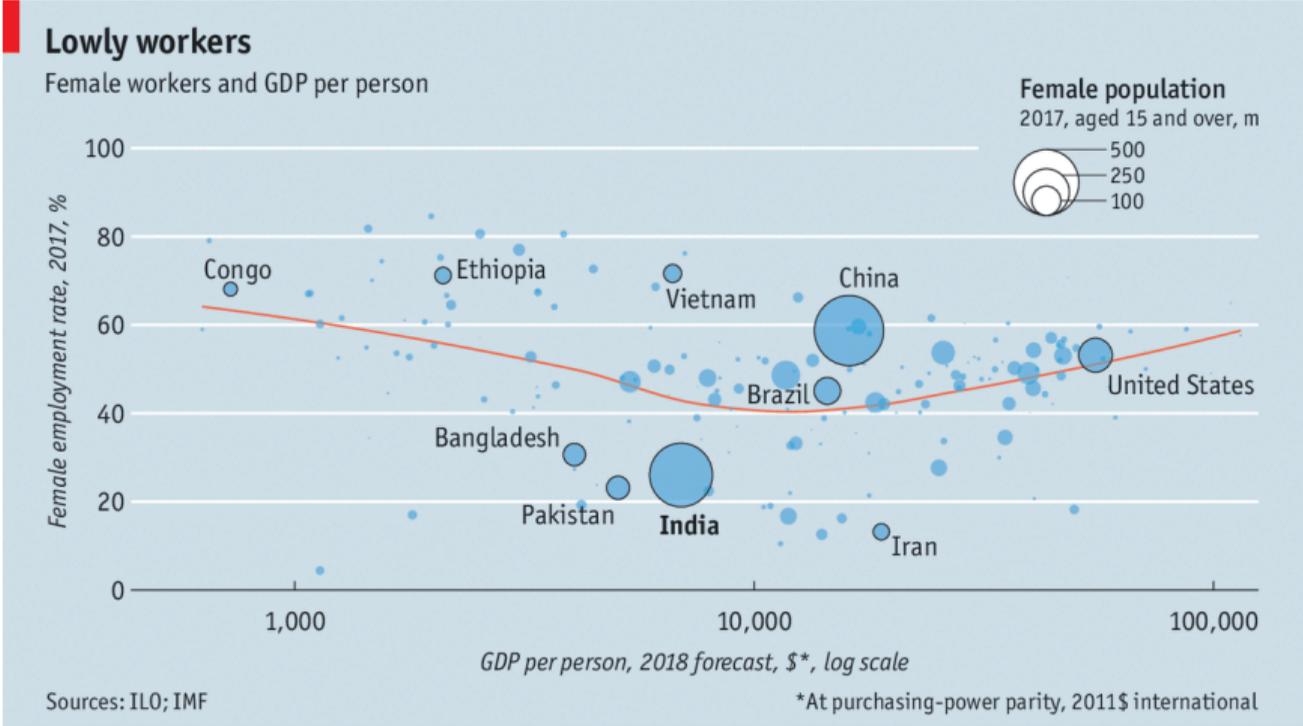


Social Norms as a Barrier to Female Employment in Developing Countries

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Female employment and economic development



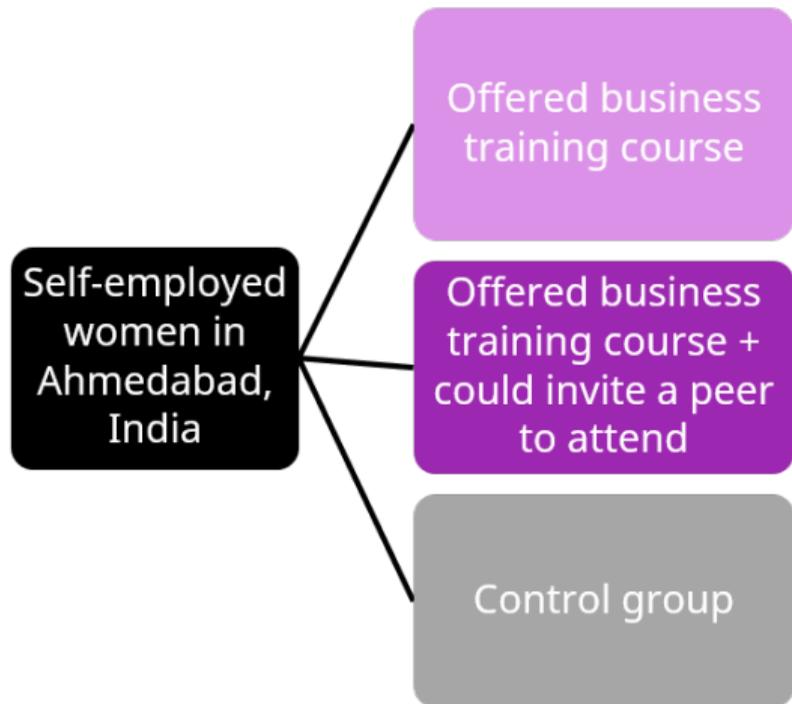
Importance of social norms for female employment

- ▶ Large variation in norms across countries at same level of development
- ▶ Many specific social norms matter
 - ▶ Stigma from women being the family breadwinner
 - ▶ Restrictions on women's social interactions and mobility
 - ▶ Acceptability of harassment of women in public spaces
 - ▶ Control over household finances
 - ▶ Responsibility for household chores and child care

Policies to improve women's employment outcomes in light of restrictive norms

- ▶ Two approaches
 - ▶ Design policy around the norm
 - ▶ Policy to shift the norms
- ▶ Will discuss two examples from my research in India

Strengthen women's business networks to counteract restricted mobility



Reshaping gender attitudes through school curriculum

- ▶ **Hypothesis:** Thinking about and discussing human rights and economic arguments for gender equality will change adolescents' attitudes and behavior
- ▶ NGO Breakthrough designed and taught 27 sessions over 2 school years, during the regular school day
 - ▶ Boys and girls in grades 7 to 10
 - ▶ Who does various chores in your home? Why that gender division of work? Is it fair?
- ▶ Evaluated intervention through randomized trial in 314 schools (>14,000 students) in Haryana, India

Intervention had a large and persistent effect on attitudes

- ▶ Large impact on gender attitudes: 16% of regressive attitudes converted to support for equality
- ▶ Impacts highly persistent so far: Similar effect size 2.5 years after program ended
- ▶ Hope to conduct longer-run follow-up surveys (e.g., employment of female students and male students' wives)
- ▶ Possible scale-up in government schools

Restrictive social norms → Expand set of labor market policies

- ▶ Need to move beyond traditional policies to improve women's labor market outcomes, e.g., training, microcredit, girls' education
 - ▶ Opening bank accounts for women
 - ▶ Safer commutes, e.g., women-only subway cars or buses
 - ▶ Psychological coaching to increase women's self-efficacy
- ▶ Norm change is difficult but warrants more policy attention
 - ▶ Acceptability of harassment in public
 - ▶ Men's role in child care and housework