

BRIEFCASE

J-PAL POLICY BRIEFCASE [MARCH 2013]

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FUNDATING RESEARCH INTO ACTION



SEE TOMORROW'S JOBS, INVEST IN GIRLS TODAY

Making employment opportunities for women more salient and accessible led to increased investment in education and nutrition of girls, and delayed marriage and childbearing among women in rural India.

Featuring an evaluation by Robert Jensen

In many developing countries, women frequently leave school, marry, and start having children at a young age. In India, nearly half of women now in their early twenties were married before the age of eighteen. Girls tend to drop out of school earlier than boys, and women are far less likely to work for pay or work outside of the home. These outcomes indicate low social and economic progress of women and may have consequences for poverty and well-being.



The availability of employment opportunities for women may play a role in influencing these outcomes. Parents may not invest as much in their daughters' education as their sons' if they anticipate fewer employment opportunities for educated women than men. Would parents change how they invest in their daughters and would young women's aspirations change, if they learned that new, better job opportunities are available? When people learn about well-paying jobs for women, can this change decisions about young women continuing their education, entering the labor market, and delaying getting married and having children?

J-PAL affiliate Robert Jensen (University of California, Los Angeles) conducted a randomized evaluation in rural India to test the impact of spreading awareness about jobs for educated young women in the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry, and subsequently helping qualified women get BPO jobs by offering free recruiting services. The purpose of the evaluation was to test whether increased employment opportunities for women can affect lifecycle work and family transitions, rather than whether recruiting services as a policy instrument (which do not actually create jobs) can help address these outcomes.

- **The recruiting services helped young women find jobs.** Women aged 15 to 24 in treatment villages were 4.6 percentage points more likely to be employed in the BPO sector than their peers in the comparison villages and 2.4 percentage points more likely to work at all for pay outside the home.
- **Parents invested more in their daughters' education, and nutrition or health.** The program led to a 3 percentage point increase in school enrollment for girls. It also increased girls' body mass index (BMI), suggesting that parents invested more in their nutrition and/or health.
- **Young women's career aspirations changed.** Women from treatment villages expressed a greater desire to work for pay throughout their lives, even long after marriage and childbirth.
- **Young women significantly delayed marriage and childbearing.** Young women from treatment villages were 3 to 6 percentage points less likely to get married or to have given birth over the three-year period of the intervention.

See Tomorrow's Jobs, Invest in Girls Today

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