Social Norms

Policy Implication

Pakistan is the third most dangerous place for women and girls, with 90% of women facing domestic violence (Thomson Reuters 2011). 50% of Pakistani women are married off at the average age of 19 years, with 13% married by the time they are 15 and 40% by age 18 (Population Council).

A little is known about the mechanisms that lead to VAWG and child marriage, and less so about the most effective pathways to curb these mechanisms. In particular, there is little evidence on the effectiveness of interventions targeting men and boys, in addition to women and girls.

The prevention of early marriages and VAWG is crucial, not only because girls who marry as children are particularly at risk of premature childbearing and violence from their partners, but also because it negatively affects economic growth and perpetuates intergenerational transmission of poverty. An important mechanism driving this effect is the interaction between VAWG and low cooperation between spouses, resulting in poor health, education and economic outcomes for women and their children.

This research therefore consists of a cluster randomized control trial (RCT) of a social norms intervention implemented by Bedari in South Punjab and Indus Resource Center in Sindh that addresses women's empowerment and VAWG.

The intervention consists of regular group meetings, theatre plays, and other community activities that address social norms targeting either men and boys, women and girls, or both, dependent on the experimental arm.

The project is in intervention phase in both Sindh and Punjab. Baseline survey was conducted in Sindh in July/August 2018. The intervention is being implemented in 135 treatment villages, and in 44 control villages after an endline survey.

The baseline survey was conducted among husbands, wives and their children of marriageable age. Data was also collected through personal interviews as well as behavioural games. An end-line survey will be conducted 6 months after the interventions, to allow us to measure impact and cost-effectiveness, as well as how impact and the route to changing social norms differs across provinces.

The project is expected to answer following research questions:

1. What is the impact on **early/forced marriage** and **education for girls** of edutainment interventions that aim to change **attitudes/beliefs/norms/social sanctions** surrounding marriage and education for girls?

2. To what extent are norm changes among **men/boys** versus **women/girls** effective in terms of changing actual behavior?

3. What are the **mechanisms** for this impact?

4. How do these mechanisms work through **intra-household bargaining**?

5. What is the effect of these same edutainment interventions on attitudes/beliefs/norms about and actual prevalence of **domestic and sexual violence**?

Project Evaluation

Baseline survey across 80 villages in Sindh has been conducted. It is about to be implemented across 99 villages in Punjab. In total, the sample consists of 1,790 households, including for each household an adult male, adult female and adolescent child (5,370 individuals in total). The survey collects key economic indicators and data on marriages and education, but also unique measures of attitudes, beliefs and norms about girls' education, marriage, gender and VAWG.

Through this thorough piece of research, we will be able to draw broader insights (beyond just edutainment interventions) about how policy makers can best change norms in communities, especially where women hold low bargaining power. Furthermore, through evidence-based identification of underlying mechanisms of impact, we will be able to draw insights for other regions within and outside of Pakistan.