

Home Production, Social Norms and Women's Labor Supply in India

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Abstract

We develop a model of a married couple's time allocation decisions to explain the low levels women's labor supply and their unresponsiveness to the wage increases at higher education levels in India. We calibrate this model with time use data from 1998 and then simulate it to match the observed data on both women's and men's time spent on work, home production and leisure in urban India. We show that in the base model with no social norms around household division of labor, the observed higher wages for women should lead to significantly greater labor supply than in the data. We then incorporate social norms that necessitate women spending a significant amount of time on home production to show that the gendered division of labor acts as a binding constraint at higher levels of education, producing much smaller increases in women's labor supply at higher education levels.

Speaker Profile

Kanika Mahajan is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the Department of Economics, Ashoka University. Previously, she has taught at the School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University, Delhi. Her primary research interests include empirical development economics in the field of gender, labor and agriculture. Currently, she is working on a range of topics – including violence against women, women's representation in gram panchayats and women's labor force participation in India.