

**Title: Discrimination by Teachers: Role of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Empathy**

**Speaker: Prof. Devesh Rustagi, University of Warwick**

**Area: Economics**

**Date: 28.08.2025, Venue: P22 @ 4PM**

**Abstract:**

We investigate whether teachers discriminate against students from marginalized groups, what attitudes and beliefs underlie this discrimination, and whether empathy can mitigate it. A correspondence study with 1,700 teachers from India shows teachers assign lower grades to answers with lower caste surname. Many teachers have pessimistic views over ability, perseverance, occupational prospects, and ritual cleanliness of people from lower castes. Teachers with more pessimistic views discriminate more. An intervention to activate empathy eliminates discrimination, especially among teachers with higher baseline empathy. These results offer a proof-of-concept on mental processes that can serve as inputs in designing programs to reduce discrimination.

**Speaker Profile:**



Devesh Rustagi is an Associate Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Warwick. He is also an invited researcher at JPAL, MIT.

His research falls at the intersection of behavioral economics, development economics, economic history, environmental economics, and political economy.

He studies the origins and stability of civic values and institutions, how these forces interact, and the effect this interaction has on development, environmental, and political outcomes. He then build on these insights to design and evaluate public policies. He achieves this by combining quasi-experimental approaches and randomized field experiments with behavioral experiments. His current projects are based in Ethiopia, Germany, India, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

His work has been published in *Econometrica*, *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Development Economics*, and *Science*.

**Webpage Link:** <https://sites.google.com/site/deveshrustagi>