

**Shaped by Culture or Institutions?
Preferences for Work and Family Life among Young Indians**

Extended Abstract for PAA 2019

Ieva Zumbyte
Brown University

Abstract

Educational attainment for both men and women has increased significantly since the 1990s in India. Contrary to historical patterns observed elsewhere, these educational improvements have not brought women into the labor force en masse. Instead, labor force participation for educated women has decreased. Some scholars explain this puzzle by pointing to lower positive selection into education, status effects, and the accompanying emphasis on marriage market motives. I offer an alternative explanation and argue that workplace norms and policies that are unsupportive of individuals with family responsibilities may contribute to women's decisions to stay home. I conduct an original survey-experiment to test the causal relationship between workplace policies and young people's preferences for balancing work and family responsibilities in India. I further identify whether these preferences are more likely to be formed in response to institutional constraints or cultural norms that dictate women's primary responsibility lies in familial duties.