

NATASHA JHA

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EMPLOYMENT

Current

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Kellogg Institute for International Studies 2023-present

Previous

Research Associate, Indian School of Business 2016-2018

Research Analyst, Barclays Shared Services 2014-2016

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University 2023

M.S., Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University 2021

M.A., Economics, Delhi School of Economics 2014

B.A. (Honours), Economics, University of Delhi 2012

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Fields: Development, Labor, Environmental Economics

PUBLICATIONS

Alcohol Ban and Crime: The ABC's of the Bihar Prohibition (Kalyani Chaudhuri, Natasha Jha, Mrithyunjayan Nilayamgode and Revathy Suryanarayana), Forthcoming, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*

We studied the relationship between alcohol consumption and crime using the implementation of a statewide total prohibition of alcohol in the Indian state of Bihar in 2016. Testing the theoretical argument that alcohol has differential effects on different kinds of crime, we used a difference-in-differences approach and found that the prohibition led to a 0.22 standard deviation point reduction in the reported incidence of violent crimes but had no significant impact on nonviolent crimes. The effect is fairly persistent over time, with the initial impact being large enough that, on average, there is a reduction in violent crime over at least a three-year period following the ban. Heterogeneity tests revealed that the effect on crime was stronger in interior districts and districts with higher baseline alcohol consumption. We also observed stronger effects in districts where a smaller proportion of the population faced religious restrictions on alcohol consumption. Since all these subgroups indicate districts where the ban is likely to have had a larger effect on alcohol availability and consumption, we conclude that the ban affects crime through this channel rather than that of institutional changes.

RESEARCH PAPERS

Show Me the Dowry: How Traditional Customs Affect Education in Rural India

This study examines the impact of a law that increased penalties for dowry on rural households' educational attainment in India, using data from the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey. A difference-in-differences approach reveals that the law reduced dowry payments and female education, with the decline in female education being most pronounced in communities with higher dowry prevalence. This suggests that dowry payments signal adherence to tradition, and reducing female education serves as an alternative signal in the absence of dowry. Hence, while the law combats an exploitative custom, it inadvertently depletes female human capital.

Previously circulated as "Dowry and Human Capital Formation: Evidence from India"

Agriculture and Arsenic: Can over extraction of groundwater make us sick?

This paper draws attention to an overlooked prospective impact of irrigation technology, namely Arsenic contamination of groundwater. Using historical geological variation in aquifer depth to

instrument for groundwater irrigation, the paper finds higher community level Arsenic exposure in water abundant districts across India. Water abundant districts have 70% more habitats with arsenic exposure greater than safety levels. Combining insights from hydrology, historical deep tubewell groundwater extraction for irrigation appears as a primary driver for arsenic release in water sources over alternate pathways related to arsenic exposure caused by contemporary farming practices such as fertilizer or pesticide usage.

Minimum Support Prices in Indian Agriculture: Supporting Whom and at What Price? (Shilpa Aggarwal, Natasha Jha & Ishani Chatterjee) (*In preparation for submission towards AER: Insights*)

Distortions introduced by price-controls may be underestimated if controls are captured for uses beyond fixing market failures. We study India's minimum support prices (MSP) for food grains, and find that when a district with a larger area under cultivation for a crop is slated to go for elections, the central government announces a higher MSP for that crop. Since the government's procurement price is the same across states, this blunt instrument is used more when other policy instruments are unavailable, i.e., when the incumbent state government is unaligned with the center. Higher MSP directly reduces welfare by increasing consumer prices.

Gender differences in Tertiary Health Care Utilization: Evidence from India (Tarun Jain, Natasha Jha and Revathy Suryanarayana)

We examine gender differences in access to and service within a publicly financed tertiary healthcare program in a developing country. Using claim-level administrative data from the program we estimate gender differences in access and services. We find that women on average experience shorter interactions with the healthcare system with fewer days between surgery and discharge, reduced hospital revisits, and are less likely to travel to seek healthcare. Further, we find women in childbearing years face the brunt of these differences and that public hospitals perpetuate these differences.

(Authors listed alphabetically with equal contributions for all papers)

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Like Mother, Like Daughter? The Impact of Mother's Work Experience on Daughter's Educational and Employment Aspirations: Evidence from WWII (Natasha Jha, Giulia Olivero, Revathy Suryanarayana and Meredith Welch)

We examine the influence of mothers as role models on the math and science ability self-beliefs, preferences for STEM based education and career paths of adolescent girls in the United States. We propose to leverage the increase in mothers' employment during World War II, particularly in unconventional manufacturing jobs, as a historical shift in societal attitudes towards women's work in the United States. To construct variables to instrument for mothers' employment, we use historical data (1940s) on manufacturing, war mobilization, and casualty rates. Our outcomes are derived from the Project Talent database, a unique cohort panel dataset that captures career choice and subject-based interest scores of the 1942-1946 cohorts of high-school students. The empirical methodology will use an Instrumental variable approach and instruments for mothers' employment using wartime production, mobilization, and casualty rates.

Sterilization and Structural Change: Evidence from India (Natasha Jha and Vrinda Kapoor)

We investigate the potential of a brutal and regime imposed mass sterilization program in India to bring about structural change. The 1975-76 sterilization program sterilized over 8 million men. According to news reports the sterilization camps were unsanitary and operations were rushed which resulted in casualties and lifelong disabilities that impacted labor market productivity. We posit that the reduction in agent productivity triggered a structural change on account of movement away from labor intensive occupations. We combine twenty years (1970-1990) of state level digitised records on sterilization targets and achievements from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare yearbooks with census data on occupation categories to explore our hypothesis. Using a cohort by year analysis we explore if cohorts of men who were likely to be exposed to the sterilization programs are less likely to be in agricultural and labor heavy industries.

OTHER WRITING

Arsenic and Agriculture: Is Our Growing Dependence on Groundwater Irrigation Poisoning Our Water? Blog post for Tata-Cornell Institute, published June 2022

Thinking About Soil from the Farmers' Perspectives. Blog post for Tata-Cornell Institute, published April 2021

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2022: PacDev, *University of San Francisco*; MIEDC, *University of Minnesota*; 21st Summer School in International and Development Economics, *CEPR/LEAP*; NEUDC, *Yale University*

2019: APPAM, *Denver*

2018: NEUDC, *Cornell University*; SEA, *DC*; International Conference on South Asian Economic Development, *South Asian University*;

2017: Winter School, *Delhi School of Economics*; Human Capital Workshop, *Indian School of Business*

INVITED SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

2023: University of Georgia;

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Referee: *The World Bank Economic Review*, *China Economic Review*, *Economics of Education Review*, *Economic Modelling*, *PLOS ONE*

Cornell University: Member Graduate Students for Gender Equity in Economics

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, AEM 2000 - Contemporary Controversies in the Global Economy (January 2023 - May 2023)

Teaching Assistant, AEM 2020 - Better Decisions for Life, Love and Money (January 2022 - May 2022)

Teaching Assistant, AEM 6120 - Applied Econometrics (August 2019 - December 2019)

AWARDS

Tata-Cornell Scholar, Annual Assistantship Award (\$35,000) (2019 - 2023)

TECHNICAL SKILLS

STATA, SAS, Python, R, Microsoft Office, \LaTeX , QGIS, VBA

REFERENCES

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