Monica Agarwal

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Citizenship: India
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Research Interests

Development Economics, Economics of Education

Education

2024 (expected)	Ph.D. in Agricultural & Applied Economics, University of Wisconsin–Madison Dissertation title: *"Essays on Affirmative Action Policies and Educational Outcomes"*
2020	M.S. in Agricultural & Applied Economics, University of Wisconsin–Madison
2018	M.Phil. in Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
2014	M.A in Economics, Jadavpur University, India
2012	B.A. (Hons.), in Economics, Jadavpur University, India

References

Prof. Laura Schechter (PhD Advisor)
Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Email: lschechter@wisc.edu

Prof. Jeffrey A. Smith
Department of Economics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Email: econjeff@ssc.wisc.edu

Prof. Priya Mukherjee
Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Email: priya.mukherjee@wisc.edu

Working Papers

- *(Job Market Paper) Role of Affirmative Action in Enrollment, Test Scores, and School Quality: Evidence from India*

ABSTRACT: Worldwide, affirmative action policies are implemented as a means to promote social equity. India's Right to Education Act - one of the world's largest affirmative action policies - mandates all private schools to reserve 25% seats at entry-level grades for low socioeconomic status students. Although implemented for over a decade, its effectiveness remains largely understudied. In this paper, I estimate the causal impact of this policy on children's learning outcomes using a combination of rich administrative and survey data in a large state in India. I leverage the lottery based allocation of oversubscribed schools to identify the causal impact of this policy. I find that the policy improves children's English test scores by .18 SD via beneficiaries attending better schools, and investing more time in educational activities. While the policy allocates children to private schools, there exists a large variation in the quality of private schools. Hence, I uncover the distribution of effects within the private sector, and find that higher quality private schools boost English test scores by .5-.7 SD, relative to lower quality private schools. My findings are from a context when all learning is remote, and suggest that not all remote learning is ineffective. Furthermore, private schools do a better job at adapting to, and implementing remote educational technologies, and in doing so, they also enhance children's learning.

- *Women Empowerment and Household Sanitation* - with Md Moshi Ul Alam

  ABSTRACT: Females derive greater benefits from in-house toilets than males. Given this, we estimate the causal impact of a policy that increased inheritance rights of females in India, on the presence of a toilet in their marital household. We estimate that the policy increased the probability of the presence of a toilet in the household a woman marries into, by at least 11 percentage points on average. Allowing for dynamic and heterogeneous treatment effects, we show that the average treatment effect is primarily driven by larger effects in states that adopted the policy later compared to early adopters. In addition, we find that the policy had the highest impact on the group of women who were the youngest at the time of policy implementation, thus having the longest exposure under the policy. Our results highlight that empowering females through inheritance rights and thus improving their within-household bargaining power can be a seemingly unrelated, yet effective policy tool for improving sanitation coverage in regions grappling with open-defecation problems.

- *Parental Investments and Sibling Spillover Effects of Affirmative Action Policies: Evidence from India*

  ABSTRACT: Affirmative action policies that are targeted to specific individuals may have unintended spillover effects. Typically, such spillover effects are absent from the cost-benefit analyses of affirmative action policies. In this paper, I estimate the sibling spillover effects of India's Right to Education Act policy. I combine the administrative data of applications to grade 1 private school admissions under the policy, along with survey data conducted with a sample of applicant households, where I collect detailed data on children's educational outcomes for both the applicants of the policy, and their siblings. Lottery based allocation of oversubscribed private schools leads to a randomization in whether the applicant child wins or loses the private school lottery. I compare educational outcomes of children who are siblings in the winning applicant households, relative to those who are siblings in the losing applicant households, by comparing households that are ex-ante similar in their likelihood of winning or losing the private school lottery. I find that being in a household that has a winning applicant child negatively affects the likelihood of enrollment when the sibling is younger and of pre-school age (by 15 percentage points). This result is potentially driven by the availability of high-quality learning materials from the school attended by the older applicant child who won the lottery to private schools. Conversely, when the sibling is younger, but of primary school entry age, I find that the likelihood of enrollment for siblings increases by 11 percentage points in winning applicant households relative to losing applicant households. This result indicates that for children that are approaching school entry age, parents in winning households are less likely to delay their school enrollment. I find no differences in parental time and monetary investments across siblings in winning versus losing applicant households. The results highlight that affirmative action policies may have unintended consequences, beyond targeted individuals, and highlights the importance of considering these spillovers in the cost-benefit analysis of such policies.

Selected Research in Progress

- *Spatial Inequality and School Choice Mechanisms* - with Md Moshi Ul Alam, Chao Fu, YingHua He

Academic Grants

2021 J-PAL Post Primary Education Initiative (USD 10,000) for
Role of Affirmative Action in Enrollment, Test Scores, and School Quality: Evidence from India (Job Market Paper)
and
Parental Investments and Sibling Spillover Effects of Affirmative Action Policies: Evidence from India

2021 Dissertation Research Grant, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, UW-Madison (USD 1,000)

Honors & Awards

2018 Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, Student Research Travel Grant, UW-Madison

2018 Graduate School Student Research Travel Grant Competition for Conference Travels, UW-Madison

2016-2018 University Grants Commission, India Non NET Fellowship

Research Assistance

2022-24 for Prof. Jessica Pac, Department of Social Work, UW-Madison.

2021-22 for Prof. Bradform Barham Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics, UW-Madison.

2020-21 for Prof. Laura Schechter Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics, UW-Madison.

2019-20 for Prof. Emilia Tjernström Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics, UW-Madison.

2018-19 for Prof. Bradform Barham Department of Agricultural & Applied Economics, UW-Madison.

Teaching Assistant

2020 (Spring) AAE 215 Introduction to Agricultural and Applied Economics (for Prof. Eduardo Cenci)

Refereeing service

Economics of Education Review

Other service

2022-2023 Organizer of Development Lab, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, UW-Madison

Conferences & Seminars

2023-2019 AAE Development Lab, UW-Madison

2023 Association for Mentoring and Inclusion in Economics (AMIE)

2018 14th Annual Conference on Growth & Development, Indian Statistical Institute, India

Affiliations

2022-2023 Association for Mentoring and Inclusion in Economics (AMIE)

2019 Graduate Research Fellow, Institute of Research and Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Computer Languages

STATA (advanced), R (intermediate), LaTeX(advanced), Webscraping using Python (intermediate)

Prior Employment

2014-2016 Associate Consultant, *Big Data Analytics, Wipro Limited, India*

Other Information

Languages: English (fluent), Hindi (native), Bengali (fluent)