

TANYA RAJAN

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Education

University of Chicago, Ph.D. Economics 2019–2025
Fields: Development, Labor, Health Economics

Rice University, B.A. with Honors in Mathematical Economic Analysis 2012–2016
Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa

Employment and Research Positions

Associate, Cornerstone Research 2025–Present

Short-term Consultant, World Bank 2025
Report on Labor Market Shocks in MENA Nations

Research Consultant, GoodWeave International (*Pro Bono*) 2023–24
Report on Child Labor in Subcontracted Readymade Garment Supply Chains in Bangladesh

Predoctoral Fellow for James Heckman, Center for the Economics of Human Development 2016–19

Research Officer, International Rescue Committee 2016

Research Assistant, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center 2014–16

Working Papers

Untangling Informality: Wages, Preferences, and Sectoral Sorting in Bangladesh’s Garment Industry

Abstract: *In many low income countries, a regulated formal sector and an unregulated informal sector coexist within the same industry and occupation. Understanding why workers choose to work at informal rather than formal jobs is critical to crafting effective labor market policy. This paper studies the importance of two determinants of worker sorting between sectors: (1) search frictions and (2) worker preferences for nonwage amenities. Focusing on the garment industry in urban Bangladesh, I collect data on workers’ job histories and elicit their preferences for specific job amenities in a choice experiment. I use the data to estimate a partial equilibrium model of job search that incorporates (1) a dual-sector labor market with sector-specific search frictions and (2) heterogeneous preferences for amenities. I find that search frictions differ by sector—workers searching for a job from unemployment are 22pp more likely receive offers from the informal sector than the formal sector over the course of a year. Additionally, preferences for nonwage amenities are strong, with some workers willing to pay nearly 30% of their wages for amenities like good supervisors and factory formality. Finally, I use the model to understand the impact of various unemployment benefit policies, from universal cash transfers to targeted unemployment insurance. I show that targeted policies, which are hard to implement in a high-informality setting, can push workers who are more salary-motivated into the informal sector.*

Work in Progress

Health Financing and Healthcare Utilization in Malawi

Abstract: *How do households in low-income countries (LICs) respond to changes in public health funding? This paper studies household health and expenditure decisions in Malawi before and after the country’s 2013 Cashgate scandal, which led to a large and persistent withdrawal of general budget support from international donors to the Malawian government. Leveraging data on the universe of health facilities in Malawi, I construct a measure of exposure to the funding shock, which differs by subdistrict due to variation in the funding sources of health facilities available in each area. I then estimate the*

causal effect of the shock on household health decisions using a differences-in-differences design with shock exposure as a continuous treatment. I find that households most affected by the funding shock are less likely to visit government-funded facilities and get less preventive care. Results are heterogeneous by income, with richer households seeking more at-home and pharmacy-based care while poorer households continue to use government funded facilities. This paper's analysis highlights the need to incorporate more distributional and behavioral considerations when informing health policy decisions in LICs.

Fertility Decline and Urbanization in India (w/ Anup Malani)

Long-term Follow-Up of the Malawi Family Planning Study (w/ Mahesh Karra and Daniel Maggio)

Rural Employment and Seasonal Migration: A Study of NREGA in Odisha, India (w/ Menna Bishop and Jack Glaser)

Publications

Cantor SB, Rajan T, Linder SK, Volk RJ. (2015). "A framework for evaluating the cost-effectiveness of patient decision aids: A case study using colorectal cancer screening." *Prev Med*, 77:168-73.

Cantor SB, Deshmukh AA, Luca NS, Nogueras-Gonzalez GM, Rajan T, Prokhorov AV. (2015) "Cost-effectiveness analysis of smoking-cessation counseling training for physicians and pharmacists." *Addict Behav*, 45:79-86.

Awards, Scholarships, and Grants

NIA T32 Predoctoral Fellowship Program	2022-2025
STEG PhD Student Small Research Grant (\$18,000)	2023
Development Economics Research Fund - Pilot Grant (\$7,000)	2023
Development Economics Research Fund - Exploratory Travel Grant (\$5,000)	2022
Gaston V. Rimlinger Thesis Prize in Economics	2016

Teaching Experience

Health Economics (MBA)	TA for Prof. Notowidigdo	Winter 2023, Spring 2024
Human Capital (PhD)	TA for Prof. Heckman	Spring 2022
Intro to Devt. Econ. (Undergraduate)	TA, Course Developer for Prof. Glennerster	Winter 2022
Empirical Analysis 1 (Masters)	TA for Joe Hardwick	Fall 2021, 2022
Econometrics (Undergraduate)	TA for Joe Hardwick	Winter 2022

Professional Experience & Service

Co-founder + Organizer, UChicago Development Reading Group/Seminar	2020-21
Women in Economics Mentor	2021-22
Presentations	<i>University of Chicago Demography Workshop (2024)</i>
Refereeing Activity	<i>JPE Micro</i>

Additional Information

Citizenship	United States
Programming Skills	Julia, R, Stata, Python, Matlab
Languages	English (<i>native</i>), Spanish (<i>intermediate</i>), Hindi (<i>conversational</i>)

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