

“EDUCATIONAL HYPOGAMY AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL INDIA”



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Educational hypogamy - the practice of men marrying women who are more educated than themselves - has been increasing in rural India over the last two decades. Can this explain rural India's declining female labor force participation rate (FLFPR)? We examine this question by testing whether women in hypogamous marriages are less likely to participate in the labor force than women in non-hypogamous marriages in rural India. This could be the case since women in hypogamous marriages are viewed as 'gender norm deviant' which is likely to cause their marriage quality to be worse than that of women in non-hypogamous marriages. This might make participation in labor force costlier for the former than the latter. To estimate the causal relationship between hypogamy and women's labor force participation, we employ a non-parametric bounds approach. We find that, indeed, compared to women in non-hypogamous marriages, women in hypogamous marriages are significantly less likely to participate in the labor force. Further, we provide suggestive evidence that this is likely because marriage quality of women in hypogamous marriages are relatively worse. Overall, therefore, our results suggest the rise in hypogamy is likely an important reason for the decline in FLFPR in rural India.



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