DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT

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A monthly update of socio-economic developments in India by the IHDS research community

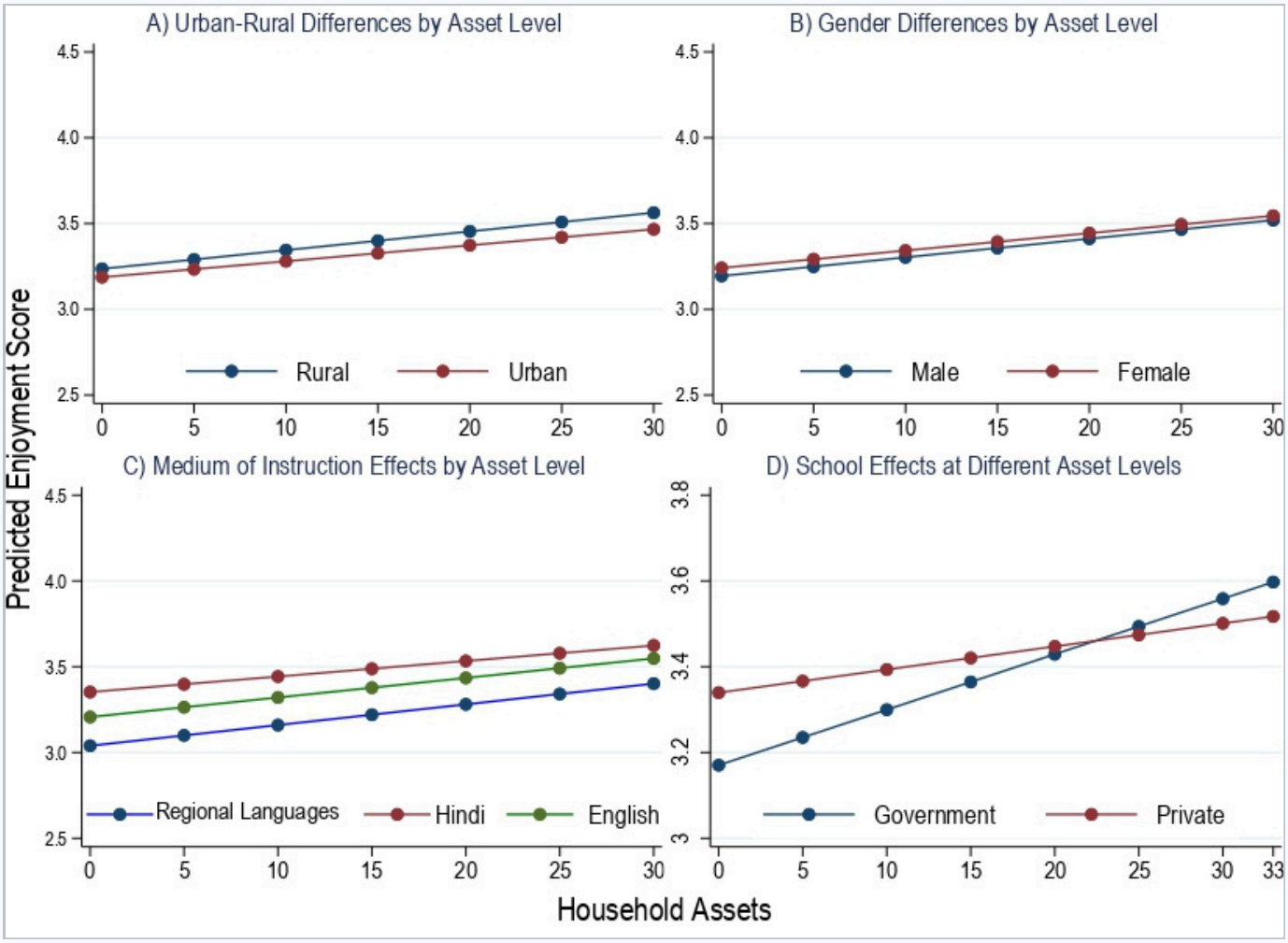
Private School Choice in India: Disparities in Enrollment and Experience

Kaibalyapati Mishra

Using data from the India Human Development Survey Round II (2011-12) for children aged 8–11 years and employing non-linear decomposition techniques, this study investigates disparities in private school enrollment and school experiences in India. The analysis shows that girls and children belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Muslim communities remain significantly underrepresented in private schooling.

Among the factors associated with school choice, medium of instruction emerges as the most influential predictor, with English-medium education substantially increasing the likelihood of private school enrollment. The findings further indicate that private school attendance is associated with a modest improvement in children's enjoyment of schooling; however, household economic status and the language environment exert stronger influences on this outcome. In addition, private schools expose children to higher levels of both positive reinforcement and punitive disciplinary practices, suggesting a more complex schooling environment than is often assumed. These relationships exhibit considerable heterogeneity across gender and rural–urban settings.

Figure 1: Asset Gradients in School Enjoyment Across Subgroups



Source: Authors' calculations based on IHDS II (2011-12).

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About the Author

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From Extended family to Enhanced Burden: Health Implications for Daughters-in-law within Patrilocal households

Deepthi Sara Anil & Debayan Pakrashi

The paper examines the health consequences of sudden disruptions in familial living arrangements within a society characterized by well-defined gender norms. Using panel data from the India Human Development Survey Round I (2004–05) and Round II (2011–12), the study analyses a sample of married women aged 15–49 residing in patrilocal households. Exploiting quasi-exogenous variation arising from the death of a co-resident parent-in-law, the study employs a difference-in-differences framework to estimate its impact on daughters-in-law.

The results show that the death of a parent-in-law adversely affects daughters-in-law's nutritional status, leading to a decline in body mass index (BMI) and an increased likelihood of being underweight. The study provides suggestive evidence that daughters-in-law experience greater household responsibilities, increased participation in wage employment, and reduced leisure time following the death of a co-resident parent-in-law. Although women also experience modest improvements in autonomy and decision-making power, these gains do not translate into better health outcomes. The findings suggest that increased autonomy alone may be insufficient to improve women's well-being when accompanied by intensified labour burdens and expanded domestic and economic responsibilities.

Table 1: Estimates for anthropometric outcomes

	(1)	(2)
	Body Mass Index (BMI)	**Incidence of underweight (IU)**
Panel A		
MILdied x Post	-0.251*	0.009
	(0.143)	(0.023)
	[0.080]	[0.697]
Observations	8,384	5,932
R-squared	0.796	0.661
Control group mean	21.69	0.301
Panel B		
FILdied x Post	-0.218	0.046*
	(0.154)	(0.025)
	[0.157]	
Observations	6,000	4,260
R-squared	0.783	0.662
Control group mean	21.57	0.307
Individual Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Time Variant Controls	Yes	Yes

Source: Author's calculations based on IHDS I (2004-05) and IHDS II (2011-12).
Notes: This Table reports the results from a difference-in-differences specification, where post is an indicator which takes the value 1 for data from the second wave of IHDS-2. All regressions include individual fixed effects as well as controls for the number of children, consumption expenditure and household assets. The IU regressions in column (2) have fewer observations because we create an incidence of underweight (IU) dummy variable, which takes the value 1 if the BMI is below the normal range (i.e. below 18.5) and 0 if the BMI lies in the healthy range (18.5 to 25). Hence BMI above 25 is excluded by construction. Robust standard errors clustered at the level of the primary sampling unit are reported in parenthesis. P-values are reported in the square brackets. * Significant at 10%; ** Significant at 5%; *** Significant at 1%.; † Significant at 15% level.

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About the Authors

Deepthi Sara Anil is an Associate Researcher with Tata-Cornell Institute for Agriculture and Nutrition. Her research focuses on development, health, and environmental economics. She received her PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur.

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Recent Publications Using IHDS Data

Aktas, A., & Poblete-Cazenave, M. (2026). Interplay Between Residential Clean Energy and Climate Policies in India: Distributional Consequences. Climate Change Economics.

Biswas, S. (2026, June 10). 66% entertainment, 11.4% e-governance: How India's connected households divide their time online. Livemint.

Bussolo, M., Peragine, V., & Reutzel, F. (2026). Inequality of Opportunity in South Asia: The Puzzle of Educational Gains Without Consumption Gains. Policy Research Working Paper 11395. The World Bank.

Chatterjee, A., & Das, K. (2026). Can We Measure Gendered Inflation? A Methodological Framework for a Household Provisioning Price Index Using India's CPI 2024 Series [Preprint]. Cambridge Open Engage.

Deshpande, A., & Ramachandran, R. (2026, May 18). Caste Discrimination May Be Driving India's Stunting Gap. The Wire.

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Suthakar, S. (2026). Married into a New World: Caste Networks and Women's Labor Market Outcomes in India. [Master's Thesis, Tufts University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. 32676702.

World Bank Study Finds Educational Gains Alone Cannot Eliminate Opportunity Gaps in India. (2026, May 27). The Policy Edge.

About IHDS

The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) began as a nationally representative, multi-topic survey of 41,554 households in 1,503 villages and 971 urban neighbourhoods across India. The first round of interviews were completed in 2004-05; the Data is publicly available via ICPSR. The second round re-interviewed most of these households in 2011-12 (N = 42,152), and data for the same are available via ICPSR. Fieldwork for IHDS-III was undertaken in 2022-24, and data is currently being cleaned and processed.

The IHDS-III has been jointly conducted by researchers from the University of Maryland, the National Council of Applied Economic Research, Indiana University and the University of Michigan.

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