



27 JUN 2018 WORKING PAPER SUMMARIES

Negotiating a Better Future: How Interpersonal Skills Facilitate Inter-Generational Investment

by Nava Ashraf, Natalie Bau, Corinne Low, and Kathleen McGinn

For many girls in developing countries, early adolescence is a time of key challenges: school dropout rates rise, and social and economic pressures increase for marriage and motherhood. This randomized control trial involving Zambian adolescent girls finds that negotiation skills can help them navigate these challenges. Girls taught negotiation skills had significantly better educational outcomes over the next three years.

Author Abstract

Using a randomized control trial, we examine whether offering adolescent girls nonmaterial resources—specifically, negotiation skills—can improve educational outcomes in a low-income country. In so doing, we provide the first evidence on the effects of an intervention that increased noncognitive, interpersonal skills during adolescence. Long-run administrative data shows that negotiation training significantly improved educational outcomes over the next three years. The training had greater effects than two alternative treatments (offering girls a safe physical space with female mentors and offering girls information about the returns to education), suggesting that negotiation skills themselves drive the effect. Further evidence from a lab-in-the-field experiment, which simulates parents' educational investment decisions, and a midline survey completed by girls and their parents, suggests that negotiation skills improved girls' outcomes by moving households' human capital investments closer to the efficient frontier. This is consistent with an incomplete contracting model, where negotiation allows daughters to strategically cooperate with parents.

Paper Information

- Full Working Paper Text (pdf)
- Working Paper Publication Date: May 2018
- HBS Working Paper Number: HBS Working Paper #18-104
- Faculty Unit(s): Negotiation, Organizations & Markets

BROWSE POPULAR TOPICS

LEADERSHIP

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

GENDER

NEGOTIATION