

Can Conditional Cash Transfer Defer Child Marriage? Impact of *Kanyashree Prakalpa* in West Bengal, India

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Abstract

This paper studies the impact of a conditional cash transfer program called Kanyashree-Prakalpa (KP) in the Indian state of West Bengal that aimed to improve the status and well-being of girls by reducing the incidence of child marriage and increasing school attainment of girls till at least 18 years of age. Using the data from multiple rounds of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), difference-in-differences and triple-difference are employed considering the younger cohort (exposed to the program) as the treated group, the older cohort (not exposed to the program) as the control group, and the neighbouring state of Jharkhand as a comparison state. The analysis suggests that the KP-program has reduced the probability of child marriage by 6.7 percent and increased the probability of secondary or higher educational attainment by 6 percent. The study contributes to the scarce literature on the significant long-term impact of the KP-program on women's well-being and empowerment.