

Paula Lopez-Pena

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CURRENT POSITION

Postdoctoral Associate & Lecturer in Economics, Yale University 2019-present

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics, University of Warwick 2012-2018

MSc in Economics, London School of Economics and Political Science 2011-2012

MA in Applied Economics, Universidad de Oviedo 2006-2008

BA Business Administration, Universidad de Oviedo 2002-2006

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Primary: Applied Microeconomics, Development Economics

Secondary: Health, Labor, Firms & Entrepreneurship

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2018-2019 Innovations for Poverty Action, Dhaka (Bangladesh)
Postdoctoral Research Fellow

2007-2011 Inter-American Development Bank
Impact Evaluation Coordinator (Managua, 2010)
Research Fellow (Washington DC, 2007-2010)

2006-2007 Universidad de Oviedo, Department of Economics (Spain)
Research Assistant

JOB MARKET PAPER

“Managing the second shift: The impact of noncognitive skills on female entrepreneurs’ time allocation and mental health”

Many workers in developing countries are drawn into self-employment out of necessity. The self-employed must balance home- and work-related responsibilities with limited material and cognitive resources. This “double shift” constrains the growth of their enterprises and undermines their psychological well-being. In this paper, I investigate whether training in noncognitive skills can help entrepreneurs manage competing demands more effectively and, thereby, improve their mental health and firm profits. I randomly assign a sample of female entrepreneurs in urban Bangladesh to a course of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) that features goal setting, time management, and problem-solving strategies. To better understand the role of skills, I compare the effects of CBT training to those of nondirective counseling. Unlike CBT, counseling nudges participants to reflect on their problems and life goals without suggesting specific courses of action. I find that CBT training leads to large increases in mental health and reductions in home-to-work conflict. Those exposed to CBT are 11 percentage points less likely to be depressed and 23 percent less likely to lose an hour of work to solve problems at home. By contrast, the effects of CBT on working time, business practices, and firm outcomes are small and insignificant. A machine learning exercise based on honest trees reveals considerable treatment heterogeneity. The data-driven approach suggests that working time and profits increase only for low-profit entrepreneurs, but high-profit entrepreneurs experience larger mental health improvements. These results are consistent with a labor-leisure model in which noncognitive skills can improve the welfare of entrepreneurs—even if average profits remain unchanged—by allowing them to increase their leisure time.

“Moving the needle: The top-down effects of managerial training in the Bangladeshi garment sector,” with M.K. Mozumder, A. Rabbani, and C. Woodruff

Ready-made garment factories in developing countries are infamous for their strenuous working conditions, including overtime, low wages, and hostile manager-employee relations. We investigate the causal links between management practices, line productivity, and worker well-being in five large Bangladeshi factories. We recruited line supervisors and randomized one-third to a ten-week training course in organizational skills centered on production planning, stress management, and interpersonal communications. To disentangle the effect of skills from offering information or a communications role model, we exposed another one-third to an educational course about work stress and health. The remainder received no intervention. Skills training led to a 2.6 percentage point increase in line efficiency over one year (6 percent higher than the average control line) but no manager-worker communications changes. Training decreased overtime pay and, thereby, workers’ salaries, but their psychological well-being remained unchanged. Health education made supervisors less likely to adopt authoritarian leadership practices and led to improvements in psychological well-being among workers but no changes in line productivity and workers’ salaries. Our findings show that management plays a vital role in workers’ productivity and well-being. However, neither of our interventions appears to be an all-encompassing solution on its own.

“The causes and consequences of Myanmar’s internal conflict and the persecution of Rohingya Muslims,” with C.A. Davis, A.M. Mobarak, and J. Wen

The Rohingya crisis is one of the world’s worst ongoing human-rights atrocities, but its causes are contested and its consequences are poorly understood. We marshal a variety of existing and original data to shed light on its drivers, characteristics, and human cost. First, in contrast with the government’s preferred narrative, we show that violence against civilians in Myanmar clearly responds to economic motives: it increases during times when international rice prices are high, in places suitable for rice cultivation. We argue that these patterns are consistent with a rapacity effect—the government and majority ethnic groups use violence and looting to appropriate rice and rice-suitable land. Second, we find support for the hypothesis that the Armed Forces of Myanmar (the “Tatmadaw”) use violence against Rohingya Muslims to incapacitate the group, as opposed to merely deterring or responding to attacks from Muslim militias. The opposite is true in all other internal ethnic conflicts. Using a structural VAR approach, we demonstrate that the Tatmadaw responds with disproportionate force to shocks that precipitate ethnic conflict only when Rohingya Muslims—either civilians or militia members—are involved. Further, the Tatmadaw deliberately targets and kills Rohingya civilians, but not civilians of other minority groups. In a last step, we explore the potential toll of enduring systematic violence on mental health using data from a representative survey of Rohingya refugees living in Cox’s Bazar. We find that more than one-third of refugees meet the symptom criteria for depression, and the condition is more severe among those who experienced more than five traumatic events.

“Falling living standards during the COVID-19 crisis: Quantitative evidence from nine developing countries,” with D. Egger, E. Miguel, S. Warren, A. Shenoy, E. Collins, D. Karlan, *et al.*

R&R, Science Advances

“Migration and the labor market impacts of COVID-19,” with N. Barker, C.A. Davis, H. Mitchell, A.M. Mobarak, K. Naguib, M.E. Reimao, A. Shenoy, and C. Vernot

“Prevalence of COVID-19 symptoms, risk factors, and health behaviors in host and refugee communities in Cox’s Bazar: A representative panel study,” with C.A. Davis, A.M. Mobarak, and S. Raihan

“Prevalence and correlates of depression among Rohingya refugees and Bangladesh,” with C.A. Davis, A.M. Mobarak

“Willingness to accept preschool incentives in urban Bangladesh,” with A. Rabbani

“Urban life, employment and well-being in Bangladesh,” with A. Rabbani, and C. Woodruff

WORK IN PROGRESS AND FIELD PROJECTS

“**The economics of domestic violence: Evidence from Bangladesh,**” with N. Buchmann and A. Rabbani
SVRI and World Bank Development Marketplace Award for Innovation on GBV Solutions 2019. Co-funded by Stars in Global Health (Grand Challenges Canada), National Science Foundation, and Weiss Foundation

“**Cox’s Bazar Panel Survey,**” with S. Baird, C.A. Davis, M. Genoni, N. Krishnan, M. Mobarak, and J. Muz. Co-funded by the Yale MacMillan Center Program of Refugees, Forced Displacement, and Humanitarian Responses, GAGE/ODI, IPA’s Peace and Recovery Program, and the World Bank

“**Improving education through bureaucrat autonomy in Bangladesh,**” with A. Haque, A.M. Mobarak, and J. Wen. Funded by J-PAL Post-Primary Education Initiative, DFID Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund, and the World Bank. *AEA RCT Registry - AEARCTR-0003513*

RESEARCH GRANTS AND AWARDS

“A media experiment to reduce domestic violence in Bangladesh,” with N. Buchmann and A. Rabbani
Sexual Violence Research Initiative and World Bank (USD 99,653), Grand Challenges Canada (99,932 CAD)

“Worker Well-Being and Productivity in the Bangladesh Garment Sector,” with M.K. Mozumder, A. Rabbani, and C. Woodruff
MIT/USI (USD 245,000), International Growth Centre (USD 98,000), MIT/USI (USD 52,000)

“Entrepreneur Well-Being and Firm Outcomes in Bangladesh”
IPA SME Competitive Fund (USD 29,999)

“The Effect of Shocks on Worker Well-being and Firm Productivity: Evidence from the Bangladeshi Garment Sector,” with C. Woodruff, R. Macchiavello, A. Rabbani, and A. Ashraf
IGC (GBP 41,743)

“Improving Education through Bureaucrat Autonomy in Bangladesh,” with A.M. Mobarak, J. Wen, and A. Haque
Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF), World Bank (USD 99,775)

ESRC-DTC, Postgraduate Scholarship. 2013-2016

Fundacion La Caixa, Postgraduate Scholarship. 2011-2012

Fundacion Universidad de Oviedo and Cajastur Fellowship. 2007-2008

Ministerio de Educacion y Ciencia, Collaborative Research Grant. 2005-2006

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2020-2021 Yale University
Lecturer
The Economics and Psychology of Poverty

2017-2018 University of Warwick, UK
Teaching Assistant
Econometrics

2016-2017 University of Warwick, UK
Teaching Assistant
Statistical Techniques

PRE-DOCTORAL PUBLICATIONS

“How Accurate Is Our Misinformation? A Randomized Comparison of Four Survey Interview Methods to Measure Risk Behavior Among Young Adults in the Dominican Republic,” with S. Vivo, S. McCoy, R. Munoz, M. Larrieu and P. Celhay

Development Engineering, 2017

“A Toolkit for the Measurement of Youth Risk Behavior,” with S. Vivo, D. Saric, R. Munoz, S. McCoy, and S. Bautista-Arredondo

Washington DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2013

“Sexual and Reproductive Health for Youth: A Review of Evidence for Prevention,” with S. Vivo and D. Saric

Washington DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2012

LANGUAGES

English (fluent), Spanish (native), Portuguese (intermediate), Bangla (beginner)

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Citizenship: Spain

REFERENCES

[Professor A. Mushfiq Mobarak](#)

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