VRINDA KAPOOR

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Education

Cornell University — Ithaca, NY
Ph.D., Applied Economics and Management — 2027
M.Sc., Applied Economics and Management — 2024

London School of Economics and Political Science — London, UK
M.Sc., Development Studies — 2015

University of Delhi — New Delhi, India
B.A. (Honours), Economics — 2014

Job Market Paper

Employer Quality and Information Frictions in Informal Labor Markets

Abstract: Informal labor markets in developing countries are infamous for poor working conditions, ranging from delayed payments to verbal abuse. Why do poor quality employers persist in informal labor markets? This paper studies the role of information frictions in sustaining low quality employment relationships in spot labor markets in India. Using field experiments with 431 casual construction workers in Chennai, I first show that workers place substantial value on employer quality, including respectful treatment, timely payment, and not being cheated. Workers demand an average premium of INR 352, approximately 32 percent of daily wages, to work for a lower-rated employer, despite facing a meaningful risk of not finding work on a given day. I then demonstrate that information about employer misconduct diffuses poorly among workers in this tightly knit labor market where workers and employers meet every day. I find that negative employer experiences are significantly less likely to be shared than positive ones, particularly when the identity of the person sharing information is revealed. Mechanism experiments offer suggestive evidence that fear of employer retaliation and concerns about the signal strength of individual experiences may play a role in limiting the transmission of negative information. These findings demonstrate the limitation of reputation as a disciplining mechanism for employer behavior even when formal enforcement is absent.

Publications

Measuring Gender Attitudes: Developing and Testing Implicit Association Tests for Adolescents in India, with Tarun Jain, Diva Dhar, Vrinda Kapur and Anita Raj, *PLoS ONE*, 17(6): e0264077, 2022.

Working Papers

Seasonal Disease Incidence and Antibiotic Overprovision: Evidence from India

Works in Progress

Environmental Stress, Employer Behavior, and Worker Welfare in Informal Labor Markets, with Avantika Prabhakar

Empowering Vulnerable Populations through Digital Mental Health Solutions: Evidence from Garment Factory Workers, with Avantika Prabhakar

Heat Adaptation in India's Manufacturing Industry, with Simoni Jain and Avantika Prabhakar

Awards and Fellowships

Einaudi Center Global Research Fellowship, Cornell University — 2025-2026
Ashley Graduate Fellowship, Cornell University — Summer 2025, 2023
Dyson Graduate Teaching Assistant Outstanding Service Award, Cornell University — 2023
Graduate Research Assistantships (x3), Cornell University — 2021-2027

Grants

2026	Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Grants ($700)
2026	Cornell Center for Antimicrobial Resistance Research and Education ($750)
2026	W. Barlow Ware Rotary Award for International Graduate Student Professional Development ($650)
2026	IHS Humane Studies Fellowship, George Mason University ($3,000)
2025	International Growth Center (£17,239)
2025	Tata-Cornell Institute ($5,000)
2025	Cornell Center for Social Sciences Seed Grant (*with Heather Schofield*) ($11,960)
2025	Einaudi Center for International Research Travel Award ($1,700)
2025	Robert S. Hatfield Award for Study of Ethics in Business and Organizations ($1,500)
2025	Cornell Center for the Study of Inequality Seed Grant ($1,000)
2024	SurveyCTO Primary Data Collection Research Grant (Honorable Mention)
2024	Cornell Center for the Study of Inequality Seed Grant ($1,000)
2024	Cornell University Research Travel Grant ($1,050)

Research Experience

Cornell University — Ithaca, NY
Research Assistant, Prof. Nancy Chau — June 2023 to May 2024

Bocconi University — Milan, Italy
Research Assistant, Prof. Eliana La Ferrara — Sept. 2019 to July 2021

Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab South Asia (J-PAL SA) — New Delhi, India
Research Manager — April 2018 to Aug. 2019
Senior Research Associate/Research Associate — Sept. 2015 to March 2018

Teaching Experience

Cornell University — Ithaca, NY
Teaching Assistant, AEM 3320/6325 Leadership and Management in Sports (undergrad) — Fall 2026
Teaching Assistant, AEM 7021 Applied Microeconomics II: General Equilibrium (PhD) — Spring 2025
Teaching Assistant, AEM 2350 Introduction to the Economics of Development (undergrad) — Fall 2024, 2023, 2022
Teaching Assistant, AEM 2020/PSYCH 2940 Better Decisions for Life, Love and Money (undergrad) — Spring 2023

Laboratory for Effective Anti-Poverty Policies, Bocconi University — Milan, Italy
Instructor, Workshop on Primary Data Collection — July 2021

Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab South Asia (J-PAL SA) — New Delhi, India
Teaching Assistant, Executive Education in Evaluating Social Programs — July 2019
Instructor, Measurement and Survey Design Course — May 2019, May 2018
Instructor, Indian Economic Service (IES) Officers' Training — Aug. 2017

Conferences and Seminars (* denotes scheduled)

2026	Pacific Conference for Development Economics, Tata-Cornell Institute, Cornell Development Economics Seminar, American Society of Health Economists Annual Meeting, Economic Science Association World Meetings, Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting, Advances with Field Experiments, Northeastern Universities Development Consortium, Cornell Labor Economics Seminar, Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting
2025	Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting, Behavioral Research in Economics Workshop India Meeting
2023	IGC/CEPR Summer School in Gender, Labor and Development Economics, Italy
2021	IPA-Northwestern Global Poverty Research Lab Methods and Measurement Conference

Academic Service

Cornell University
President, AEM Graduate Student Association 2023-2024

Referee Service
Journals: Economic Modelling
Grants: SurveyCTO Primary Data Collection Research Grant

Skills

Software: Stata, R, ArcGIS, Matlab, Python

Languages: English, Hindi (native)

References

Heather Schofield (Chair)
Assistant Professor
SC Johnson College of Business
Cornell University
hws44@cornell.edu

Michèle Belot
Professor
Department of Economics &
School of Industrial Labor Relations
Cornell University
mb2693@cornell.edu

Nancy Chau
Professor of Economics
Charles H. Dyson School of Applied
Economics and Management
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