RCT MIDLINE REPORT



The school-to-work transition:

Preparing youth to pursue career paths of their choice

Principal Investigator: Lori Beaman



THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION IN INDIA Is a huge challenge and under-researched

India faces an employability crisis. Education enrollment and advancement are higher than ever, but employment outcomes for educated youth have declined and become more unequal.

- 50% of post-secondary graduates are employable¹
- Female labor force participation is 21% and declining²
- 56% of employers find it difficult to fill jobs³

While significant investments have been to skill India's youth, very little research has been conducted on what works and what doesn't.

J-PAL and Medha partnered to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention to address the employability crisis.



J-PAL AND MEDHA EVALUATED THE IMPACT OF A CAREER PREPARATION PROGRAM FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Medha's Career Advancement Bootcamp (CAB) builds 21st Century Skills and connects youth to career paths of their choice:

- 4Cs (communications, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration)
- Workplace Exposure (internships, career talks, etc.)
- Career preparation (CV, goal setting, interview prep)

CAB was delivered to women in under-resourced tertiary institutions in Tier II/III cities across Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

There were three arms to the study:

- Career Advancement Bootcamp (CAB)
- Career Advancement Bootcamp plus internship
- Control



THE RESEARCH COVERED 1,400 STUDENTS FROM TIER II/III CITIES IN UTTAR PRADESH AND HARYANA

Sample details:

Students from 17 under-resourced schools

32 batches of students: 24 in UP and 8 in Haryana

Students were randomly assigned to treatment groups on a rolling basis

In total, 1406 students were enrolled in the study at baseline.



FROM 2018 TO 2020, THE BASELINE SURVEY, INTERVENTION, AND MIDLINE SURVEY WERE CONDUCTED FOR TWO COHORTS



Baseline surveys and randomization were conducted in person during the 2019-20 academic year.

Midline surveys started in person in February 2020.

The pandemic forced the remainder of midline surveys to be conducted on the phone in June and July 2020.

ATTRITION WAS A CHALLENGE DUE TO COVID-19 AND The need to conduct the midline survey on the phone

Midline sample size:	In-Person	Phone	Total	Mock Interview
Treatment	245	464	709	312
Control	95	147	242	100
Total	340	611	951	412

Of the original 1,406 participants, 951 participated in the midline survey.

Of those, 412 students who had graduated conducted mock interviews with HR professionals over the phone.

Attrition analysis and robustness check are in the appendix.

Two treatment arms were combined due to attrition (CAB and CAB + Internship).

THE FINDINGS WERE GROUPED INTO THREE CAREER PREPARATION INDEXES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS



Career Planning

• Measures current career goals, plans to achieve them, and any alternative career goals and plans.



Career Awareness

• Measures perception and knowledge of different career options, job portals, and places to get information.

Career Readiness

• Measures employability through quality of resume/CV, performance in a mock interview, and workplace experience.

Personal Development



• Measures personal development through questions around self-efficacy, sense of control, comfort around the opposite gender, and support from family.



MEDHA'S CAREER ADVANCEMENT BOOTCAMP (CAB) LEADS TO Greater Career Awareness, Planning, and Readiness

Measured in standard deviations



CAB leads students to have significantly higher career planning and career readiness skills.

There is a less significant increase in career awareness and no significant impact on personal development.

All treatment effects are estimated using controls selected by double LASSO.

THE IMPACT ON CAREER READINESS IS LARGELY DRIVEN BY Resume writing and interview performance

Strong positive effects for specific, career-related skills:

- More treatment students have a resume and know how to prepare one.
- Treatment students were more equipped to speak about their strengths in an interview.

No effect on communicating immediate, postgraduation plans and their ability to talk about nonjob topics in an interview.



MEDHA ALUMNI ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO HAVE WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE THAN THEIR PEERS



Very strong positive effect on real-life work experience

• 2x students in the treatment group have gained work experience.

The treatment effect is driven largely by internships.

AND ARE MORE AWARE OF JOB PORTALS AND PLACES TO FIND INFORMATION ON CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Strong positive effects on awareness of job portals:

- 14.5% more in the treatment group know about job portals.
- The treatment group can also name more job portals.

No effect on perceptions of private-sector salaries and job security, no effect on specific industry perceptions.



MEDHA ALUMNI ALSO HAVE CLEARER CAREER PLANS AND ALTERNATIVE 'PLAN Bs'



Q1: What is your career goal?

Q2: How will you get there? What are the means of accessing this opportunity?

Q3: Once you have achieved your first opportunity, what will you do to grow in your career?

Questions repeated for an alternative career goal (if they have one)

Strong, significant improvement in alumni's articulation of an alternative career plan and goal.

Moderate improvement in alumni's articulation of their primary career goal, specifically how to achieve it.

THERE WAS NO EFFECT ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, But it could have been due to covid-19 disruptions

"I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events."



No treatment effect on personal development even when broken into components.

This may be due to disruptions caused by COVID-19:

- These variables may have been more difficult to measure over the phone.
- The pandemic may have caused anxiety and a lack of confidence.

WHEN DISAGGREGATED BY SURVEY TYPE EFFECTS ARE FOUND



Those interviewed over the phone were:

- More likely to express self-efficacy.
- More likely to be comfortable with the opposite gender.
- More likely to expect their parents' approval of their job choice.

WE ARE INCORPORATING THE LEARNINGS INTO THE PROGRAM AND SHARING THE INDEXES AND TOOLS WITH THE ECOSYSTEM

Improving Program Design

Incorporating specific learnings to strengthen the program design and delivery.



Revising internal evaluation tools & systems

Upgrading our internal evaluation systems to incorporate career preparation indexes and instruments.



Disseminating the indexes & methodology with others

Sharing the findings, indexes, and instruments with peers, funders, and collaboratives to align outcomes/methods.



AND STARTING TO DESIGN AN EMPIRICAL STUDY TO EVALUATE OUR SYSTEM ADOPTION WORK WITH THE GOVERNMENT



Our system adoption work:

Priority initiatives

Supporting efforts

Curriculum design and revision

Enhance existing courses, review and recommend changes, develop new programs/degrees/diplomas.

Capacity building of system actors

Train and mentor faculty and other system actors. Design and disseminate toolkits and guides.

Performance management systems

Determine impact indicators, build and deploy tech and non-tech systems, strengthen data-driven decision making.

Empirical evidence and collective action

Conduct and disseminate research on the school to work ecosystem. Collaborate more deeply with peers.



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APPENDIX

ATTRITION WAS HIGHER IN THE CONTROL GROUP DUE TO A LACK OF CONNECTION WITH MEDHA



Attrition was high in both treatment and control groups:

- Harder to follow up over the phone generally
- Even harder during a pandemic

A substantial difference in attrition rates in the phone surveys.

Those in the control group had far less of a connection to Medha and thus less of an interest in participating in the survey.

DESPITE ATTRITION, RESPONDENTS IN TREATMENT AND CONTROL HAVE SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS

Treatment - Control



Differences in attrition could drive earlier results: suppose the most 'career ready' in the control group did not respond to our survey. This would erroneously look like Medha improved career readiness.

The good news is that people who attrit in treatment and control look pretty similar at baseline.

ROBUSTNESS TESTS RESULT IN SIMILAR TREATMENT EFFECTS, GIVING US CONFIDENCE THE FINDINGS ARE SOUND

Measured in standard deviations



Nonetheless, we have 'stress tested' our results to see how much we should worry about attrition.

Methods include:

- Matching (PSM)
- Weighting (IPW)
- Bounding

Career readiness result particularly robust!