

Impact of Revealing Manager Ethnicity and Gender on Job Seeker Behavior in India

Sector(s): Firms, Gender, Labor Markets

Sample: 3,090 job applicants

Target group: Job seekers Women and girls Youth Managers Workers

Outcome of interest: Discrimination Gender attitudes and norms Attitudes and norms

Intervention type: Digital and mobile Information Social networks Recruitment and hiring Employment

Partner organization(s): University of Chicago

Members of cultural, ethnic, or religious minorities and women are underrepresented in leadership positions in the private sector. Researchers are studying whether and how much job seekers in India discriminate against managers from excluded groups by randomly varying the manager characteristics displayed on job postings.

Policy issue

Members of cultural, ethnic, or religious minorities and women are underrepresented in powerful positions in the private sector. Managers who are also cultural or ethnic minorities or women may face workplace discrimination from their subordinates, especially in areas where members of the cultural or religious majority or men are particularly opposed to challenges to the prevailing social hierarchy.

Two key ways in which potential or current employees may discriminate against managers include: job seekers may choose not to work for managers from historically excluded backgrounds, and employees working for managers from excluded backgrounds may work less or at a lower intensity. Here, the researchers ask: how much does workers' concern for social approval motivate their discrimination against managers from excluded backgrounds? How much does workers' own prejudice motivate their discrimination against these managers?

Context of the evaluation

This study took place in Bihar, India. Bihar is India's third most populous state, and it is also among the lowest income states. Muslims and women in Bihar face widespread discrimination.

For example, women held only 15 percent of board seats and 3 percent of CEO and CFO positions in India in 2019. In the informal sector in the state of Bihar women ran only 10 percent of economic enterprises in 2012.

In Bihar and in India more broadly, competition for jobs among educated young people is relatively steep. In one study in India in 2018, 20.2 percent of men with ten or more years of education were unemployed.

Details of the intervention

Working in Bihar, researchers are randomly varying whether the manager associated with a job posting is from a minority group to measure the impact of job seeker discrimination on labor supply. Researchers are also randomly varying whether an

applicant's decision to apply is shared with their network.

Facebook's "Jobs on Facebook" feature is a relatively common way for employers to hire entry-level workers in this context. Researchers posted a general ad for entry-level jobs, such as data entry operators, on Facebook. Candidates who replied to the ad were asked to answer a few demographic questions, and to refer three to five friends who may also be interested in similar jobs. A subset of candidates then received a listing for a phone surveyor job.

At this stage, candidates were randomly assigned to see one of eight types of job listings:

1. Non-minority manager, regular pay, confidential application. The job description included the name of a Hindu, male manager.
2. Muslim manager, regular pay, confidential application. The job description included the name of a Muslim, male manager.
3. Woman manager, regular pay, confidential application. The job description included the name of a Hindu, woman manager.
4. Muslim manager, increased pay, confidential application. The job description included the name of a Muslim, male manager. Successful candidates would receive a higher monthly salary.
5. Woman manager, increased pay, confidential application. The job description included the name of a Hindu, woman manager. Successful candidates would receive a higher monthly salary.
6. Non-minority manager, regular pay, choice shared with referrals. The job description included the name of a Hindu, male manager. Applicants were notified that the people they referred would also be invited to apply to this job if they chose to apply.
7. Muslim manager, regular pay, choice shared with referrals. The job description included the name of a Muslim, male manager. Applicants were notified that the people they referred would also be invited to apply to this job if they chose to apply. Those people would then know that they had applied to work for a Muslim, male manager.
8. Woman manager, regular pay, choice shared with referrals. The job description included the name of a woman, Hindu manager. Applicants were notified that the people they referred would also be invited to apply to this job if they chose to apply. Those people would then know that they had applied to work for a Hindu, woman manager.

Ultimately, successful candidates received a 30-day job that was paid a total of approximately INR 10,000 (approximately US\$133 at the time of the evaluation). In this context of relatively high unemployment, a 30-day job was seen as a good opportunity that could also beget future employment opportunities.

Researchers are tracking outcomes in four key categories: quantity and quality of labor, self-sorting along perceived ethnic lines, costs of discrimination, and the intersection of social approval and discrimination. Key indicators include the number and quality of applications, the wages at which applicants are willing to begin working, and the proportion of applicants who accept job offers.

Results and policy lessons

Research ongoing; results forthcoming.