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LOSING PROSOCIALITY IN THE QUEST FOR
TALENT? SORTING, SELECTION, AND
PRODUCTIVITY IN THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC
SERVICES *

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Abstract

We embed a field experiment in a nationwide recruitment drive for nurses in Zambia to test whether career benefits attract talent at the expense of prosocial motivation. We randomize the offer of career benefits at the recruitment stage. In line with common wisdom, treatment attracts less prosocial applicants. However, the trade-off only exists at low levels of talent: the marginal applicants in treatment are more talented and equally prosocial. These are hired, and they perform better at every step of the chain: they deliver more services, promote institutional childbirth, and reduce child malnutrition by 25% in the communities they serve.
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Losing Prosociality in the Quest for Talent? Sorting, Selection, and Productivity in the Delivery of Public Services

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