

Authors

Sabrin Beg
University of Delaware

Anne Fitzpatrick
The Ohio State University

Adrienne M. Lucas
Lerner College of Business and Economics, University of Delaware

Gender Bias in Assessments of Teacher Performance
By SABRIN BEG, ANNE FITZPATRICK, ADRIENNE M. LUCAS¹

Professional advancement often depends on both a manager's assessment and an employee's own self-assessment of their productivity. Both assessments are often complicated due to a lack of objective outcomes and measures. Instead, managers may instead rely upon subjective assessments that reflect pre-existing biases based on characteristics like gender. Lacking objective data, and potentially receiving biased assessments, female employees may not develop accurate assessments of their own self-effectiveness. In this paper we compared managers' and workers' subjective assessments, testing whether that relationship varies by workers' genders. We then compared managers' assessments to an objective, output-based measure of productivity and asked managers to assess hypothetical people, randomly varying the gendered name of the person.

While performance reviews occur across almost all sectors of the economy, the education sector is a particularly interesting one to study. Identifying effective teachers, including promoting those who might be effective principals, is crucial to improving school quality and student learning. Education also contains observable metrics: a teacher's effectiveness can be measured objectively with students' test score gains (Bian and Das 2020). However, in developing countries, principals may lack such data, leading to assessments that could include both classical measurement error and systematic bias based on teachers' characteristics that are unrelated to their actual effectiveness (Harris and Saw 2014). Lacking data, teachers themselves may also be unaware of their true

¹ Beg: University of Delaware, 415 Parrall Hall, Newark, DE 19716 (email: sbeg@udel.edu); Fitzpatrick: University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Winstley Hall 5-025, Boston, MA 02125 (email: anne.fitzpatrick@umassboston.edu); Lucas: University of Delaware, 419 Parrall Hall, Newark, DE 19716, NBER, I-PAL, and CGD (email: glucas@udel.edu). We thank the World Bank Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF), Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), and the United Nations Children's Fund for generous funding of this project. For exceptional project management and research assistance in Ghana we thank Henry Adomson, Renard Corbin, and Edward Torgue. This project would not have been possible without the dedication of the entire IPA Ghana SEAES policy and field teams, especially Joyce Jurgens and Bridget Kwasiah Gyasi. We thank UNICEF and Ghana Education Services for their partnership and our respondents for their cooperation. For useful comments and suggestions we thank Heather Sarason and Peter Todd.

Gender Bias in Assessments of Teacher Performance

Professional advancement often depends on subjective performance reviews, especially in developing countries where objective data on performance may not be available. But subjective reviews may be susceptible to personal biases based on characteristics like gender. To better understand this in the education sector in Ghana, researchers compared both principals' reviews and teacher self-assessments of effectiveness to an objective measure: increases in student test scores. Female teachers were objectively more effective based on increases in student test scores. However, principals were 11 percentage points

less likely to rate a female teacher as effective compared to a male teacher. These findings contribute to the evidence on gender biases in subjective assessments and related barriers faced by women in labor markets in developing countries.

January 06, 2021