Work-From-Home Revolution: Enhancing Women's Participation in STEM

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Abstract

Despite various organizational efforts to promote gender representation, inclusion, and diversity, women's participation in STEM occupations remains disproportionately low. This paper examines whether introducing or enhancing work-from-home options can improve young women's representation in STEM occupations. Using theories from labor economics and organizational strategy, along with data from SWAA, IPUMS-CPS, and job postings, the study employs a Difference-in-Differences approach, leveraging COVID-19 as a natural experiment that exogenously triggered work-from-home adoption. The analysis reveals that implementing work-from-home policies increases the likelihood of young women pursuing STEM careers by a significant 6.4 percent. These findings are consistent across subgroups and remain robust to subsample and falsification tests. This research highlights how cost-effective policies, such as flexible work arrangements, can play a pivotal role in reducing gender disparities in STEM occupations.

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