Information Provision and Gender Difference in Labor Outcomes: Evidence from an Online Job Board *

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Abstract

Women and men differ in their job search strategies in information gathering and in referral networks. While men often have broader social networks and personal connections, women may rely more on job boards, benefiting from the transparent information they provide. This paper examines the impact of job boards on the gender employment gap within a gender-unequal context, using geographic and temporal variation in the rollout of one of China's largest online job boards. We construct an expansion timeline, collecting data on the job board's entry dates in each city using historical screenshots from the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Additionally, the internal monthly Urban Household Survey (UHS) allows us to detect both the immediate and dynamic effects of the job board's expansion. Our findings show that the job board's introduction reduces the gender gap in employment by increasing the probability of women's employment, with no significant effect on men's employment. These results hold across various subgroups, including married individuals and those without college degrees. The positive effects of the online job board, however, disappear among the unmarried and highly educated groups. We aim to provide additional evidence supporting the mechanism that women with limited social networks and mobility benefit more. This study offers important implications for policymakers in designing and implementing effective interventions to reduce gender inequality in the labor market.

Key Words: Online Job Boards; Gender Difference; Employment Rate

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