

Reading Summary

Kai Liao

May 2021

This paper explores the issue of gender gaps in labor market of lawyers. There are significant difference of earnings and subsequent promotion between men and women lawyers. However, whether this difference results from gender discrimination or productivity difference remains unclear. This paper solve this problem by observing the gender performance gaps. It finds that the gender performance gaps do not appear to be correlated with measures of explicit discrimination at the firm level. This paper also use the main measures of performance in the legal profession to analyze the extent to which gender performance differences explain the gender gap in earnings and promotion. They also analyze the link between performance and gender gaps in career advancement.

This paper use hours billed and new client revenue to proxy the performance of a lawyer. They then use linear regression and quantile regression to show that this is indeed a significant gender gap between male and female. In their regression, the fixed effects of firm and region is controlled. To eliminate the potential concern of differences in hours worked, they normalized the performance by hours worked and

the results are still valid. They also consider the effect of the different area of laws. When this is controlled, the main result is still valid.

The performance gaps of lawyers may be due to discrimination in the workplace. To test if this is a reason for the performance gaps, they regress performance on the interaction term of Female and not enough assignment. The results cannot reject that female lawyers actually receive same treatment as male lawyers.

Another potential reason of performance gaps is child rearing. Using the same idea of testing workplace discrimination, this paper regress performance on the interaction term of Female and children numbers and children's age. The results shows that the number of children does not make female lawyer less productive when compared to males. However, if there is a child under 4 years old, female lawyer in a family would have less productivity.