

RUOXUAN (REBECCA) WU

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Education

University of Chicago, Ph.D. in Economics	2020–2026 (<i>Expected</i>)
Yale University, M.A. in International and Development Economics	2017–2018
London School of Economics and Political Science, BSc. in Economics	2014–2017

References

Professor Marianne Bertrand (Co-Chair) University of Chicago Booth School of Business Marianne.Bertrand@chicagobooth.edu (773) 834-5943	Professor Christina Brown (Co-Chair) University of Chicago Kenneth C. Griffin Department of Economics christinabrown@uchicago.edu (773) 702-8003
Professor Michael Dinerstein Duke University Department of Economics michael.dinerstein@duke.edu (650) 492-1004	

Research and Teaching Fields

Primary:	Development Economics, Labor Economics
Secondary:	Household Economics, Behavioral Economics

Job Market Paper

Beliefs, Reputation, and Barriers to Entry in Online Labor Markets (with H. Ahmed and Z. S. Tirmazee)

Abstract: Hundreds of millions of workers in developing countries seek digital jobs online but face entry barriers without an established reputation. Novice workers could offset this by lowering initial wages, yet few do. Our baseline survey points to two explanations: workers believe employers interpret low wages as low quality signals and are uncertain about their own abilities. We conduct two field experiments on a leading global freelancing platform to examine how these beliefs shape worker outcomes. In the demand-side experiment, we randomize wage offers by novice workers to 703 jobs and find that workers misperceive employer behavior: low wage offers significantly improve their hiring prospects. In the supply-side experiment with 481 novice workers, we randomly provide them with accurate information about employer responses and their performance. Correcting workers' beliefs increases their willingness to lower wages. Consistent with reputation models, effects are driven by high-ability novices with high

returns to reputation once these frictions are removed. Simulations show that without external intervention, worker learning about employer responses and their abilities is slow and costly. Our findings highlight that information interventions can help workers in developing countries overcome reputation barriers and accelerate talent discovery in online labor markets.

Working Papers

Intra-Household Incentive Design: An Experiment on Parent-Child Decision Dynamics in Pakistan (with H. Ahmed, Z. S. Tirmazee, and E. Zhang)

Abstract: How should we design and target incentives for skills investment in young adults who live with their parents? We study the role of intra-household payment and information targeting on the effectiveness of a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program using a randomized control trial. The program aimed to boost completion of a digital skills training program among young females in urban Pakistan. Fixing the incentive size and daughters' knowledge about it, we cross-randomized (1) the payment split between parents and daughters and (2) whether parents received information about the daughters' incentive. Under asymmetric information about the CCT, incentivizing parents increased training completion by 103% compared to incentivizing daughters, driven by increased parental nudging. When both parents and daughters knew about the CCT, completion rates did not vary by the incentive split. Two-year follow-up reveals that young women who completed the training programs are more likely to be working and demonstrate more extensive computer use. Our results suggest that in this parent-child context, incomplete information sharing is the main barrier to the optimal incentive targeting for skill acquisition.

Work in Progress

Intermediation by Superstars: Evidence from Online Labor Markets - Pilot Completed

Abstract: I examine the role of labor intermediaries in improving worker productivity in online freelancing markets. I first document the prevalence of labor intermediaries in a decentralized market and then investigate two mechanisms through which intermediaries may enhance worker performance: labor specialization and on-the-job learning. I test these mechanisms through a randomized controlled trial in Pakistan. Graduates from a freelancing training program will be randomly assigned to work independently on online platforms or through intermediaries. I track performance over time to test both mechanisms. First, I identify labor specialization effects by comparing output quality on identical tasks between platform workers and intermediary workers. Second, I test learning effects by comparing performance between platform workers and former intermediary workers after they transition to independent work. My findings will inform policies on digital labor market regulation.

Do Wedding Vendors Discriminate? Experimental Evidence from the Wedding Industry in Pakistan (with S. A. Asad and S. Shaukat) - Pilot Ongoing

Awards, Scholarships, and Grants

BFI Development Economics Center Research Grant (\$16,800)	2024
The Weiss Fund Travel and Piloting Grant (\$13,160)	2024
Agnes and Nathan Janco Travel Award (\$3,850)	2024
Thaler-Tversky Independent Research Grant (\$3,000)	2024
IGC Small Research Grant (£5,056)	2024
Resident Fellowship at Lahore School of Economics	2023
BFI Development Economics Center Pilot Grant (\$9,950)	2023

The Weiss Fund Travel Grant (\$4,950)	2023
BFI Initiative for the Study of Gender in the Economy Exploratory Research Grant (\$5,000)	2022
BFI Development Economics Center Exploratory Research Grant (\$4,840)	2022
University of Chicago, Economics Fellowship	2020-Present

Teaching Experience

Microeconomics of Development (graduate)	TA for Christina Brown	2024
Behavioral Development Economics (graduate)	TA for Anne Karing	2023
Data for Empirical Analysis (graduate)	Guest Lecturer	2023
Practicalities of Running RCTs (graduate)	TA for Rachel Glennerster	2022
Econ. of Gender in Intl. Contexts (undergrad)	TA for Alessandra González	2022, 2023

Research Experience and Other Employment

Research Assistant for Prof. Christina Brown, University of Chicago	2022
Research Assistant for Prof. Leonardo Bursztyn, University of Chicago	2019-2020
Research Assistant for Prof. Emily Breza, Harvard University	2019
Short Term Consultant, Development Research Group, World Bank	2018-2019

Professional Experience

Conferences	2025: <i>Advancements in Field Experiments, North East Universities Development Consortium (scheduled)</i> 2024: <i>North East Universities Development Consortium, Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting</i> 2023: <i>PEDL Young Scholars Matchmaking Workshop</i>
Refereeing Activity	<i>Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization</i>

Other Writing

Estimating Global Poverty in Stata: The PovcalNet Command (with A. C. Aguilar, C. Lakner, E. Prydz, J. S. Lopez, and Q. Zhao), *Global Poverty Monitoring Technical Note No. 9, World Bank*.

Additional Information

Citizenship	China
Programming Skills	Stata, R, Python; SurveyCTO, Qualtrics; L ^A T _E X.
Languages	Chinese (native), English (fluent)