The Impact of Team Incentives on Performance in Graduate School Evidence from Two Pilot RCTs

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In organizations, teams are ubiquitous. “Weakest Link” and “Best Shot” are incentive schemes that tie a group member’s compensation to the output of their group’s least and most productive member, respectively. In this paper, we test the impact of these incentive schemes by conducting two pilot RCTs (one in-person, one online), which included more than 250 graduate students in a graduate math class. Students were placed in study groups of three or four students, and then groups were randomized to either control, Weakest Link, or Best Shot incentives. We find evidence that such incentive approaches can affect test scores, both in-person and online.