**Summary of gender gaps in performance: evidence from young lawyers**

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**Introduction:**

Scholars Ghazala Azmat and Rosa Ferrer aim to reveal the reasons for gender gaps in career outcomes and performance among high-skilled professionals as well as a broader set of professions and skills. To do so, they documented performances and career outcomes of young lawyers in the United States. The generation of young lawyers chosen for this study has experienced virtual gender equality in law school admissions and performance. However, the gender earnings gap persists, where male lawyers earn 18 log points higher weekly earnings than female lawyers on average. Through careful examination, this study believes that 50 percent of this gender earning gap can be explained through individual and firm characteristics. The remaining earning gap can be explained through performance differences, which are measured by annual hours billed and the amount of new client revenue brought to the firm. The presence of preschool-aged children in the household and aspiration to be law firm partners are key determinants for the gender performance gap.

**Overview of the theoretical foundation:**

This study mainly used OLS linear regression method to examine the gender gap's correlation with career outcome, and with performance. Two important metrics were utilized to measure performance. The first one is “hours billed,” the annual number of hours billed by lawyers. This independent variable directly determines the annual revenues and can reflect the quantity and quality of service. In addition, it has been proved persistent over time. The second measure is “new client revenue,” the annual revenue generated from new clients that lawyers brought. Their performance was then viewed in conjunction with the traditional explanations of discrimination such as child-rearing, and career advancement measured as whether one achieved partnership status 12 years after leaving the law school.

**Overview of the data and empirical strategy:**

This paper uses a longitudinal survey of lawyers who were first admitted to the bar in 2000 in the U.S. as the data set, and the respondents were interviewed in the years 2002 and 2007.

The data set contains not only variables describing the career performance and outcome such as “total earnings”, “hour billed”, and “new client revenue”, it also includes traditionally omitted factors such as family conditions, employment background, race, educational conditions, and living regions.

**Overview of the findings:**

Firstly, the author did a regression among work performance and employer discrimination, the presence of children, and career concerns. The result shows that only a small part of the gender gaps can be explained by the independent variables above.

        Secondly, the author included a new variable “target hours” and discovered no gender gap in the target hours to bill. However, by comparing whether adding “new client revenue” into “hours billed” when calculating the ratio of hours worked to performance, a gender difference in performance due to reasons other than hours worked surfaces.

        Thirdly, the author included a new variable, “areas of law observations”. The result did not reveal the evidence that female lawyers fell into those areas associated with lower hours billed.

        Fourthly, the author put discrimination and child-rearing. After controlling for other factors such as regional fixed effects, there is no consequential effect of discrimination or children on hours billed and new client revenue. However, young children tend to lower female lawyers’ hours billed but not to male lawyers.

Fifthly, the author tried to find other innate factors that could be vital to explain the performance gap. 1) After controlling for all other variables, “aspirations” can explain the gender gap in new client revenue but not hours billed. 2) Overbilling, networking behavior both do not appear to explain the gap in performance.

Finally, the author compared the earning differences by gender with or without controlling performance measures and whether performance plays an important role in the promotion gender gap. The results turn out that the performance measures are positive and significant for both findings and there is a strong relationship between earnings/promotion and performance measures.

**Conclusion**:

There is a sizable gender gap amount high-skilled individuals in both earnings and performance. A significant portion of the gender earnings gap that previous studies failed to explain can be justified through a commonly omitted variable: difference in performance. This study explored gender gaps in performance through three hypotheses: factors correlated with workplace discrimination; the presence of preschool-aged children; and career concerns factor. The first hypothesis does not exhibit a strong relationship with the gender performance gap. The existence of young children and differences in career aspiration are key determinants of the gender performance gap.

Although this study presented ground-breaking findings, there are many limitations to its application. This study utilized self-reported AJD data, which has a high response bias even though this data is collected anonymously. Only participants with strong opinions on the underlying subject would choose to respond, hence forming a more extreme sample than the population scholars wish to study.

Another key limitation roots from the use of hours billed as a performance measurement metric. Working longer hours does not always lead to higher performance. Evaluating a lawyer’s performance based on hours worked overlooks the importance of productivity which subsequently discourages lawyers from utilizing new technologies. Readers should remain cautious about those limitations when interpreting the study’s findings.