Lecture 11: Wells Fargo and Multitasking

Compensation in Organizations

Jacob Kohlhepp

December 19, 2025

Recall: Tayan (2019)
(Note: popular press article not peer reviewed research)

Modeling Wells Fargo: Destructive Effort

▶ Output depends on a productive and destructive task:

$$y = 1 + ae_1 - be_2, a > 0, b > 0$$

▶ The 1 is just profit from operating at all.

▶ The cost of effort is:

$$c(e_1, e_2) = (e_1^2 + e_2^2)/2$$

▶ We measure and pay only based on total effort:

$$m = e_1 + e_2$$

$$w(m) = \alpha + \beta m$$

Solve on the board!

Modeling Wells Fargo: Destructive Effort

Theorem 1

If marginal destruction outweighs marginal production ($a - b > 0$) the optimal wage is $\beta^* = (a - b)/2$. If not, the firm pays a flat salary: $\beta^* = 0$.

- ▶ Incentives are not always optimal.

- ▶ Sometimes a flat salary is more profitable.

- ▶ What happens if the firm can probit destructive effort?

Modeling Wells Fargo: Destructive Effort

Theorem 1

If marginal destruction outweighs marginal production ($a - b > 0$) the optimal wage is $\beta^* = (a - b)/2$. If not, the firm pays a flat salary: $\beta^* = 0$.

▶ Incentives are not always optimal.

▶ Sometimes a flat salary is more profitable.

▶ What happens if the firm can probit destructive effort?

▶ If the firm can prohibit e_2, everything is "resolved."

Wells Fargo and the Model

- ▶ Destructive task: opening fake accounts.

- ▶ Productive task: opening real accounts.

Table of Contents

Recall: Alexander (2020)

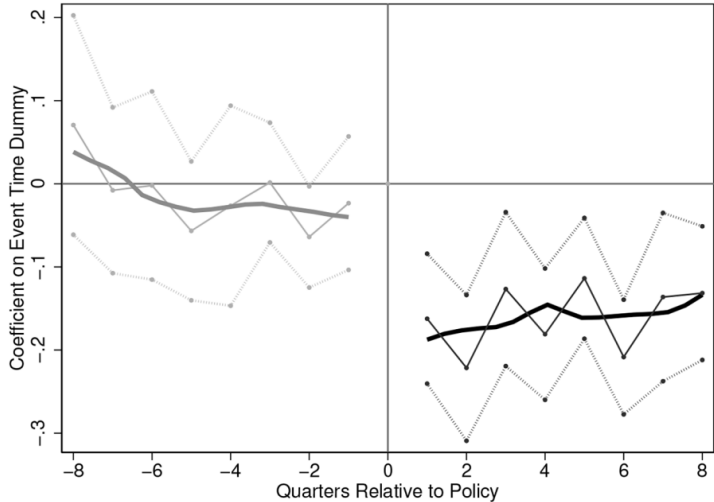# Alexander (2020): Comorbidity of Admitted Patients

Fig. 8.—Healthier patients sent to participating hospitals: Charlson comorbidity index for medical patients. Event study plot created by regressing the Charlson comorbidity index on a full set of event time indicators, as well as hospital, quarter, type (APR-DRG by SOI), and doctor fixed effects. Plotted are the coefficients on the event time indicators,