



Gender bias in academic recruitment?

Results from a survey experiment in the Nordic Region

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Academic recruitment and gender bias

This study examines the role of bias in academic recruitment by conducting a large-scale survey experiment among faculty members in Economics, Law, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology from universities in Iceland, Norway and Sweden.



Economics



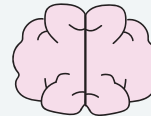
Law



Physics



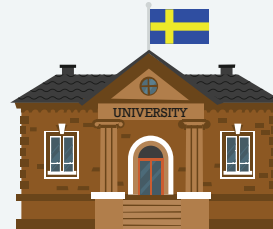
Political
Science



Psychology



Sociology

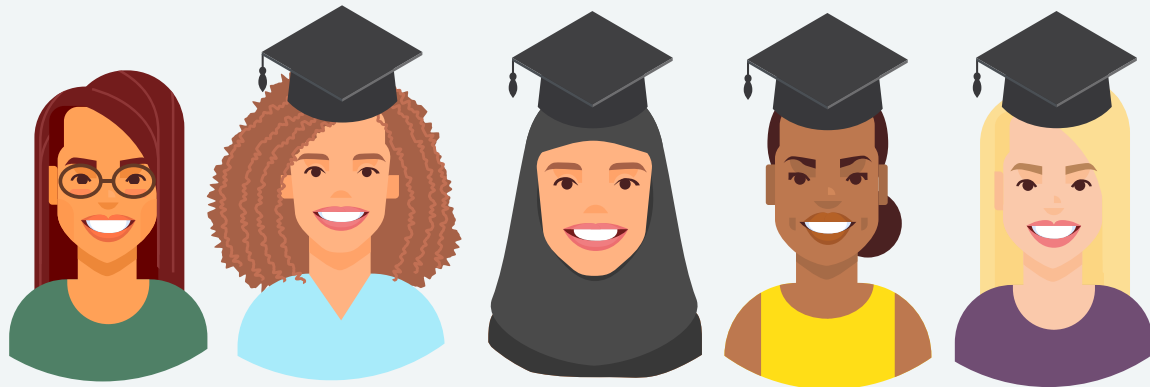


The aim is to find out whether gender bias in evaluations of academic output plays a part in producing the persisting gender disparities in top-level academic positions in the Nordic countries.

Female professors are underrepresented

Since the 1960's, women's educational attainment has experienced remarkable progress.

Despite this, women are still underrepresented in professor positions, including in the social sciences and the humanities, where there is a strong female dominance among students.



Does this suggest that gender bias in evaluation of otherwise equal candidates creates barriers to academic careers for female scholars?

Which qualifications are highest rated?

Faculty respondents were asked to rate CVs of hypothetical candidates from 1 to 7 according to their competence and hireability.

The hypothetical candidates for a permanent position as an Associate Professor in their discipline were randomly assigned either a male or a female name.

To examine the effects of publication records and children, each participant evaluated two CVs (one with a more extensive publication record) from the same candidate, but were also randomly assigned candidates with two, or no children.

Altogether 775 respondents from 17 universities in Iceland, Norway and Sweden participated in the study.



Female CVs get higher ratings

For both competence and hireability, female CVs get higher ratings than male CVs.

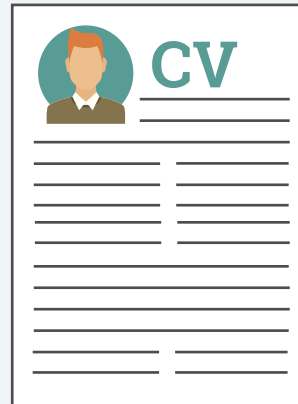
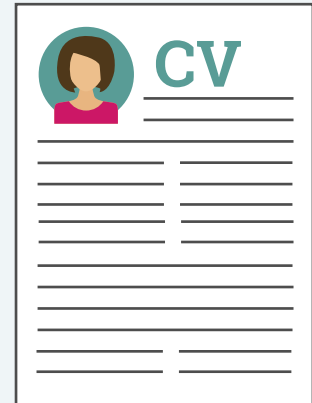


As expected, the average ratings for both males and females are higher when we include the CVs with six publications, but male and female CVs had the same pay-off from additional publications.



However, while the average male candidate's CV is rated 4.26 on competence and 3.77 on hireability, the average female candidate's CV is rated .29 higher on competence and .28 higher on hireability.

The pay-off for children and for a strong CV are not lower for women than for men, and there are no significant differences between the disciplines.



Gender bias – not the key explanation

Despite the underrepresentation of women in professor positions in all fields, the female candidates were viewed as both more competent and more hireable compared to their male counterparts. Having children or a stronger CV did not change the overall conclusion.



Therefore, biased evaluations of equally qualified candidates for Associate Professor positions do not seem to be the key explanation of the persistent gender gap in academia in the Nordic region.

Read the article:

Gender Bias in Academic Recruitment? Evidence from a Survey Experiment in the Nordic Region
European Sociological Review. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaa050>