



## **Barriers to entry:**

# **Decomposing the gender gap in job search in urban Pakistan**

## **Discussion**

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# Policy questions the paper addresses?

1. Why are so many women interested in working but **not actively searching**?
2. Why are many **firms less likely to open vacancies for women** (and men) and hire them?
3. **What can we do about?** Which interventions work?

# What does the literature say (broad)?

## 1. Self-selection (by women)

Female and male jobseekers search for different types of jobs / value different things in a job (partially due to different share of domestic work) → fewer jobs that they would be willing to accept

## 2. Different search (by women)

Job search is often highly structured around (gendered) social networks and referrals; mobility and time constraints in job search; gendered traits (risk aversion, confidence and impatience)

## 3. Discrimination (by firms)

Employers have gendered preferences which they convey either explicitly or implicitly to jobseekers → search is less effective for women

# Results summary

## 1. **Demand-Side Constraints:**

Firm gender criteria significantly limit women's job opportunities more than any decisions that individuals make in their own job search.

## 2. **Education's Role:**

The demand-side constraint decreases with higher education levels, nearly disappearing for women with tertiary education ("white-collar").

## 3. **Not self-selection in search/application**

Women apply at higher rates than men if they meet all job criteria, indicating that the primary barrier is the initial gender restriction by firms.

## 4. **Firm & vacancy characteristics matter:**

Firms are more likely to hire women if they a) already hired women, b) have female-friendly facilities, c) believe that industry/job is "suitable" for women

## In short?

- 1. Lower educated women** > do not find jobs because **employers (👴)** believe their jobs are not suitable for them?
- 2. Higher-educated women** > do not find jobs because they are more selective and **suitable jobs don't exist?**
  - > **Different gender restrictions that limit availability**

# Some limitations

## 1. Generalizability

- **Urban Focus:** Findings may not be directly applicable to rural areas where social norms and labor market dynamics differ significantly.

## 2. Potential selection bias:

- **Self-Selection:** Only small share of job seekers signed up for the job matching platform, may be more motivated or with fewer household constraints
- **Firm Participation:** Firms that participated in the study might already be more progressive or open to hiring women.

## 3. Limited Exploration of Supply-Side Factors:

- **Household Dynamics:** Study acknowledges their key role but cannot disentangle how intra-household dynamics influence women's job search.
- **Cultural norms:** Study cannot disentangle correlation between education level and cultural norms that may affect job search? Higher-educated women can afford to be more selective?

# What can we really do on the demand-side?!

## Lack knowledge which **demand-side interventions** would work?

1. Removing gender criteria in hiring? > Bans/regulations?
2. Addressing hiring culture at the firm? > Information provision?
3. Incentives to invest in female-friendly facilities? > Grants?
4. Incentivize *initial* female hires? > Wage-subsidies?

## Challenges

1. Women may not be interested in jobs despite availability
2. Firms may circumvent gender criteria or exploit subsidies
3. Inducing female hiring could backfire *on both sides*
  - negative anticipation of firm confirmed (physical jobs)
  - negative anticipation of jobseeker confirmed (not female-friendly)  
→ reinforce conservative gender norms

# Some questions for discussion

1. Seems firms / hiring managers believe that women do not want these jobs. So they impose gender criteria with the **idea to 'protect' women** or to **limit their own search and selection effort**?
2. **How would firms react to a policies/programs** to reduce gendered hiring (bans/subsidies)? What could be unintended consequences?
3. Could the observed selectivity by high-educated women be due to a mismatch between the types of jobs available and their aspirations? How might this be addressed in policy? **Do we just need more, better jobs?**
4. How do you think the **findings would differ in rural areas** or other cities in Pakistan with different socio-economic conditions? What additional factors might need to be considered in these contexts?
5. How might the potential self-selection bias among jobseekers and firms to the job matching platform & **study sample affect your findings?**