

香港中文大学（深圳）伦理审查决议书
Ethical Approval Document in CUHK (SZ)

决议编号 Approval No.	CUHKSZ-D-20230021	
申请项目名称 Project Name: Employees Discriminating Against Female Entrepreneurs		
项目类别 Project type: Academic Paper		
项目负责人 Project Leader: Zhongchen Hu	职称 Title/Position: Assistant Professor	专业 Major: Finance
项目承担单位 Organizing Institution: Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen		
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请求审查类型:

新申请项目

修订后重审项目

延续审查项

Type of Review Requested:

New Project Application

Revised Project Re-review

Continued Review Item

递交审查资料:

项目实验步骤及说明

可行性研究报告

主要研究者简历

其他资料

Submission of Review Materials:

Experimental Steps and Explanations for the Project

Feasibility Study Report

Main Researcher's CV

Other Materials

项目内容摘要:

Project Summary:

This research project aims to understand whether female entrepreneurs face challenges in hiring talented workers. While human capital is crucial in the early stages of a small business, if females face higher barriers in recruiting talent, this study will help us understand the lower rates of entry and success for female entrepreneurs.

项目开展的意义:

Significance of the Project:

The underrepresentation of women in entrepreneurship, especially in technology, is well-documented. Females are less likely to start businesses than males, and those who do launch startups have substantially lower success rates. Discrimination in financial markets partially explains women's lower rates of business ownership. However, it does not fully account for their much lower entrepreneurial success compared to men in tech fields. One potential factor is that female founders face difficulties recruiting talented employees like computer scientists. This could stem from applicants directly discriminating against female leaders and not wanting to work under women. Alternatively, prospective hires may internalize third-party discrimination, such as bias from financial institutions, which affects women's ability to attract talent. This project will provide valuable insights into the scope of hiring challenges encountered by female entrepreneurs due to discrimination. Gaining a better understanding of these issues will be an important step toward promoting gender diversity in the startup ecosystem.

项目实施可能出现的副作用、危害及应急预案:

Possible Side Effects, Hazards, and Emergency Plans for the Implementation of the Project:

I do not expect any adverse effect on any parties. Below, I describe the experimental design, the core intervention, and data collection methods.

I plan to collaborate with several entrepreneurs in the US. I have already contacted several of them interested in participating in this study. They recognize that this is a genuine issue. When these entrepreneurs hire new employees, they often actively reach out to multiple potential candidates with a brief message outlining the job, company, and required skills. In the message, they also invite applicants to a follow-up conversation via phone or Zoom to discuss additional details. I intend to replicate this approach of hiring talent.

I create several identical pairs of fictitious founders and startups. Each male-led startup has a corresponding identical female-led startup. Each fictitious startup has an online presence, including a website, a unique email domain, and a presence on LinkedIn. The websites are identical except for the company name, founder pictures, and founder names. The founders' pictures are generated using artificial intelligence. I first create images of non-existent individuals through AI tools and then use AI to generate matching counterparts of the opposite gender, preserving most key facial traits, such as eye shape, mouth width and height, the distance between eyes, smile, etc. Using online surveys, I verify that the male and female pairs have similar attributes, including attractiveness, trustworthiness, and other relevant characteristics. The male and female founders also have LinkedIn profiles that perfectly match their employment and education history. The only differences between these profiles are the founders' pictures and names.

I will gather a sample of potential candidates using publicly available information online, focusing on currently graduating students in their final year of an undergraduate or master's program at the Top 100 US universities. I will collect the candidates' university email addresses by accessing the student directories on the universities' public websites.

The only intervention of the experiment is as follows. I will randomly divide the sample into treatment and control groups. The fictitious female founder will contact candidates in the treatment group via email, while the fictitious male founder will contact candidates in the control group in the same manner. The brief email will outline an open job role and the skills needed, describe the company, and invite the recipient to schedule a follow-up Zoom call to discuss more details. The primary aim is to measure whether individuals in the treatment and control samples respond to the message or not. The message contains less than 200 words and takes less than one minute to read. Since the industries of our fictitious startups match the industries of partnering startups, after the experiment, they will consider the CVs of individuals who have responded in future job openings.

In addition, in order to understand why candidates may discriminate against female entrepreneurs, I have an auxiliary intervention augmented to the main design outlined above. Specifically, I will prime a random subset of candidates with a newsletter from an unrelated non-profit organization, sent a few days before the entrepreneur's outreach.

The newsletter provides real information on large initiatives aimed at supporting female entrepreneurs with venture capital funding. This aims to examine whether the non-priming subsample will display a stronger gender bias against female entrepreneurs. If yes, the results will support a theory of third-party discrimination, whereby prospective employees internalize biases against women-led businesses prevalent in other markets, such as the venture capital sector, into their labor market decisions.

项目实施可能引发的伦理问题及对策（包括知情同意、保护隐私、身体伤害、利益分配等）：

Ethical Issues and Countermeasures that May Arise from the Implementation of the Project (Including Informed Consent, Privacy Protection, Physical Harm, Benefit Distribution, etc.):

I do not expect any adverse effect on any parties. First, I believe that our experiment will not result in a welfare loss, because individuals in our study are responding to a potential real job opening. The partner startups will consider all applicants for future job openings after the experiments. Second, as described above, the email takes less than one minute to read and respond. Third, while highly unlikely, if any participant expresses confusion or concern, I will immediately identify the email as an academic study and explain. Lastly, to avoid a very small risk of unintended disclosure of participants' contact information, all electronic data will be collected and stored only on encrypted devices. I will remove all identifying information immediately after receiving the data. I will not publish any individual data. Instead, I will only release summary statistics based on a large sample of people, ensuring that no one can be identified in the published paper.

项目负责人签名：
Signature of the Project Leader:

胡中琛

时间：
Date: 2025/January/21

项目审查时间：
Project Review Date:

伦理委员会意见：
Opinions of the Ethics Committee:

伦理委员会主席或授权负责人签名：

Signature of the Chairman of the Ethics Committee:

时间
Date:

