

The Role of Future Parenthood in Hiring: Can Motherhood Penalties and Fatherhood Bonuses be Generalized to Future Mom and Dad?

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Abstract: Research has shown motherhood penalties and fatherhood bonuses in working places. Employers, it appears, view parenthood as an important factor in hiring. However, motherhood penalties and fatherhood bonuses could be generalized to future parents, since during Chinese hiring process, child-free job applicants are often asked about their future parenthood plans. In this research proposal, an experimental study in a lab setting is utilized to test whether the role of future parenthood could be sufficient to cause hiring bias. The main set of independent variables in the study is applicants' different expectation of future parenthood. Applicants' gender and applicants' applying organization type are also included to see whether there are some interaction effects with future parenthood. The results are measured through participants' explicit and implicit attitudes towards fictitious resumes using 3 measurements: passing rate, a 7-point scale, and decision making time. The predicted results are that there will be a significant main effect of future parenthood, a significant interaction effect of parenthood and gender, and a significant interaction effect of parenthood and organization type in the hiring process.

Keywords: future parenthood, hiring bias, fictitious resume

1. Introduction

Research on motherhood penalties, referring to mothers' socially devalued status at work [1], has long shown negative biases mothers face in working places. When narrowing to the hiring process, motherhood penalties are also proved to work across the culture [2-4]. Though most of the studies have shown explicit biases against mothers [5] early on, mothers also face implicit biases in the hiring process [6]. And though most of the studies addressed biases against mothers who have several children [7], there are also studies targeting discrimination against pregnant mothers [8].

On the contrary, for fathers at work, there is a corresponding effect, fatherhood bonuses. This can be shown from the positive effects on men's wages and careers [9]. During the hiring process, fathers can also experience more positive treatment when compared with child-free men [6]. The mechanism of fatherhood bonuses can be individual's tendency to use status characteristic to assign expectations [10], since some employers may attach fathers in this parental status with reliability.

Though research has found that mothers are no different from fathers and non-parents on working outcomes [11], the role of parenthood does disadvantage mothers and advantage fathers. When comparing mothers and fathers in working places, not only do working fathers take more

advantages over working mothers [12], but also the role of parenthood has divergent effect [14-15] for mothers and fathers.

Despite repeated researches focusing on parenthood biases in the hiring process, there is still a novel research space targeting on future parenthood biases. Since child-free job applicants are often asked about their future parenthood plans during Chinese hiring process, maybe being a mother is not a necessary condition to face motherhood penalties and being a father is not a necessary condition to face fatherhood bonuses. Could motherhood penalties and fatherhood bonuses be generalized to future mom and future dad, so that the expectation of future parenthood is sufficient to cause parenthood biases?

2. Hypothesis and Alternatives

Despite the potential employment effects of future parenthood [15] shown in previous research, a research published in 2021[17] successfully pointed out the mechanism of future motherhood penalties for the first time that in a western context, “maybe baby” bias “disadvantages young women's careers by increasing their employment risk”. At the end of the paper, it also appealed to future research focusing on positive fatherhood biases.

By proposing that this “maybe baby” model [16] can be generated to Chinese context and can also be generated to existing research on fatherhood biases, I came to the hypothesis that the child-free female who are more likely to become future mothers will face negative hiring biases, and the child-free male who are more likely to become future fathers will face positive hiring biases.

However, there could be some alternatives. It is possible that gender bias rather than the effect of future parenthood explains for the difference [17]. However, there is research stipulating that “It is only married women and mothers who face significant disadvantages.” [18] Moreover, it is also possible that the effect of parenthood may not be able to work across jobs, since research has found that different jobs prefer different gender [19]. However, in a between-subject field experiment [6], biases on mothers are proved to work for dispersed jobs during the hiring process.

3. Methods

The study will be in a 2×2×2 lab setting. Since using fictitious resumes can be a useful and convenient method to test biases on the role of parenthood [23-24], this study will test participants' explicit and implicit attitude towards fictitious resumes. Considering the predicted effect of the future parenthood in the hypothesis, the first set of independent variables is the parenthood potential. This will be measured through the self-description of whether or not plan to have kids in the resumes. There is also a predicted difference on the role of parenthood between different gender, so the second set of independent variables is gender. Employing organizations can also cause disparities [21], and the difference between public organizations and private organizations is always a matter of concern when landing jobs under Chinese culture, so the third set of variables is organization type (whether it is a public organization or a private one).

4. Participants

The participants are all forth year students from Chinese universities majoring in human resources and having hiring internship before, half male and half female. In this case, these participants are well equipped with professional hiring skills. At the same time, they haven't been influenced by a specific company's value or culture. As a consequence, their hiring decisions can be more generalized.

Participant Recruitment: This study will utilize a multistage-random-cluster-sampling for

participant recruitment. Participants will be chosen from 9 universities in china, 3 from the top 50 universities, 3 from universities ranking at 50-100, and 3 from universities ranking after 100. For each university, a random sample of 15 male and 15 female students will be chosen through their student ID number.

5. The Applicants in the Resume

Job applicants in fictitious resumes are all child-free third-year graduate students in Chinese graduate schools. In this way, the study can reduce the influence of irrelevant variables such as age, educated level, previous working years and so on. Also, this group of people coincides with Chinese women's and men's prime childbearing years [16], so that, free from the potential obstacle of fertility, the likelihood of future parenthood can be measured by the willingness to have kids in the future.

6. Procedures

Firstly, participants will be asked to imagine themselves as employment placement agents. Secondly, each of the participants will be given 8 fictitious resumes to meet the setting $2 \times 2 \times 2$. The resume will indicate the participants' willingness to have kids (yes or no), gender (male or female), and applying organization type (public or private), with other information being at the same quality. These 8 resumes will be shown together on one page and are allowed to click an icon to zoom over and over again. Thirdly, participants will be told to keep the passing rate to 50% and then fill out the Hiring Decision Scale (HDS), which is a 7-point scale to show their attitudes towards the resumes.

7. Measurements

In order to measure participants' explicit and implicit attitudes towards fictitious resumes, there are 3 measurements: passing rate, score for HDS, and decision time. For each resume, the average passing rate of all participants and the average score for HDS are used to measure explicit biases [22]. The scored decision time for participants to make each resume choice is used to measure implicit biases [6]. As for the scored decision time, for each participant, firstly, his or her implicit arrangement for 8 resumes will be shown. To be specific, the top 4 resumes are his or her four passing choice, with the resumes with shortest decision time to be the first one and the longest decision time to be the fourth one. The bottom 4 resumes are his or her four failing choice, with the resumes with the shortest decision time to be the last one and the longest decision time to be the fifth one. Then the rank will be scored from the top one to the last one with point 8 to 1. Finally, average the points given by all participants for each resume.

8. Data Analysis

For data analysis, firstly, there will be a descriptive statistical analysis to report the overall information. Secondly, there will be a MANOVA test for difference analysis, with independent variables being future parenthood, gender, organization type, and dependent variables being passing rate, score for HDS, scored decision time. After that, there will be a correlation analysis, the SPEARMAN'S CORRELATION, to analyse the relationship between passing rate, score for HDS, and scored decision time. Finally, a regression analysis is used to figure out whether there is a hiring model considering future parenthood, gender and organization type.

9. Predicted Results and Interpretation

The 3 figures below are predicted results for passing rate, score for HDS, and scored decision time.

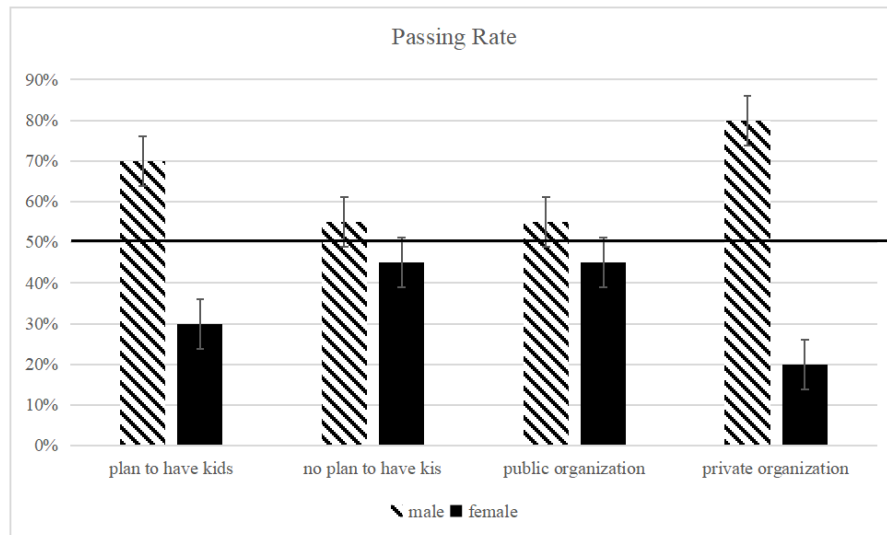


Figure 1: Passing rate by future parenthood, gender, and organization type.

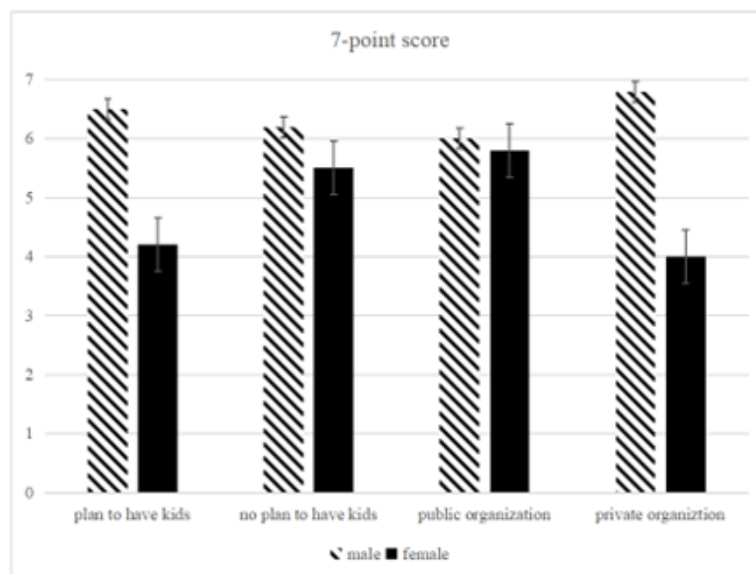


Figure 2: Score for HDS by future parenthood, gender, and organization type.

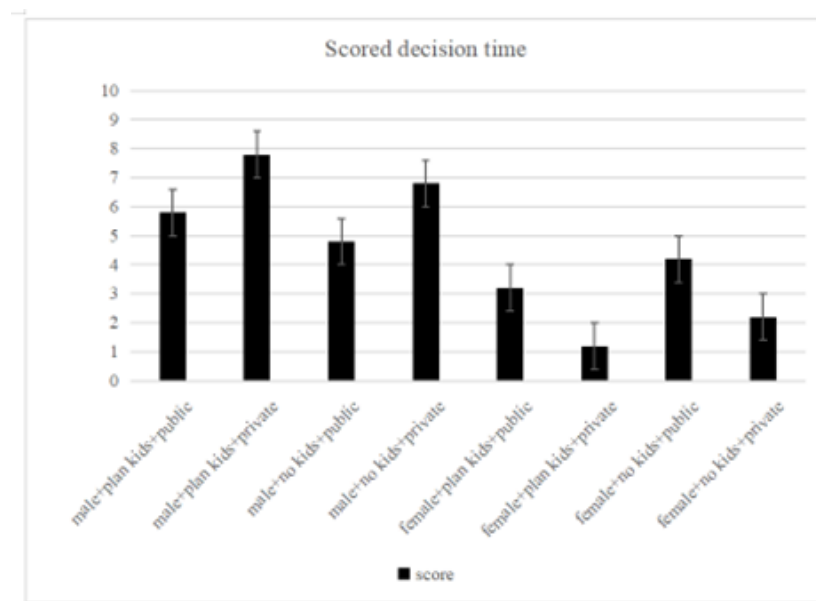


Figure 3: Scored decision time by future parenthood, gender, and organization type.

Expanding on the result of passing rate in figure 1, there is a reference line of 50%, indicating the controlled overall pass rate.

It can be interpreted from the figure that, firstly, the passing rate for the female who plan to have kids is significantly lower than the passing rate for the female without plans to have kids (coincides with González, M. J., Cortina, C. and Rodríguez, J., 2019; Becker et al., 2019; Peterson Gloor et al., n.d. [16]), with the result for the male group being the opposite (coincides with Yu & Hara, 2021[14]). This shows that the “maybe baby” model (Peterson Gloor et al., n.d. [16]) works in Chinese context and works for future dads too. Secondly, the male bar is taller than the female bar in all conditions, but the significant main effect is triggered more by future parenthood rather than by gender (coincides with Zhang et al., 2008 [18]). Thirdly, the passing rate difference between different expectation of parenthood is significantly smaller in public organizations than in private organizations (coincides with Baron and Bielby 1980 [21]), and also significantly smaller in the male group than the female group (coincides with Hipp, 2020 [23]). This suggests that biases caused by future parenthood are more statistically significant in private companies and in female group. Most likely, it has to do with the fact that for Chinese public organizations, it is the government that covers the maternity leave. To conclude, the role of future parenthood significantly influences participants’ attitudes towards resumes, and the influence differs in different gender and different organization type.

10. Conclusion

First and foremost, there is a significant main effect of future parenthood in hiring biases. To be specific, women in a childbearing age, child-free condition who have a high expectation to become mothers in the future will be negatively biased in hiring process, compared with women who have a low expectation to become mothers. On the contrary, men in a childbearing age, child-free condition who have a high expectation to become fathers in the future will be positively biased in hiring process, compared with men who have a low expectation to become fathers. As we can see, motherhood penalties and fatherhood bonuses can be generalized to future mom and dad.

Moreover, there are also two significant interaction effects. The first one is the interaction effect of future parenthood and gender, which suggests that the role of future parenthood influences

women more. Also, there is a interaction effect of future parenthood and organization type, which indicates that future parenthood influences the hiring process of private companies more.

There are limitations in this research proposal too. Though using a well-controlled sampling method, the participants in the study are still different from the ones in real life. Also, in a lab setting, the observer effect may influence the result. However, for this experimental study, independent variables can be better controlled and implicit bias can be better measured. So, based on the result of this study, a field study can be conducted in the future to see whether this conclusion can be generated to real life.

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