Does Signaling Childcare Support on Job Applications Reduce the Motherhood Penalty?

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Abstract – There is substantial evidence that due to perceived childcare obligations, mothers are disadvantaged on labor markets. To what extent can childcare support ameliorate such a disadvantage? To answer this question, we ran a CV experiment in a large Indian city and examined whether signaling access to childcare support may offset the motherhood penalty associated with labor market entry. We randomly varied motherhood, as well as a childcare support signal in online applications sent to service sector jobs in Delhi. Indicating motherhood on a CV led to a 57% or 20 percentage point reduction in callback rates for interviews as compared to non-mothers. A simple childcare support signal (in the form of one-line in a CV) offsets the motherhood penalty by 20% or 4 percentage points. We interpret the findings taking into account the Indian context and with respect to potential sources of discrimination.

Keywords: motherhood penalty, childcare, audit experiment, India

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