



Do Female Executives Make a Difference? The impact of female leadership on gender gaps and firm performance:

Seminario di Andrea Moro, Università Cà Foscari, Venezia

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Abstract

We investigate whether female executives make a difference on gender-specific wage distributions and firm performance using a unique matched employer - employee panel data set of Italian workers that allows us to control for firm and worker fixed effects. We find that female executives increase the variance of women's wages at the firm because they have a positive impact on wages at the top of the distribution, and a smaller, negative impact on wages at the bottom. Moreover, we find that the interaction between female leadership and share of female workers employed at the firm has a positive impact on firm performance. Differently from the previous literature, we focus on less volatile, more long-term measure of actual firm productivity: TFP, value added per worker and sales per worker. These results are robust to different measures of female leadership and to different estimation samples. This evidence is consistent with a model of statistical discrimination where female executives are better equipped at interpreting signals of productivity from female workers. Our interpretation suggests that there are costs associated with the underrepresentation of women at the top of the firm. JEL Codes: M5, M12, J7, J16