

MITIGATING THE GENDER GAP IN THE WILLINGNESS TO COMPETE: EVIDENCE FROM A RANDOMIZED FIELD EXPERIMENT

Sule Alan

University of Essex
and Bilkent University

Seda Ertac

Koc University

Abstract

We evaluate the impact on competitiveness of a randomized educational intervention that aims to foster grit, a skill that is highly predictive of achievement. The intervention is implemented in elementary schools, and we measure its impact using a dynamic competition task with interim performance feedback. We find that when children are exposed to a worldview that emphasizes the role of effort in achievement and encourages perseverance, the gender gap in the willingness to compete disappears. We show that the elimination of this gap implies significant efficiency gains. We also provide suggestive evidence on a plausible causal mechanism that runs through the positive impact of enhanced grit on girls' optimism about their future performance.

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E-mail: salancrossley@gmail.com (Alan); sertac@ku.edu.tr (Ertac)