Jewish identity and job market prospects in Argentina: evidence from a field experiment (DRAFT VERSION)

Cabral Juan Andrés and Pucci Iara Florencia

Abstract

In this paper, we investigate potential discrimination within Argentina's labor market, focusing specifically on the Jewish community. Through a field experiment, we examine whether individuals with Jewish-sounding names experience different response rates compared to their non-Jewish counterparts after submitting resumes for job applications. Contrary to our initial hypothesis, our findings reveal no significant difference in the response rates. Jewish-named applicants received responses at a rate comparable to those with non-Jewish names, suggesting an absence of discriminatory behavior in email responses within the job market we studied. These results contribute to a nuanced understanding of the impact of religious identity on employment opportunities in Argentina.

Introduction

Numerous scholars have investigated the existence of discriminatory practices in several contexts (Romei and Ruggieri 2014). In this literature, considerable research attention has been directed towards labor market discrimination. Neumark 2018, for example, reviews some experimental research that found concrete evidence of this kind of discrimination. Another overview of more experiments done in this direction can be found at Baert 2018. Furthermore, in recent years, many countries have considered implementing the mandatory use of anonymous resumes, by removing information such as name, age and gender.

In this article, we sought to detect religious discrimination through a field experiment with randomization on an online job board. We generate two groups of people that constitute a control group and a treatment group. There is no clear way how to make individual's religion explicit in a study like this. The path followed here is to take names that may be indicative of a particular religion as was done in Banerjee et al. 2009.[1] The treatment group is signaling of Jewish descent through the name and surname, and the control group is made up of individuals with common names and surnames from Argentina. We then send these fictitious resumes to real job openings and record all employer contacts through the fictitious candidates' mailbox.

Conditional on the name being a good signaling of each individual's religion, our field experiment does not yield evidence of the existence of discrimination towards Jewish candidates. On average, Jewish candidates don't receive a different quantity of callbacks from employers than non-Jewish candidates. Given that this experiment randomizes the sending of resumes, it is possible to say that we estimate the causal effect of having a Jewish name on the probability of receiving a response from employers.

Our work is the first to our knowledge that tests employment discrimination against individuals belonging to Judaism through a field experiment. It contributes to the literature that investigates discrimination in the labor market and also to the related literature that investigates the effects of religion on the labor market.

[1] Another option is to include in the resume's photo clothing that is a signal of religion, as Weichselbaumer 2015 did, or creating a fake social media profile with personal information as Acquisti and Fong 2020, however, those options were not explored here.

Experimental design

To carry out our experiment we used a very popular job search website in Argentina (ZonaJobs). On this website employers publish an announcement in which they describe a position and wait for potential candidates to send their resume through the same platform.

Our experiment was carried out between March 8 and March 20. During this period, **we sent a total of 2835 resumes through ZonaJobs**. All resumes are fictitious as they include data that does not match to any real person.

For the creation of the profiles we use information provided from real individual positions on LinkedIn related to programming skills. We created two groups, a control group with individuals who have common names in Argentina, and another group with individuals with common names in the Jewish religion.

The idea behind the choice of names is that those who are Jewish indicate it through their name, while those who are not have common Argentine names. This is one of the key assumptions, and that is that the effect that names have on the probability of being contacted later is only given by the fact that they indicate the religion of the individual.

The job notices for our study were meticulously collected on March 20. This collection encompassed not only the announcements posted on that particular day but also those from previous days which had not yet been closed by employers. These notices were then randomly assigned to each fictional applicant created for our experiment. Subsequently, applications were sent out, with each application featuring a unique email address. This specific approach allows us to accurately track and analyze the subsequent responses received from employers.

Econometric model

To detect discrimination in the labor market, we estimate the following equation:

$$Callback_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Jewish_i + error_i \quad (1)$$

The response variable is a dummy variable that takes the value of one when the applicant is contacted; the jewish variable is a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the applicant has a Jewish name. And error is the error term. The i indexes resumes.

The existence of discrimination will be given by the value and sign of β_1.

Given that abstract submission is randomized, it is reasonable to think that $cov(jewish, error) = 0$. This can be indirectly tested by looking at the relationship between the applicant being Jewish and the job to which the application is sent has a particular characteristic. These tests are found in figure 1, they suggest that the randomization was successful.

A second estimated model includes various gender-related control variables and company data.

$$\begin{aligned} Callback_i =& \beta_0 + \beta_1 Jewish_i + \beta_2 gender \\ &+ \beta_3 gender \times jewish + \beta_5 X + error_i \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

Where gender is a dummy variable that takes 1 if the postulant is a women and 0 if it is a man. X is a vector of variables related to the company that published the notice. The results of this estimation are found in table 3.

Results

We first test for a successful randomization, that is, to see if any variables correlate with the treatment. If randomization was successful, no variables related to ads or profiles should be correlated with treatment. The results show that the randomization was successful and are in the Table 1.

The results of the experiment indicate that Jews aren't discriminated against when offering them work. On average, they receive the same responses from companies.

Table 1: Correlation between treatment variable and characteristics

	Caba dummy	Gender	Full time dummy	Wage
Correlation with Treatment dummy	-0.017	0.003	-0.015	-0.006

Table 2: Equation 1

	Dependent variable:
	Callbacks
Jewish	−0.0001
	(0.003)
Constant	0.009***
	(0.002)
Observations	2,834
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3: Gender effects

	Dependent variable:	
	Callbacks	
	(1)	(2)
Jewish	−0.0001	−0.001
	(0.003)	(0.005)
Gender	0.001	−0.00001
	(0.003)	(0.005)
Interaction		0.003
		(0.007)
Constant	0.008***	0.009**
	(0.003)	(0.003)
Observations	2,834	2,834
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Conclusion

In this study, we present evidence from a randomized field experiment conducted to explore the presence of discrimination against Jewish individuals in the labor market. Our findings, contrary to what might be anticipated, indicate no significant differences in the response rates between applicants with names associated with the Jewish community and those with non-Jewish names. This suggests that, within the scope of our research, there is no discernible discrimination towards Jewish individuals in terms of employer responses to job applications.

Limitations

Some of these study limitations include:

- The fact that we study the labor market through an online site which may not fully reflect the Argentine labor market.
- On the other hand, we only focus on the first part of the hiring process.
- As Heckman and Siegelman 1993 mentioned and Neumark 2012 tried to solve, correspondence studies cannot distinguish between taste discrimination and statistical discrimination.
- Finally, we only used profiles that targeted a segment of the job market (IT for example). These limitations only refer to the external validity of the results.

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