

Gender differences in resume language and gender gaps in salary expectations

Qian Qu^{1,2}, Quan-Hui Liu^{1,2}, Jian Gao^{3,*}, Shudong Huang^{1,2}, Wentao Feng^{1,2}, Zhongtao Yue⁴,
Xin Lu^{5,6}, Tao Zhou⁴, Jiancheng Lv^{1,2}

¹ College of Computer Science, Sichuan University, Chengdu 610065, P. R. China

² Engineering Research Center of Machine Learning and Industry Intelligence, Ministry of Education, Sichuan University, Chengdu 610065, P. R. China

³ Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60208, USA

⁴ CompleX Lab, Big Data Research Center, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu 611731, P. R. China

⁵ College of Systems Engineering, National University of Defense Technology, Changsha 410073, P. R. China

⁶ Department of Public Health Sciences, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden

* Correspondence to jian.gaol@kellogg.northwestern.edu

Resumes are often the first medium through which job applicants are evaluated, and resume screening could be the starting point for gender equality in various aspects. Little is known, however, about how women and men write differently in their resumes and how language differences are associated with the gender gap in labor. Here we analyze 6.7 million resumes of Chinese job applicants and find substantial gender resume differences, where women and men show distinct patterns in both simple language features and high-level semantic structures in the word embedding space of resumes. In particular, women tend to write shorter resumes but longer sentences and use a more diverse set of unique words, indicating their better language skills. Neural network models trained on resumes can predict gender with 80% accuracy, and the accuracy decreases with the levels of education and the requirements for text standardization. Moreover, while better language skills are associated with higher salary expectations, this positive relationship is magnified for men but weakened for women in women-dominated occupations. These results suggest that the gender of applicants is deeply encoded in the language of their resumes, and the language in salary expectations depends on occupational characteristics and gender. Our findings contribute to understanding gender gaps through the lens of written language in a resume.