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**Fighting discrimination from within. Interventions in job market signalling to improve access to jobs for disadvantaged ethnic minorities.**

Ethnic-based discrimination in labour markets is recognised as a major problem. So far, governments have tried to address this issue by mainly focusing on changing employers’ behaviour (e.g. equal treatment trainings, anti-discrimination laws, etc.). However, as the persistently high levels of discrimination across modern labour markets suggest, these measures are unable to prevent discriminatory behaviour by employers. We argue that a more promising strategy for public policy to address such discrimination would be to modify the characteristics of the *hiring* *process* rather than to try to change actor *preferences or behaviour*. In other words, public policy should focus on fighting discrimination from *within* the hiring process and thus *nudge* employers’ behaviour by changing the decision-making context.

Our theoretical framework assumes that hiring is foremost a signalling game between the employer and the (minority) applicant. More precisely, we argue that in order to be effective public policy should intervene at the level of signal transmission between applicant and employer to reduce or cancel the impact of ethnic origin on hiring probability. In particular, we identify four strategies that could help reduce discrimination: 1) influence employers’ interpretation of specific characteristics (debiasing), 2) remove access to information on ethnicity (blind hiring), 3) increase the saliency of hard signals (i.e. educational credentials), and 4) signal optimization. We discuss these different strategies by relying on a systematic literature review and evidence from two survey experiments that were conducted in Switzerland.

In more detail, in these survey experiments using the factorial vignette technique we investigated employers’ hiring preferences in the low- and middle-skilled labour market sectors in Switzerland. We contacted and invited members of two big employer organizations to participate in an online survey. In this survey, we embedded fictitious descriptions of applicants that the respondents were asked to evaluate. Thereby, the applicants’ profiles were randomly varied along several dimensions that are relevant for discrimination research (age, gender, nationality, education, etc.). These experiments allowed us to test which characteristics do induce discriminatory behaviour and whether there are particular conditions that are able to decrease or increase the amount of discrimination.

Reviewing the evidence of both the specialized literature and the results of the experiments, we conclude by arguing that the strategy of “fighting discrimination from within” is promising but that we need to better understand the role that ethnicity plays in different recruitment contexts for it to be effective.

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