New research finds altering language of job descriptions may not help organizations address diversity issues

April 12 2023

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It looks like the "best practice" of removing gendered language from job listings may simply have been a "best guess" by managers seeking to

increase diversity of applicant pools for their organizations. New research in *Management Science* finds that tweaking the language of job postings to make them more gender-neutral has negligible practical effects on men's and women's likelihood of applying for jobs.

Managers have believed, based on past research and opinions, that carefully removing language that has masculine or feminine connotations from job listings should help increase the gender diversity of the applicant pool. The study, titled "The Gendering of Job Postings in the Online Recruitment Process," finds that gendered language has little effect on applicant behavior.

"This result was unexpected and has great practical relevance to executives and managers involved in recruiting talent," says Emilio J. Castilla of MIT.

Castilla, alongside co-author Hye Jin Rho of Michigan State University, says several technology recruitment companies claim that their "inclusive writing platforms" help employers "debias" job ads and attract a diverse pool of candidates. As a result, many employers and their human resources (HR) professionals have put significant efforts into crafting job ads and recruiting messages to appeal equally to women and men.

"Our findings reveal that both the language used when posting jobs and gender of the recruiters have no effects that matter in practice on how women and men behave during recruitment," says Castilla, a professor in the Sloan School of Management at MIT. "Trying to 'degender' job listing language may not have the effect employers hope for.

"We caution that the practice of simply altering the language of job descriptions may not necessarily help organizations address diversity issues," concludes Castilla.

Citation: New research finds altering language of job descriptions may not help organizations address diversity issues (2023, April 12) retrieved 26 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2023-04-language-job-descriptions-diversity-issues.html