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**INFORMATION ADVANTAGE OR BIAS RELATED TO SOCIAL TIES:
EVIDENCE FROM A PEER REVIEW SYSTEM FOR NATIONAL
RESEARCH GRANTS**

Abstract:

We examine how reviewer-applicant social ties (department and university affiliation, co-author/co-applicant relationships, research field similarity) influence reviewer evaluations, based on Japanese research grant application data (2005–2016). All relationships between social ties and scores are positively correlated, even after accounting for unobservable applicant characteristics and proposal quality. Regarding bias and information advantage effects, upward deviation from department match negatively correlates with applicants' future research outputs, implying bias. Upward deviation from research field similarity or university match positively correlates with future productivity, indicating that information advantage predicts applicants' future productivity. Information advantage through social ties is stronger for younger applicants.

Keywords:

Research grant, peer review, bias, favoritism, research productivity

JEL Classification: D82, O32, O38