

Zeeshan Samad

Curriculum Vitae, February 2022

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Employment

Postdoctoral fellow, Utah State University, Aug 2021 – present

Short-term Consultant, The World Bank, Jan 2021 – June 2021

Education

Ph.D. in Economics, Vanderbilt University, Dec 2020

Specialization fields: Microeconomic Theory, Experimental Economics

Dissertation title: Motivated Beliefs and Biases

M.A. in Economics, Vanderbilt University, May 2016

M.P.P., University of Maryland, May 2014

B.Sc. in Economics, LUMS, Pakistan, May 2010

Study Abroad: Malardalen University, Sweden, Fall 2009

Teaching Experience

Adjunct Professor, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

Principles of Microeconomics (ECON 1020), Summer 2018 and Summer 2017

Teaching Assistant, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

Microeconomic Theory II (ECON 8110), Spring 2016

Intermediate Microeconomics (ECON 3010), Fall 2015

Strategic Analysis in Game Theory (ECON 2160), Fall 2015

Lead Instructor, Vanderbilt Program for Talented Youth, Nashville, TN

Methods of Economic Analysis, Summer 2018

Behavioral Economics, Summer 2017

Microeconomics, Summer 2017

Lead Instructor, Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, Baltimore, MD

Principles of Economics, Summer 2016

Other Research Experience

Graduate Research Assistant, Vanderbilt University, Aug 2016 – Dec 2020

PhD Intern, Tennessee Department of Education, May 2019 – Aug 2019

Research Analyst, Hagler Bailly (consulting firm in Pakistan), Aug 2010 – June 2012

Awards

Research Grant, Council of Economics Graduate Students, Vanderbilt University, Spring 2020

Graduate Student Fellowship, Economics Department, Vanderbilt University, Aug 2014 - Jul 2015

Research Grant, Council of Economics Graduate Students, Vanderbilt University, Fall 2018

Fulbright Scholarship, United States Department of State, Aug 2012 - May 2014

Erasmus Exchange Scholarship, Fall 2009

Working Papers

How to Reduce Misinformation [with Lucas Rentschler]

Does competition among media firms improve news quality? What about third-party fact-checking? We conduct a lab experiment with multiple treatments to answer these questions. We find that competition among firms and third-party fact-checking both significantly reduce misinformation, and the effect is greatest when both interventions are present.

Self-Deception: Adopting False Beliefs for a Favorable Self-View

This paper presents a theoretical model and an online experiment on motivated beliefs. Using two belief-elicitation methods – one unincentivized and the other incentivized – I show that subjects who behave selfishly report systematically more pessimistic beliefs in the unincentivized elicitation task than they do in the incentivized task. By contrast, subjects who behave altruistically report the same beliefs in both elicitation tasks. I propose that selfish subjects deliberately falsify their beliefs in the unincentivized task in an attempt to maintain the self-view of an altruistic person.

Systematically Skewed Beliefs

The false-consensus bias states that people believe that their behavioral choices are more common than they actually are. Numerous studies have provided evidence of the false-consensus bias by asking experimental subjects to estimate the percentage of people who share the same preferences as them. This paper shows that this bias is deeper than that. In an online experiment, I ask subjects to predict the entire distribution – rather than a single statistic (e.g., mean, median, mode) – of other people's types. I find that subjects overestimate the mass around their own types. In addition, this overestimation is so systematic that predicted distributions can be presented as skewed transformations of the actual distribution, where the skewness parameter is a function of the subject's own position on the distribution.

Risk, Trust, and Altruism in Genetic Data Sharing [with M. Wooders, B. Malin, & E. Vorobeychik]

We conduct behavioral experiments to elicit attitudes towards privacy risks associated with sharing genetic data. We ask subjects to make a risky decision but frame it in two different ways. To half the subjects, the problem is said to represent the decision to share one's genetic data. To the other half, the problem is said to represent the decision to share one's financial data. Both frames involve identical risks and payoffs, allowing us to focus on how the framing of the problem influences attitudes. Our findings (with 162 subjects) indicate that individuals are more willing to risk the privacy of their genetic data for a potential health benefit than the privacy of their financial data for a potential monetary benefit.

Behavioral Effects of a Minimum Wage Law

Does an increase in the minimum wage cause an increase in wages of informal sector workers, even though the law is not enforced in the informal sector? I answer this question using data from the Pakistan Labor Force Survey and a difference-in-differences framework. I find that an increase in the minimum wage has a positive spillover effect on informal sector wages, even though the law is not enforced in the informal sector. In addition, I find that the impact on informal sector wages is greater in poorer regions of the country where the minimum wage law has a greater "bite". I propose that this result is best explained by informal sector employers' preference to follow a social norm.

Miscellaneous

Computer skills: STATA, z-Tree, Latex, Qualtrics, Redcap

Citizenship: Pakistan