

# Labor Market Opportunities of Private and Public Education in Colombia

Valeria Junguito<sup>1</sup>, Juan Pablo Castilla<sup>#</sup> and Ximena Aldana<sup>#</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Colegio Los Nogales, Colombia

<sup>#</sup>Advisor

## ABSTRACT

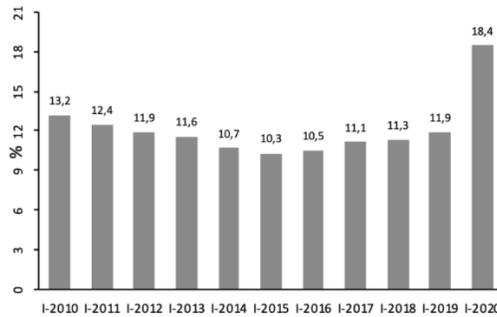
Colombia has presented high unemployment for the past decade which was worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. Job inequality among the highly vs. poorly educated has sparked a debate whether employers treat candidates differently based on their high school institution. This experiment explores the present research question: Does graduating from a public or private high school affect a candidate's opportunities of getting employed in Colombia under the circumstances of Covid-19? To circumvent the quandary, a quantitative field experiment on a correspondence testing method was used to investigate minority outcomes in the labor market. To create a realistic representation of the actual employment situation of Colombia, CEOs and business managers of the top companies were part of the experiment. Results reflect differential treatment in labor opportunities favouring private school graduates. It was evident throughout the experiment that the effects of graduating institutions were not as relevant as the level of education. Applicants from public schools can overcome this hurdle by investing in observable skills to the employer, suggesting that educational training programs can contribute to the reduction of the inequality gap Colombia currently faces.

## Introduction

### Context

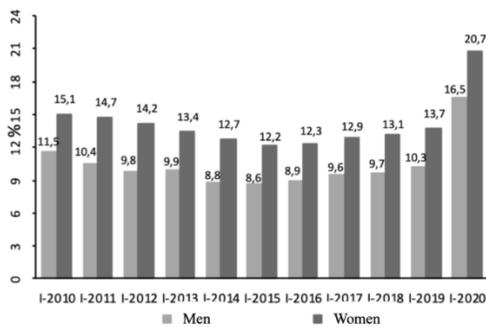
#### *Unemployment in Colombia*

Historically, Colombia has had one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. It is mainly triggered by the millions of displaced citizens who had to leave rural areas because of violence and depart to the principal cities where job opportunities were scarce. It was later worsened by the incoming millions of Venezuelan immigrants who arrived due to the conflict in the neighboring country. Unemployment was continuously decreasing from 2002 until 2009, where Colombia's unemployment rose from 11.4% to 13% because of the world crisis. Followed by a contrary behavior in 2015, the unemployment rate was 9.8%. With the shock of petroleum prices and reduction in global demand, Colombia's economy started facing structural adjustments. Elasticities between the product and employment were altered, resulting in a gradual increase in unemployment. 2020 comprised one of the most disruptive events the world has faced in recent history: the Covid-19 pandemic. The Colombian unemployment rate was the highest in the decade, reaching 20.2%. Until now, its impact was the strongest in the city's labor markets. Furthermore, inactivity grew from 3% in 2019 to 5% in the first semester of 2020, becoming a relevant indicator in explaining the variations in the unemployment rate (DNP, 2020). With the alternate labor market statistics, gender inequality in job opportunities has appeared and persisted. Unemployment amongst women has maintained above man's unemployment.



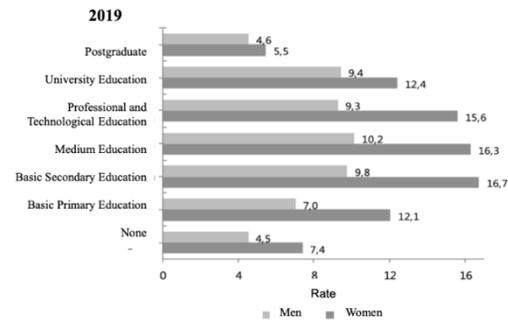
(DNP, 2020)

**Graph 1.1.** Semestral Unemployment Rate in 13 Main Areas in Colombia



(DNP, 2020)

**Graph 1.2.** Semestral Unemployment Rate by Gender in 13 Areas



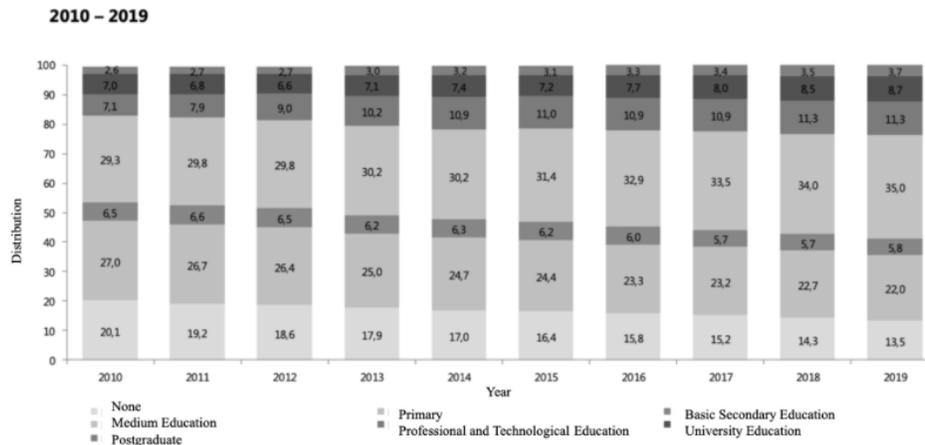
(DANE, 2020)

**Graph 1.3.** Unemployment Rate According to Educational Level and Gender

With the increase in unemployment in the first semester of 2020, women unemployment rate increased by 7.0 percentage points (pp) while men increased by 6.2 pp. As a result, the gender gap grew from 3.4 pp to 4.2 pp (DNP, 2020). Every measure of economic success has also revealed educational inequality. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics, unemployment is higher among the less educated. In 2019, the unemployment rate among women who completed middle level education was 16.3%, while for men it was 10.2%. Within basic secondary education, as citizens accomplish more years of learning, they are less prone to become unemployed (DANE, 2020).

### *Public and Private Education in Colombia*

For the past decade, Colombia has invested in expanding the coverage for basic schooling. Since 2010, the quantity of the uneducated population has substantially decreased. Following this extension, the country is in need to promote programs that improve the quality of education (DANE, 2019). The Third International Maths and Science Study revealed that Colombia's education is deficient. Students do not reach curricular objectives established by the country, nor meet international standards (Guerra, 2017).



(DANE, 2020)

**Graph 1.4.** Distribution of Population in Age to Work According to Educational Level Achieved

The Ministry of Education has evaluated student achievement through a national standardized test: *Las Pruebas Saber*. The results exposed that one fourth of the students in public schools do not surpass the minimum level of the language test (Díaz & Tobar, 2014). Likewise, a study by UNESCO by the Latin America Laboratory of Evaluation in Quality Education shows that in Latin America, the education level is higher in private schools than public schools (Steiner et al., 2002).

Results are not astonishing considering students from private schools in Colombia have better nutrition, do not have to work, grow up in well-educated homes, and have access to better utensils and facilities (Steiner et al., 2002). There is a deficiency in the allocation of teachers in public schools on a regional level, being scarce in areas where they are most needed. These differences create a debate on whether the Colombian government is generating enough programs and making sufficient investments to reduce the educational gap.

## Previous Research

### *Employment Cycle*

In Colombia, the evolution of labor participation is determined by a continuous cycle where the owners and managers of companies are part of a highly educated population in the country. Only the high class has access to these educational institutions. Company owners prefer to hire their family members and the high-class community, minimizing the labor pressure of employment for this group. This elevates the labor pressure regarding available modern jobs for the rest of the population. Low educated workers are subjected to this cycle of labor life. They work as employees and experience high levels of unemployment. Later on, they work independently in informal jobs but with lower unemployment rates. This network between the privileged population of the country makes the most powerful companies be owned and composed of this same group; generating an exclusion in work opportunities for the less fortunate and expanding the inequality gap between the rich and the poor (López, 2010).

### *Educational Effects on Labor Opportunities*

In globalization, a well-trained workforce is required to ensure economic development in a company. The Faculty of International Business and Economics of Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University conducted a study which disclosed that employment opportunities are higher for educated people. Principally this phenomenon is linked to the state of productivity and abilities to promote economic growth, measured as a calculation of GDP

reported to the employed population (Isalia & Predonu., 2015). In the same line of reasoning, The School of Education and Communication of Sweden conducted a study revealing the direct relationship between education and participation in work. The results implied that the recurring phenomenon of unemployment amongst the less educated widens inequality within these dimensions. This emphasizes the importance of educational investment by governments to improve the economic stability of the country (Bjursell et al., 2017).

Specifically in Colombia, The Bank of the Republic has identified that modern unemployment is biased towards the more educated. Leading to a turnover of unskilled wage-earning workers and an increase in informal employment. Additionally, this trend has been aggravated because of the evolution of the minimum wage, generating limitations for the demand for unskilled labor (López, 2010). This implies the construction of a stronger cycle of poverty amongst the less educated.

## Gap in the Research

Job inequality among the highly vs. poorly educated has sparked a debate whether employers treat candidates differently based on their education institution. It has been recognized that more levels of education and better quality education bring more job opportunities. Colombia has recognized that the low educated population seeks to find alternatives to earn income such as informal employment, which currently comprises 50% of the actual employment rate (López, 2010). However, it has not been examined if graduating from a private institution changes job opportunities compared to public institutions. Differences in quality education in public and private institutions in Colombia leads to the assumption that graduating from a private school results in better job opportunities. This research paper will explore the relevance of graduating from these institutions in terms of labor market opportunities in Colombia.

It is difficult to examine differential treatment in the labor market with conventional household surveys. When analyzing survey data, researchers compare employment opportunities using years of education as a treatment variable. Nevertheless, these government conducted studies cannot control other variables that are considered by employers. As a result, differences in outcome could be attributed to uncontrolled variables (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). This experiment will explore the present research question: Does graduating from a public or private high school affect a candidate's opportunities of getting employed in Colombia under the circumstances of Covid-19? With the previous studies explored above, it can be assumed that graduating from a private school leads to better job opportunities. Current statistics on employment opportunities based on level of education lead to the second assumption that the effect of the graduating institution will not be as relevant as the level of education.

## Methodology

### Experimental Design

Educational components of jobseekers in labor market outcomes can be attributed to differences that are observable to employers but unobservable to research. To circumvent this quandary, I conducted a quantitative field experiment on a correspondence testing method to investigate minority outcomes in the labor market. I sent a curriculum vitae summarizing skills and experience to CEO's and business directors of leading Colombian companies by manipulating the perception of Private and Public school education to the fictitious 'applicant'. I also experimentally varied the years of education of the candidates. Every participant received four resumes: two private school graduates and two public school graduates.

According to Bertrand & Mullainathan (2004), standard labor force surveys do not include all characteristics employers consider, making the results misleading. Differences in results can be attributed to these

unobserved components. To avoid deceptive outcomes, economists have conducted pseudo experiments and audit studies. However, it has been proven these experiments are extremely challenging to manipulate since they are using people as their subjects rather than manipulating profiles. Audit studies provide clean non-laboratory evidence. Auditors know the purpose of the study, which could lead to rationales forced to be consistent or inconsistent (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Last, these studies are extremely expensive, hindering large enough examples to comprehend mitigating factors.

This research overcomes these difficulties by relying solely on resumes. This guarantees comparability across ‘applicants’ and generates confidence that outcomes will be caused only by private or public schools. The method of the experiment does not have scope to possess procedure deviations. Finally, since there is no marginal cost of conducting the study, there is a greater sample size providing a better estimate and a considerably smaller statistical error.

## Creating Resumes

To begin the experiment, the fictitious resumes of the ‘applicants’ were created. Profiles needed to be realistic and be similar to the other ‘applicants’ in order to attribute the differences in outcomes to school instead of other factors. The first defining component was assigning the ‘applicants’ name. In order to avoid gender, race, or social class bias, the researcher designated a number for each ‘applicant’. Another component to maintain uniformity between the candidates was the languages spoken. Each candidate was assigned a native level of Spanish and a proficient level of English. In the same line of reasoning, all the candidates graduated school in the same year, creating a consistent age group. In order to construct more reasonable profiles, work experience was considered. Many industries, such as the consulting sector, could drive biases in outcomes because of preferences for a particular company. Therefore, each ‘applicant’ was assigned to a job in the car industry of Colombia. All the companies are ranked as the top car concessionaires. The position held within the company was the same for all ‘applicants’.

The manipulated component of the resumes was education. To measure the impact of Public and Private schooling in working opportunities, this factor needed to vary amongst candidates. To select the schools, the margin of difference needed to be minimized. For this reason I chose two schools that had similar scores in *Las Pruebas Saber*, which determine the level of education of an institution compared to the national average and are used to admit students in Colombian universities. In 2018 Colegio Los Nogales, a private institution in Colombia, scored 75.93. In that same year, the Institución Educativa Distrital Alexander Von Humboldt was the public institution with the highest average score of 71.41 (ICFES, 2017). In the experiment, two candidates were assigned to Colegio Los Nogales, one of the most prestigious and best ranked schools in the country, and two other candidates were assigned to the Institución Educativa Distrital Alexander Von Humboldt. To measure an alternate variable, years of education were altered. All the candidates were assigned to the same university: Universidad de los Andes, one of the top and most prestigious Colombian Colleges. All the resumes had an economics career for a bachelor's degree. However, two candidates, one from public school and another from private school, had an MBA in La Universidad de los Andes. Taking these characteristics into consideration would allow the creation of a representative profile to each of the ‘applicants’. This would enable results to be attributed to the control variables and minimize inconsistencies caused by bias.

1	
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
2020 - 2022	UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES Master of Business Administration (MBA Program)
2009 - 2014	UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES Bachelor of Arts (Economics)
1995 - 2009	COLEGIO LOS NOGALES
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	
2015 - 2020	CHEVROLET Administrative Manager
<b>LANGUAGES</b>	
Spanish: Mother Tongue English: C2	

Resume 1

3	
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
2020 - 2022	UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES Master of Business Administration (MBA Program)
2009 - 2014	UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES Bachelor of Arts (Economics)
1995 - 2009	INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA DISTRITAL ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	
2015 - 2020	TOYOTA Administrative Manager
<b>LANGUAGES</b>	
Spanish: Mother Tongue English: C2	

Resume 3

2	
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
2009 - 2014	UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES Bachelor of Arts (Economics)
1995 - 2009	COLEGIO LOS NOGALES
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	
2015 - 2020	NISSAN Administrative Manager
<b>LANGUAGES</b>	
Spanish: Mother Tongue English: C2	

Resume 2

4	
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
2009 - 2014	UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES Bachelor of Arts (Economics)
1995 - 2009	INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA DISTRITAL ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	
2015 - 2020	KIA Administrative Manager
<b>LANGUAGES</b>	
Spanish: Mother Tongue English: C2	

Resume 4

## Survey

The experiment was carried out between the 1st and 15th of March 2021. In order to collect data, a survey was sent to 92 respondents. The survey had two major components: general information of the respondent and examination of the resumes. The first section was focused on an overview of the respondent. These questions would allow a clear understanding of current Colombian business managers. Information gathered would help evidence the ongoing phenomenon of the high-class employment cycle. The researcher did not ask if the respondent attended a public or private school to prevent bias in the selection of the resumes. Instead, it was asked the school they attended in order to manually categorize their school as a public or private institution.

**Table 1.1.** Section 1 Survey

Question	Possible Answers
Gender	Female
	Male
	Rather not say
	Other
Age	20 - 30
	31 - 40
	41 - 50
	51 - 60
	60+
Marital Status	Single
	Married
	Divorced
	Widowed
Highest Level of Education	Rather not say
	High School
	Bachelors
	Masters
What is your social class according to your public receipts?	Doctoral
	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
What high school did you graduate from?	6
	Open ended question

\*In Colombia the social status determines the public receipts of the household. Social class are divided into 6 groups numbered from 1 (the poorest) to 6 (the wealthiest).

The second section of the survey was focused on the selection process of the fictitious applicants. A picture of each resume was provided. The respondent was asked to organize resumes in order of preference for the ‘applicants’ of the job. The structure of this question would summarize the hiring preferences of each respondent.

### Selection of Participants

Respondents of the survey were carefully chosen in order to minimize the errors of outcome that could be attributed to the participants. To create a realistic representation of the actual situation of Colombia, actual employers were part of the experiment. CEOs and business managers of the top companies in Colombia answered the questionnaire. With this range of candidates, a wide range of answers would be attained that possess various business perspectives. This group would also reflect the mindset of current Colombian employers and display the fundamental characteristics of the group leading Colombia’s economy.

### Weaknesses of the Experiment

The strengths of the experiment have been emphasized relative to previous studies conducted in the field of research. However, the experiment also holds its limitations and weaknesses. A job applicant ultimately cares whether they obtain the job and the wage offered. Initially, the outcome of this experiment is a model of the current workforce situation in Colombia. This procedure cannot be translated into gaps in earnings and presents

a marginal error compared to the actual Colombian labor force situation. The respondents have a set of preferences that can be used as an average of Colombian employers, but can also vary from the entire population. Another weakness is that resumes directly report the school and this can lead to various sources of concern. First, some respondents may have simply not noticed the name of the school of graduation and based their decision on other factors. Respondents may not recognize the names of the schools as private and public causing them to misinterpret the resumes. The school name may also signal other traits of the candidate. More specifically, a private school reflects a higher social class and this might help respondents infer a social background. Finally, the group selected to answer the survey is not the only channel to obtain a job. People can gain employment through other networks and means that do not involve Colombia's current leaders.

## Results and Analysis

### Demographics

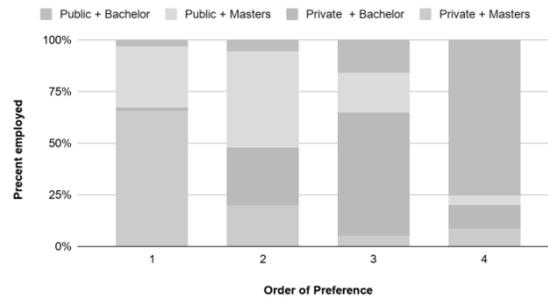
**Table 2.1.** Respondents Demographics

Category	Division	Results
Gender	Female	38,30%
	Male	61,70%
	Rather not say	0%
	Other	0%
Age	20 - 30	0%
	31 - 40	7,40%
	41 - 50	39,40%
	51 - 60	46,80%
	60+	6,40%
Marital Status	Single	4,30%
	Married	78,70%
	Divorced	17%
	Widowed	0%
	Rather not say	0%
Highest Level of Education	High School	1,10%
	Bachelors	10,60%
	Masters	86,30%
	Doctoral	2,10%
"Estrato"	1	0%
	2	0%
	3	0%
	4	0%
	5	0%
	6	100%
High School Graduate	Public School	100%
	Private School	0%

94 participants answered the survey. 61.70% of the respondents were male and 38.30% were female. This sample reflects a higher volume of CEO women than other Latin America countries and the worldwide average. According to the International Labour Organization, 24% of Latin America private and public companies are directed/led by women. Worldwide, 34% executive directors are women (ILO, 2017). Responses also revealed that the current Colombian leaders are primarily 41 to 60 years old. In terms of education, most business managers have reached master's degrees. This implies that current Colombian leaders had an advantage in obtaining their job because of their years of education. According to the survey, 100% of the participants are part of the high social class, proving that Colombian employment remains biased. Ultimately, 100% of the respondents graduated from a private high school. These results disclose the hiring preferences of past businesses when hiring Colombia's current leaders. Gender, level of education, social class, and graduating institutions played a significant role in the candidates' employability. Said information prompts the following questions: Have hiring

preferences developed in Colombia? Will current employability preferences help Colombia have a more diverse group of future leaders?

## Results of Employed Resumes



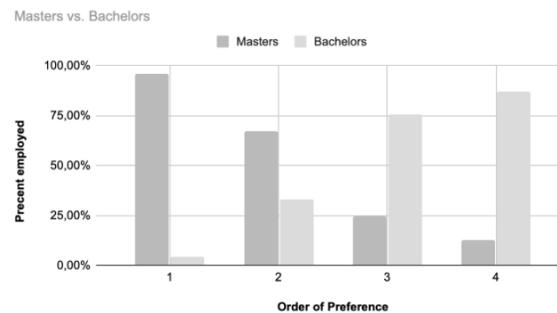
\* Blue represents resume 1: Colegio Los Nogales and 21 years of education. Red represents resume 2: Colegio Los Nogales and 19 years of education. Yellow represents resume 3: Institución Educativa Distrital Alexander Von Humboldt and 21 years of education. Green represents resume 4: Institución Educativa Distrital Alexander Von Humboldt and 19 years of education.

### Graph 2.1. Profile Preferences

The conducted experiment measured the primary effects that years of education and private vs public schooling have on employability during the scarce labor demand that Covid-19 provoked. Graph 2.1 tabulates average selection rates by years of highest degree reached and graduating institutions. The first column represents the first option of resumes that the respondents preferred. The favored resume was the profile of master's degree and graduate of private education with a selection of 66 percent. The profile with an equivalent level of education and public high school had a 29.8 percent selection. Representing a significant statistical difference of 36.2 percentage points. Present results expose that current Colombian business managers prefer private school graduates. If a public education graduate is seeking for a job under Colombia's current labor market conditions and preferences, then the candidate would have to apply to approximately 30 more jobs than a private school graduate in order to get hired. The second column portrays the second option of employability. The preferred profile, with 46.8 percent, was the master's degree with public education. The resume of private education and bachelor degree has a 27.7 percent chance of getting employed as a second option. This implies a difference of 19.1 percentage points, which is considerably less than the difference evidenced in the first option between the top chosen resumes. This evidence shows that years of education is a vital role in employability. However, results also display that in certain circumstances, having graduated from a private institution gives an advantage even when the other candidate has a greater level of education. In the third option, the resume with the most chance to get employed was the profile of private education and bachelor's degree followed by public education and master's degree. Last, the fourth option had preference for the resume of public education and bachelor's degree with a chance of getting employed at 75.5 percent. This implies that a candidate with resume 4 has the least opportunity to obtain a job in the current employment circumstances of Colombia. Present results suggest that both factors measured, years of education and institution of graduation, have a significant effect on labor market

opportunities during Covid-19 circumstances. This opens a discussion on whether years of education have a more substantial effect on employability than private vs public schools or vice versa.

## Do Master's Degree Candidates Have More Employability Than Bachelor's Degree Candidates?



\* Red represents resume 1: Colegio Los Nogales and 21 years of education, and resume 3: Institución Educativa Distrital Alexander Von Humboldt and 21 years of education. Yellow represents resume 2: Colegio Los Nogales and 19 years of education, and resume 4: Institución Educativa Distrital Alexander Von Humboldt and 19 years of education.

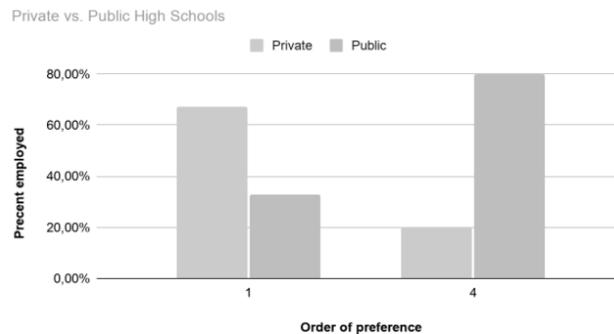
### Graph 2.2. Years of Education Preferences

Throughout the experiment, two resumes were assigned a master's degree while the other two had a bachelor's degree. To assess the effect on labor opportunities, a graph who merged resumes with the same years of education was created. Graph 2.2 exhibits a considerably large statistical difference favoring profiles with more years of education. In the first option, master's degree resumes had an advantage of 91.5 percentage points on getting employed. Meaning the disparity in employability is attributed to higher levels of education. In the second option, master's degree candidates were also preferred but with a minor advantage than in the first option. The third option preferred for bachelor's degree by 51 percentage points. Last, the fourth option revealed a preference of 74.4 percentage points for bachelor graduates. As it was expected, we find that the chance of getting employed when having higher education is significantly higher than fewer years of education. Graph 2.2 divulges the importance current Colombian CEO's attribute to educational attainment in circumstances of scarce labor demand.

## Do Private School Graduates Have More Employability Than Public School Graduates?

In order to compare the factor that has a greater influence on employability in Colombia during Covid-19, a graph displaying the effects of private and public education was created. The results of private school graduates were consolidated and so were the public school graduates. Results on graph 2.1 demonstrate a substantial gap in employability based on graduated institutions and years of education. Graph 2.3 demonstrates that in the first

option Private education graduates had a 67 percent chance of getting employed while public education graduates had a 33 percent chance. This means that a private education graduate has a 34 percentage point advantage of getting employed over a public school graduate. Finally, the fourth option revealed that respondents have the least preference for public education graduates. Overall, profiles that graduated from Colegio Los Nogales were elected more amongst the top options, revealing a hiring preference for private institutions. The last option also reveals that as a last resource candidate, current Colombian CEO's would hire a public school candidate. These results reveal a potential cause for current Colombian inequality. Graduates from private institutions have greater labor opportunities, which contribute to the rich-poor gap generated in Colombia. A trigger for the findings are employability preferences attributing people of higher social status. Going back to table 1, this potential cause might arise because current Colombian CEO's and business managers are mainly private school graduates and prefer to hire candidates that assemble with their profile. Results reveal that preferences in schools are not a consequence of educational quality but are awarded to the characteristic assumptions of a private school graduate. Both schools have an equivalent educational quality according to the Colombian standardized national test. However, since Colegio Los Nogales is a private school, it comes with a set of suppositions, such as social status, family background, amongst others. It is important to emphasize that only the high social class of Colombia has access to private education and that minimum to none kids are granted scholarships to attend.



\* Blue represents resume 1: Colegio Los Nogales and 21 years of education, and resume 2: Colegio Los Nogales and 19 years of education. Green represents resume 3: Institución Educativa Distrital Alexander Von Humboldt and 21 years of education, and resume 4: Institución Educativa Distrital Alexander Von Humboldt and 19 years of education.

### Graph 2.3. Institutional Preferences

Comparing Graph 2.2 and 2.3, it can be observed that years of education are the factor with the greatest influence on labor market opportunities based on current Colombian CEOs preferences, under Covid-19 circumstances. However, it is also clear that the institution of graduation also has a relevant effect on candidates' employability. In order to understand the set of qualities that obtain greater labor opportunities and under what specific circumstances are years of education more relevant, a statistical analysis was conducted using the obtained results of the experiment.

### Statistical Results

To appropriately compare the preferences for the resumes, an equation was created. The quantity of times the resume was chosen, the first option (F) would gain 3 points, second option (S) gets 2 points, third option (T) gets 1 point, and fourth option (R) gets 0 points.

$$\text{Equation 1: Points Earned} = 3F + 2S + 1T + 0R$$

**Table 2.2.** Earned Points for Profiles

Points Earned	Resume 1	Resume 2	Resume 3	Resume 4
3	62	1	28	3
2	19	26	44	5
1	5	56	18	15
0	8	11	4	71
Total Points	229	111	190	34

\*In the first column 3 represents option 1, 2 represents option 2, 1 represents option 3, and 0 represents option 4.

Results demonstrate a substantial gap in the preference for resume 1. The difference between the first and third resume is 39 points which were both profiles with a high education of master degree. As it can be seen in Table 2.2 on the last row, the difference between the preference of resume 2 rather than resume 4 is considerable. A candidate who graduated from a private school and obtained a bachelor's degree has 77 points of advantage over a candidate who graduated from a private school and obtained a bachelor's degree. The differences between these two scores shows that once two candidates have a master's degree, the advantage of having private education is less than when the two candidates have a bachelor's degree. Table 2.2 tabulates an incredible 118 point difference between resume 1 and resume 2. This evidence shows that when two job seekers graduate from a private school, the candidate with more years of education has a significant advantage over the other. Furthermore, resume 3 and 4 have a difference of 156 points favoring resume 3. The advantage that a public school graduate has when obtaining more years of education over another public school graduate is higher than the one a private school graduate has when getting more years of education over another private school graduate. The greatest statistical difference is between resume 1 and resume 4, which is 134 points. A candidate who graduated from a private institution with a master's degree has a significant advantage over a candidate who graduated from a public institution with a bachelor's degree. This statistical analysis reveals that the best set of combinations for employability are being a graduate of a private school and having obtained a master's degree. It is also clear that candidates of public schools are the most favored when having greater years of education. As individuals from public institutions in Colombia receive more years of education, they contract the advantage gap between public and private education.

## Evaluation and Relation to Existing Theories

Overall, after having conducted the research, the initial assumptions can be validated. Differences in education in public and private institutions in Colombia lead to differential treatment in labor opportunities favouring private school graduates. It was evident throughout the experiment that the effects of graduating institutions were not as relevant as the level of education of the 'applicant'.

The discussion that arises from the obtained results is based on the causes for the differential gap between the control variables. To begin with, findings on preferences between private and public schooling are because of a bias towards the particular group of private school graduates. This reflects a predilection towards the high socioeconomic class of Colombia in the labor market. Existing research has examined networks of interactional relationships among actors and meaningful social characteristics. Research conducted by Anthony Lemelle (2002) evidenced how socioeconomic status is distributed between race and gender groups manifesting that there are significant differences in the distribution of occupational prestige. By conducting research integrating internal colonialism and dual labor market theories, Lemelle was able to understand the correlation between social status and labor opportunities. Findings state that subaltern communities have a disadvantage in terms of distribution of occupational prestige. This existing theory is controversial because it is a source of

social and political conflict because it recognizes a recurring cause to expand inequality in a country (Lemelle, 2002).

The conducted experiment also indicates that a cause for the obtained results is a bias towards a candidate with similar characteristics to the employer. As previously mentioned, the lack of social mobility in Colombia shows a hiring preference for a particular group. As the experiment reflected, current CEO's of Colombia are private school graduates of high socioeconomic class, and the group mostly favored in the experiment have the same characteristics. Existing theories about this phenomenon could explain the gained findings. A research published by the editorial Public Library of Science evidences bias accommodation to maximize candidate fit with the working team. The recruitment process adds pressure to avoid hiring candidates from specific groups because it is viewed as a primary role responsibility to take into consideration the preferences of co-workers. The present research demonstrates that professionals prioritize candidate fit, minimizing the diversity of the group and engaging with the same community (Vial et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

This paper suggests that public school graduates receive differential treatment when seeking jobs in Colombia during the circumstances that Covid-19 provoked in the labor market. There is a great inequality gap in Colombia and employability preferences might be a cause for the lack of social mobility. The factor with the greatest influence on labor market opportunities is years of education. Having graduated from a private institution also favors a candidate considerably. Equally importantly, applicants from public schools can overcome this hurdle by investing in observable skills to the employer. This study suggests that educational training programs can contribute to the reduction of the inequality gap Colombia currently faces.

The obtained results also reveal a significant problem for Colombia because the country generates greater inequality between the rich and the poor. Preferences for candidates with a higher social status background limit the possibilities for less fortunate people to escape from poverty. The lack of availability of quality education to the less fortunate is already a disadvantage which is later widened by the narrow range of employment opportunities. These findings are important and need to be addressed because even if Colombia undergoes economic growth, the population that will be benefited are the company's managers, who are the high class of the country. The lack of social mobility will enable the reduction of inequality in the country. Regardless, this issue can be addressed through investment in educational programs and a higher education.

Future research could be conducted to circumvent the present limitations the methodology imposes. Examining possible wages offerings for the candidates could translate the results to gaps in earnings. This would allow a further level of analysis that would reflect labor market opportunities and valorization of candidates based on the control variables of the experiment. Having a wider variety of respondents would provide a more accurate model of the current situation. Labor opportunities arise not only from the business managers and CEOs of the country. Therefore, broadening the group of respondents would provide a more exact representation of the current job opportunities preferences in Colombia. Finally, these results reflect that present Colombian leaders are more conscious of the importance of generating labor opportunities to help reduce inequality. This raises the question: will current employability preferences generate a more diverse group of future Colombian leaders? In order to respond to this inquiry, future research would need to be conducted in a couple of years using the same method of the conducted experiment.

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