



# **EFFECTS OF HABILITATION PROCEDURES ON ACADEMIC CAREER: LESSONS FROM THE ITALIAN CONTEXT**

**Antonio Zinilli and Emanuela Reale**



The study examines the **effects** produced by the **Italian National Scientific Habilitation** (ASN -Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale) on the academic **research quality**.

In this context, “research quality” refers to the **quality of scientific publications**.

We want to understand how **academics** themselves **view the impact of ASN on the quality of their own research**; other individual (e.g., gender, children etc.) and organizational (e.g., characteristics of the university of origin) characteristics have also been observed.

# Importance of the study



**ASN** is a **precondition** to apply **for permanent positions** of full and associate professor in Italian universities (Law 240/2010).

The effect of the ASN on the scientific quality in Italy is a **debated topic**. The importance of ensuring the validity and utility of the evaluation process has also grown (Abramo and D'Angelo, 2015).

Academic evaluation exercises, such as ASN, are criticized for fostering a “**publish or perish**” culture, incentivizing quantity over quality, potentially leading to a proliferation of low-quality publications and discouraging long-term, high-risk research pursuits (Abramo and D'Angelo, 2015; Baccini et al., 2019; Aliakbar et al., 2021).

**On the other hand**, the **ASN** argue that it has **increased transparency and fairness** in the academic evaluation process, reducing the influence of subjective factors such as personal connections or affiliations. Moreover, the ASN has encouraged researchers to produce more internationally recognized publications, contributing to the visibility and competitiveness of Italian research at the global level (Ossenblok et al. 2012).

Scholars generated evidence regarding evaluation's **impact** on research agenda and publication patterns **in various fields** (Shalley, 1995; Osuna et al., 2011; Abramo D'Angelo, 2015; Santos and Horta, 2018).

**Academics** tend to **criticize** the rules of competitive funding and **evaluation while** remaining **attentive to them**, “reacting according to the requirements of the process” (Musselin, 2013; Lucas, 2007).

Marzolla (2016) emphasizes need for **discipline-specific assessment methods**.

Pautasso (2015) explores **gender dynamics**, revealing **disparities** in application rates.

Marini (2017) notes **ASN**'s shift towards favoring **early-career scholars** with high-quality research.

De Paola and Scoppa (2015) find women in committees more likely to promote female candidates.

Marini and Maschitti (2018) suggest **no significant gender bias** in habilitation procedures.

According to the perception of the academics:

- i) what effects ASN produces on the quality of their research? Are there disciplinary differences?
- ii) which factors describe the differences between those who assume ASN has had an impact on research quality and those who believe it has not?

The hypothesis that we want to test is that the **effects** of scientific habilitation are **perceived differently** in different scientific fields (e.g. SH vs. LS and PE). Changes reported by the scholars investigated are associated with **different epistemic regimes**.

Quality assessment varies across disciplines, impacting perceptions and criteria.

**Survey Design:** original national survey in Italy (2020-2021).

**Sample:** 1,365 academics from Italian universities.

**Variables:** investigated effects of ASN on research quality, considering demographics, geographical contexts, and academic roles. We consider the **fourteen Italian CUN areas** to characterize the perception of the academics with respect to ASN.

**Method:** employed logit model to analyze perceptions, adjusting for survey design using sampling weights.

We used a **logit model to explain the likelihood of response** and shed light on the variables that affect respondents' perceptions of the effect of ASN on their own research

# Results



**Response variable:** the influence of the ASN on research quality (1 = ASN influenced my research; 0 = otherwise).

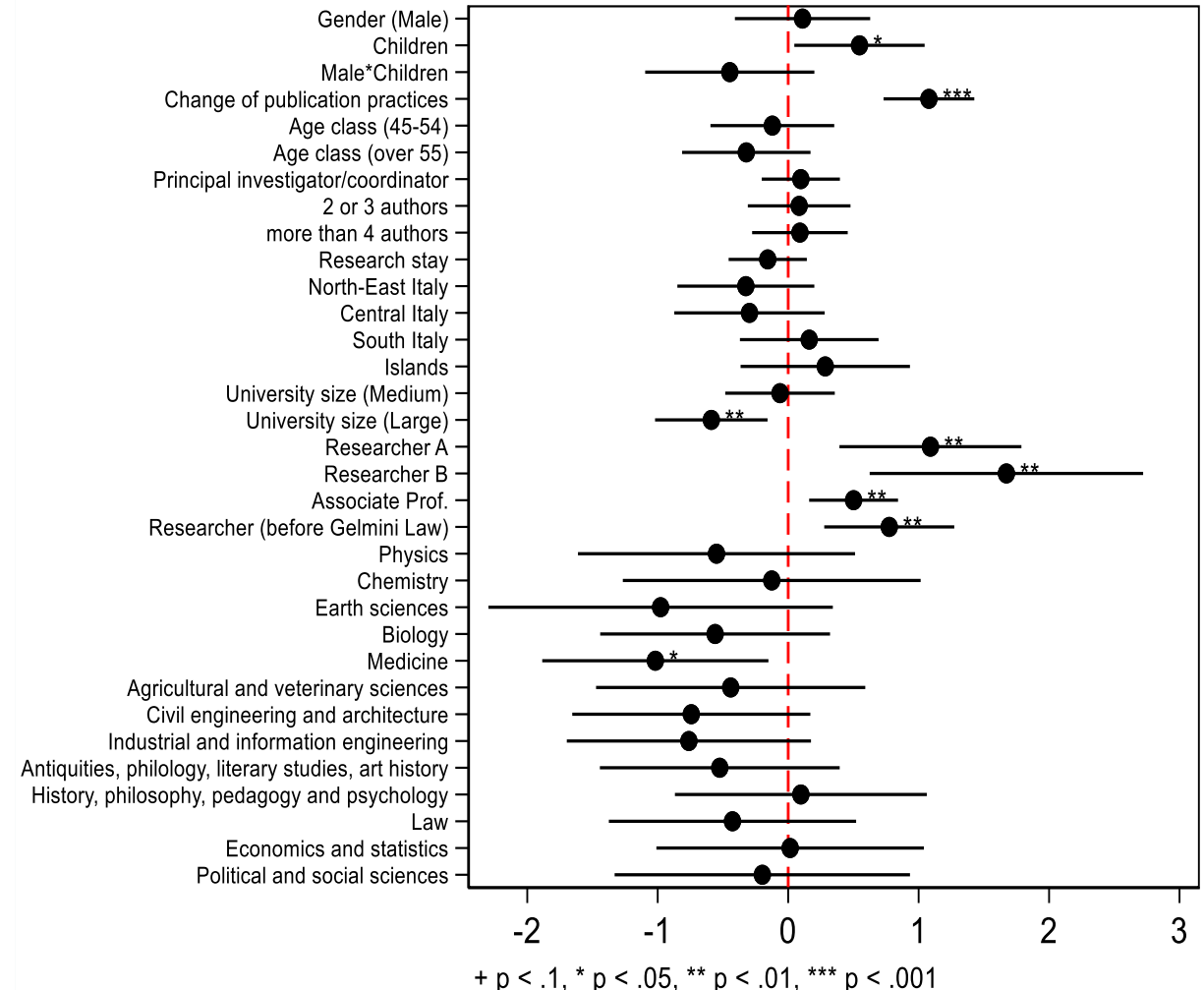
**Children:** statistically significant, indicating researchers with children **are more likely** to perceive ASN as influencing research quality.

**Change of publication practices:** statistically significant, suggesting researchers reporting changes in output **are more likely** to say ASN influenced research quality.

**University Size (Large):** statistically significant, suggesting researchers in larger universities **are less likely** to perceive ASN as negatively affecting research quality.

**Academic role:** statistically significant, suggesting researchers in lower academic ranks **are more likely** to perceive ASN as influencing research quality.

Generally, **disciplinary area membership variables** are not significant, suggesting **no significant association** between the effect of ASN and research quality perception, and academic discipline.





The study finds that the Italian ASN's impact on academics' research quality is not significant across scientific fields, challenging initial hypotheses.

Gender does not significantly affect perceptions of ASN's impact, but **having children positively associates with perceived influence on research quality**. The interaction between gender and parenthood is not significant.

Researchers who reported changes in their publication practices are more likely to perceive the Italian ASN as having influenced the quality of their research.

Young researchers are more susceptible to the influence of the Italian ASN on their perception of research quality. This indicates the amplified **impact of ASN on early-career academics**.

**Academics from smaller universities** are more likely to perceive ASN as negatively affecting research quality compared to those from larger institutions.



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**Thank you!**