Math ability, gender stereotypes about math ability, and educational choices – Combining experimental and survey data

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Abstract
Although the labour market increasingly requires skills in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), in several European countries, including Italy, this increasing demand is not matched by an analogous increase in the number of youngsters pursuing studies in these fields.
The problem is particularly pronounced for female students, who are much less likely than males to enrol in STEM tracks. Two main explanations proposed for the underrepresentation of females in STEM fields are (i) gender differences in math ability and (ii) gender stereotypes about math ability.
We ran an experiment and administered a survey among 8th graders in Italy, who are called to make an important educational choice that will greatly affect their upper educational opportunities and labour market prospects.
The experiment, combined with the survey, aims to investigate the presence of math performance gaps and gender-based stereotypes among 8th graders and, ultimately, whether these factors are related to the educational choices of female students.