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Mieszko Mazur, Galla Salganik-Shoshan



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Teaming up and quiet intervention: The impact of institutional investors on executive compensation policies

Mieszko Mazur¹, Galla Salganik-Shoshan²

¹Department of Finance, IESEG School of Management; 3 rue de la Digue, 59000 Lille, France

²Finance Division, Department of Business Administration, Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, P.O.Box 653, 84105 Beer Sheva, Israel

m.mazur@ieseg.fr

salganik@som.bgu.ac.il

***Corresponding author.**

Abstract

This paper investigates whether institutional investors intervene in firms to impact their incentive systems. We use metrics based on geographic distance between institutional investors as proxies for the intensity of their strategic interactions and plausible interventions. We find that when investors are geographically proximate to one another, firms tend to adopt executive compensation contracts that exhibit more performance-based mechanisms, higher incentives to expend managerial effort, and higher incentives to make risky and positive-NPV policy choices. We also find that geographic distance between institutions is a significant determinant of the executive pay differentials. We show that firms with geographically dispersed investors have larger compensation gaps. This latter evidence appears to be consistent with the tournament theory, where CEO compensation is high relative to performance. Throughout the analysis we apply the dynamic panel generalized method of moments (GMM) methodology that accounts for unobservable heterogeneity, simultaneity, and other important endogeneity issues.

Keywords: Institutional investors; Executive compensation; Strategic interactions; Executive pay disparity; Geography

JEL Classification: G23, J33, M52

1. Introduction

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