

# **THE METOO MOVEMENT AND GENDER DIVERSITY ON IT BOARDS OF DIRECTORS**

**Nahid Aslanbeigui, Jordan Petchel, and Katerine Ramirez**

The androcentric culture of the information technology (IT) industry celebrates white, male college dropouts courted by equally male-dominated venture capital firms in search of the next “moonshot.” Cultural norms espoused by founders and reinforced by venture capitalists promote “bold but bad” behavior—including sexual harassment—toward coworkers, often women. The toxic culture persists beyond the IPO. Founders, investors, and their appointed executives occupy seats on male-dominated boards of directors, the entities most responsible for creating and enforcing organizational culture.

Supported by scholarship, we accept the premise that increased board gender diversity improves firm economic and social performance as well as labor practices and policies. We use regression analysis to quantify the impact of the MeToo movement—a global phenomenon that exposes sexual harassment and misconduct—on the gender composition of IT boards, a topic that has not received much attention in the scholarly literature on Governance. Using the Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS) codes and Bloomberg data, we create a balanced panel of 77 publicly traded IT companies in the United States for 2010-2019. Our dependent variable is the share of women on boards. We use two proxies for MeToo, our independent variable: newspaper headlines and Google Trends that contain the expressions “sexual harassment” and “sexual misconduct.” Controlling for firm-specific variables that do and do not vary over time, we discover that MeToo has had a small, positive, and statistically significant impact on IT board gender diversity, occasionally pushing women’s board membership beyond three, presumed to be a critical mass.