Age is inversely correlated with overconfidence, so older students were more able to identify their real performance. This behavior suggests that, over the years and with greater maturity, students will acquire greater autonomy and be able to evaluate themselves more efficiently.

Conclusions

This study aims to verify if the previous findings of education literature, which relate overconfidence bias to performance and students’ personal characteristics, apply in the Brazilian context.

Using a large sample of student-level observations of the ENADE (National Student Performance Exam) of 2015, released by the Brazilian Minister of Education, we compared the perceived difficulty interval with each student’s effective performance, by assigning them a score based on how far their perceived performance was from actual performance.

As the Ministry of Education regulates undergraduate programs of the country through a long exam, which is applied on a regular basis and has publicly available results, Brazil is a promising test scenario for bias issues related to overconfidence in students.

Our main results suggest that better performing students in Brazil “know what they do not know”: performance is inversely correlated with overconfidence in both parts of the exam (general and specific knowledge). Senior students were also more able to assess their real performance.

Surprisingly, the female students presented a higher probability of being overconfident when compared to the male students. In addition, the students with higher incomes exhibited greater overconfidence, as well as those who spent less time to complete the exam.

The presented study opens space for new studies in the area of education, using a large database of students in a neutral environment.

References