Discussion of
Culture, Religiosity and Female Labor Supply

by

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Research Question:

What is the effect of culture on female LFPR in Turkey?

Methodology

Applies epidemiological approach to a within-country setting

Findings

One standard deviation increase in employment rates in 1970 in the province of origin increases the probability of female labor force participation by 3 percentage points – controlling for individual characteristics, current economic and institutional setting

A higher rate of religiosity in the province of origin affects the female labor supply negatively

LFPR in Turkey

Very low LFPR – around 30.2 percent

Lower LFPR in urban areas – around 20 percent

Educational differences explains about one third of the difference between Turkey and similar countries in Southern Europe

Observations that facilitate empirical analysis

Large regional differences in LFPR in Turkey

Differences in cultural traits –

> Appendix A regional differences in attitudes towards women's work and attitudes towards husband's help in household chores – missing from paper?

Differences in religiosity

Empirical Strategy

Goal: Estimate female labor force participation decision by equation (1).

X: age, education etc.

W: regional dummies

Z: cultural attitudes towards the work of woman i

Z may be correlated with the error term; There may also be reverse causality (LFP affecting cultural attitudes)

Equation (2) : Culture is a function of the previous generation among other factors

$$LFP_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{it} + \beta_2 Z_{it} + \beta_3 W_t + \epsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

$$Z_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_{it} + \alpha_2 Z_{it-1} + \alpha_3 W_t + \gamma_{it} \tag{2}$$

$$LFP_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{it} + \beta_2 Z_{it} + \beta_3 W_t + \epsilon_{it} \qquad (1)$$

$$Z_{it} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 X_{it} + \alpha_2 Z_{it-1} + \alpha_3 W_t + \gamma_{it} \qquad (2)$$

Empirical Strategy

1. Clarification of what Zit refers to would be helpful

   Does it refer to the cultural values of the individual, or the cultural norms/constraints that individual faces (from the spouse, neighbors etc.).

   If it is the latter culture in the origin is less relevant

2. Paper notes that there is no data on Zit-1;

   There is also no data on Zit

3. Two equation system is a bit misleading because it suggests as if there is data on Zit and it is being instrumented; while there is a missing data problem. The missing data is proxied by Zit-1 which is assumed to be exogenous.

Empirical Strategy

4. This paper and the literature argues for the exogeneity of Zit-1 which is measured by the historical LFP rate in the origin.

– Contemporaneous LFP decision has no influence on Zit-1 ✓

– Outmigration is not random; Could migrants from low LFPR regions be systematically different that affect their labor market prospects or productivity?

•Regional LFPR rates are correlated over time

•Higher LFPR in the origin may signal that females have skills that are relatively more valued in the labor market (due to e.g. Higher quality of education)

•"Work culture" may also differ. Individual coming from a higher LFPR region may be exposed to a better knowledge of the labor market either directly or through parents (how to find jobs, how to acquire skills relevant for the labor market, how to find nannies for the children etc.) (parental literacy rate partly addresses this; but for a given level of education for the individual and literacy status of parents a higher LFPR in the origin may mean higher access to labor market information)

Data

TDHS 2008, matched with 1970 LFPR rates from the 1970 Census and current labor force conditions from 2008 HLFS.

Sample – ever married women ages 15 to 49

LFP rates in 1970 – some striking figures such as Isparta 16.24 (highest figure), Yalova (12.13), Burdur (8.05) compared to İstanbul (12.13)

Some of these women in non-agricultural sector may actually be working at home (such as carpet weaving; unpaid family worker; is this much different than farm work?)

Results for the effect of culture

Significant effect of LFPR in the province of origin across specifications

Other robustness checks:

Control for spousal labor supply?

Controls for educational distribution among female labor force participants in the region of residence

Results for the effect of culture

Religion as a proxy for attitudes towards women's work

Religion does not prohibit women's work

Workplace practices may however not accommodate the more religious (e.g. bans on scarves in public sector until recently). Raises the possibility of discrimination and this changes interpretation.

Electoral votes may not be a good measure of religiosity

Several religious groups are known to vote for AP, many religious individuals vote for CHP

Several socioeconomic factors determine voting behavior – how important is the religious beliefs? Economically deprived regions may be more likely to vote for a new party that emerged in 1973 elections.

Year	İstanbul - Party vote	Antalya - Party vote
1973	% 8.4 (MSP)	% 5.6 (MSP)
1999	% 21 (FP)	% 15 (FP)
2007	% 48 (AKP+Saadet)	% 35 (AKP+Saadet)