

Conditions That Brought Bounce-Back in Southern Europe: An Inter-Temporal and Cross-National Analysis on Female Labour Force Participation with Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis

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Abstract : Since the 1990s, governments, international organizations and scholars have drawn increasing attention to the significance of women in the labour force. While advanced industrial countries in North Western Europe and North America have managed to increase female labour force participation (FLFP) in the early post world war two period, emerging economies of the 1970s have only been able to increase FLFP only a decade later. Among these areas, Southern Europe features a wave of remarkable bounce backs in FLFP. However, despite striking similarities between the features in Southern Europe and those in Turkey, Turkey has not been able to pull women into the labour force. Despite a host of institutional similarities, Turkey has failed to reach to the level of her Southern European neighbours. This paper addresses the puzzle why Turkey lag behind in FLFP in comparison to her Southern European neighbours. There are signs showing that FLFP is currently reaching a critical threshold at a time when structural factors may allow a trend. It is not known, however, the constellation of conditions which may bring rising FLFP in Turkey. In order to gain analytical leverage from similar transitions in countries that share similar labour market and welfare state regime characteristics, this paper identifies the conditions in Southern Europe that brought rising FLFP to be able to explore the prospects for Turkey. Second, this paper takes these variables in the fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) as conditions which can potentially explain the outcome of rising FLFP in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey. The purpose here is to identify any causal pathway there may exist that lead to rising FLFP in Southern Europe. In order to do so, this study analyses two time periods in all cases, which represent different periods for different countries. The first period is identified on the basis of low FLFP and the second period on the basis of the transition to significantly higher FLFP. Third, the conditions are treated following the standard procedures in fsQCA, which provide equifinal: two distinct paths to higher levels of FLFP in Southern Europe, each of which may potentially increase FLFP in Turkey. Based on this analysis, this paper proposes that there exist two distinct paths leading to higher levels of FLFP in Southern Europe. Among these paths, salience of left parties emerges as a sufficient condition. In cases where this condition was not present, a second path combining enlarging service sector employment, increased tertiary education among women and increased childcare enrolment rates led to increasing FLFP.

Keywords : female labour force participation, fsQCA, Southern Europe, Turkey

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