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Female migration: A way out of discrimination?

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Abstract

In light of the recent feminization of migration, we empirically explore to what extent worldwide female migration can be explained by perceived gender discrimination. Making use of unique individual level data, we track women's intention and preparation to migrate from 148 countries between 2009-2013 and disentangle how individual perceptions of gender discrimination can foster or impede female migration across countries. We perform extensive robustness checks to mitigate concerns about potential threats to identification posed by measurement error and unobservables. Our evidence indicates that women who do not feel treated with respect and dignity have a higher incentive to migrate abroad. The likelihood that these migration intentions are turned into actual preparations, however, depends on more traditional determinants such as household income, network effects and family obligations. Furthermore, we also show that more intense gender imbalances in economic and political opportunities prevent women from actually moving abroad.

Keywords: Female migration, Gender discrimination, Migration intentions, Selection model

1. Introduction

Gendered assessments of international migration processes are fairly recent both in the economic literature (Cobb-Clark, 1993; Cortes, 2015; Docquier et al., 2012; Kofman,

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