

The Impact of International Migration on the Labour Market Behaviour of Women left-behind: Evidence from Senegal

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of male international migration on the labour market behaviour of women left-behind in Senegal. While previous studies rely largely on cross-sectional data collected only in origin countries, this analysis takes advantage of a new longitudinal and multi-sited dataset on international migration. This allows using more appropriate methods for examining causal mechanisms and avoiding selection biases that were inherent in previous analyses. Results from a random effects logistic panel regression do not support previous findings of a positive effect of husbands' migration on women's labour market participation. Instead, we find evidence of lower activity rates for spouses of migrants. The finding seems mostly driven by women whose union is transnational from the start (i.e. who marry someone who is already a migrant) and who have significantly less chances to be working than their counterparts whose husbands are in Senegal. A further contribution of our paper is its ability to take into account the household composition of left-behind women. We find this to be an important moderating factor, as living with their migrant husband's family represents an additional negative impact.

Introduction

This paper examines the impact of male international migration on the labour market behaviour of women left-behind. The economic and social effects of migration on origin households and communities, in particular through the remittance channel, are high on the policy-agenda and have been extensively researched over the past decades. However, the role of migration for the economic behaviour of left-behind is less well documented, and evidence taking into account the gender-specific responses of non-migrant household members is scarce, in particular in the context of international migration from Africa.

The economic theoretical literature suggests several channels through which migration can affect the labour market behaviour of left-behind non-migrants. Remittance flows are expected to increase reservation wages and the demand for leisure, and lower labour market participation (Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2009). At the same time, there may be a "lost labour effect" after the departure of the migrant, and tasks previously carried out by the migrant may be reallocated among non-migrants. Depending on whether male and female work is a complement or a substitute, women and men in the household may be affected differently by this reallocation (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2006). Moreover, remittance transfers may help lifting liquidity constraints if credit markets at the origin are imperfect and enable non-migrant household members to start an entrepreneurial activity, thus increasing household labour supply (Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2009). The sociological literature highlights another channel through which female labour market behaviour may change in response to male migration. The absence of males may lead to a shift in bargaining power in the origin household by enhancing women's independence. As a consequence, women may take over tasks previously performed by men, a process which challenges the traditional division of labour and granting them an increased decision-making power (De Haan, 2000).

This is indeed what several recent studies have found, in contexts as diverse as Jordan (Khaled, 1995), Mozambique (Yabiku et al, 2009), Mexico (Kaniaupuni, 1998), or Bangladesh (Hadi, 2000). However, there is also ample evidence of the reverse effect

of male migration: Binzel and Assaad (2009) have found that in Egypt the remittances sent by migrants discourage their wives from continuing their income-generating activities. Studies by Sadiqi and Ennaji (2004) on Morocco, Cabegin (2006) on the Philippines, or Lokshin and Glinskaya (2009) on Nepal come to similar results. Evidence from an anthropological study from rural Senegal by Fiéloux (1985) also suggests that migration reinforces women's dependence towards men as the status of a migrant's wife is viewed as "incompatible" with an economic role.

Objectives

This study aims to add to the existing empirical literature by making several conceptual and methodological contributions. While previous studies rely largely on cross-section data, this analysis takes advantage of a new longitudinal data set on international migration, based on the collection of retrospective histories. In this way, labour market transitions over the woman's lifetime can be related to migration spells of males in the household. Second, while there is some limited qualitative evidence, quantitative analysis on the Sub-Saharan African context is lacking. Given that gender-specific labour market segmentation and values vary across geographical contexts, insights from Senegal, a country highly affected by international migration, should be a valuable addition.

Moreover, the existing empirical literature generally assumes that the position of the woman in the household and the household composition does not change over the duration of the migration. However, whether men's migration affects wives' economic participation may be strongly influenced by where the woman lives. If, as in Fiéloux's (1985) research context, virilocality is the dominant practice - the wife lives with her husbands' extended family - another male figure (the husbands' father or brother) may replace the authority of the absent husband, thus limiting the woman's potential gains in autonomy. Labour market behaviour should thus be studied in relation to the residential history. Focusing on the case of wives left-behind, the objectives of this study are thus:

1. To explore whether the international migration of the husband stimulates or, on the contrary, reduces labour market participation of the spouses staying behind in Senegal.
2. To examine, for the spouses who are economically active, whether they have experienced occupational mobility, and if so, into what sectors.
3. A final objective is to assess whether the impact of men's migration on women's economic participation is mediated by the residential location of the women.

Data

Most previous research on the topic has two major shortcomings: on the one hand, it uses cross-sectional data, which prevents a more accurate assessment of causality through the use of appropriate econometric methods such as instrumental variable and control function methods. Furthermore, it is based on data collected only at origin, excluding from the analysis those women who might have subsequently become migrants themselves.

This paper uses a new set of biographic survey data collected in 2008 in the framework of the MAFE-Senegal project (Migration between Africa and Europe). The survey design rests on two principles:

- (1) Longitudinal data, which is obtained through the collection of retrospective life histories covering the life of the respondents from their birth till the time of the survey.

Life spheres covered include, for instance, employment, family formation and housing histories, as well as the migrations of members of the respondent's social network. The survey allows thus to identify and date all labour market transitions, partnership statuses as well as all migration spells of the husband (and other family members and close friends).

(2) A transnational sample, collecting information on non-migrants and return migrants at origin, and on current migrants at destination. In a first stage, a household-level survey was carried out with approximately 1,200 households. Subsequently, life histories were collected in the biographic survey with 1,200 individuals, who were sampled within the households. Respondents include 200 spouses of current migrants. In addition, 600 migrants were interviewed in the main Senegalese destinations in Europe (Spain, Italy, and France).

Methods

Both descriptive and multivariate methods will be used in the analysis. An initial descriptive analysis provides a "cross-section perspective" by comparing the labour market situation of married women with and without partners abroad based on household data. Furthermore, this time using individual biographic data, sequence analysis is applied to describe labour market trajectories of women whose partner was abroad at one point during their married life and those whose partner never migrated.

In a second step, we construct an unbalanced panel data set and use **random effects logistic panel regression** to examine the role of the husband's migration in women's labour market participation. The models also control for age (women enter the risk set when 15 years old) and time period (before 1990s, 1990s, 2000s), individual socio-economic characteristics (level of education completed, religion, indicators for children under 6 and living in the capital region), and an indicator for living with the extended family. Variables are time-varying except for religion. Furthermore, we study whether the woman's residential location and household composition influences the relationship between male migration and labour market transitions, modelling employment and residential histories simultaneously in a multi-process model.

Preliminary findings

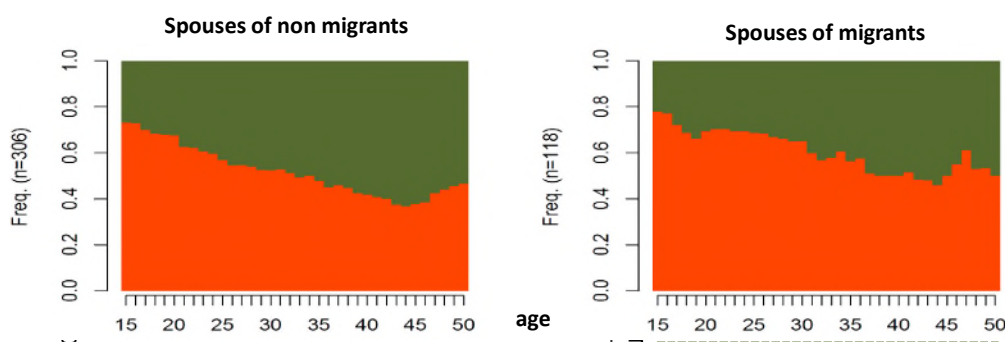
A first descriptive comparison of women with and without migrant husband at the time of the survey suggests that husband's migration plays no significant role for spouses' labour market behaviour. The difference in participation is not statistically significant, and women experience equal numbers of transitions over time. Women differ, however, with respect to other characteristics, as those with migrant husbands are at the average younger, more educated, and have fewer young children, characteristics which are generally positively related to labor market participation.

Figure 1 Characteristics of women with and without migrant husband

| Variable | Categories | Migrant husband | No migrant husband | Sign. |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------|
| Labour market participation | No work=0 Work=1 | 67.0% 33.0% | 57.7% 42.3% | n.s. |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Mean number transitions over 10 yrs | Participation Any status | 0.4 0.6 | 0.5 0.6 | n.s. n.s. |
| Age | Mean age | 35.3 | 39.2 | ** |
| Education | Mean years of education | 6.2 | 4.6 | ** |
| Children | Mean number of children <6 yrs | 0.42 | 0.94 | *** |
| Total (N Senegal=369) | | 273 | 96 | |

Next, two transversal sequences illustrate the proportion of active women (in green) by age and the migrant status of their spouse. While a high rate of inactivity characterizes both groups, a substantial percentage of women whose spouse never migrated become active with age. This is less the case among women whose spouse migrates, and one can even observe a reverse trend between certain ages.



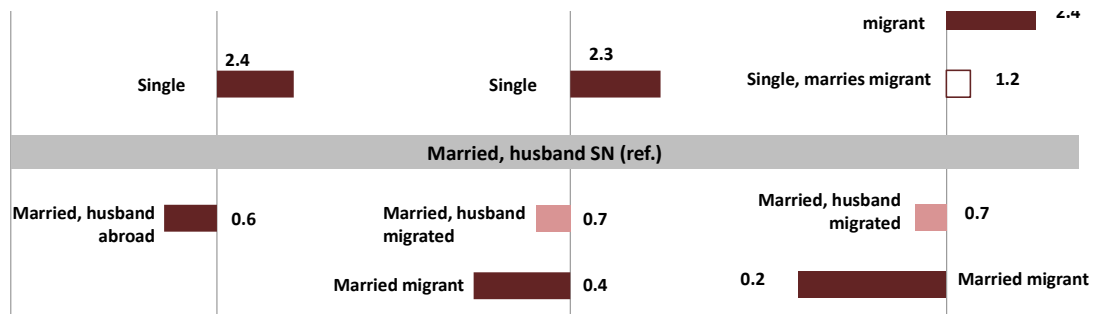
Marital status, husband's migration and work

Model 1: We distinguish between years when women were single, married with husband in Senegal, and married with husband abroad. Women who are single are more likely to work, while the international migration of the husband has the opposite effect.

Model 2: We split the husband abroad category into spells for women whose husband migrated after marriage, and women who married a migrant. The negative effect of migration in labour market participation is predominantly present for women who married an international migrant.

Model 3: Finally, we “look into the future” to identify women who are going to marry a migrant in the future, to see whether they are different from other single women from the start. Indeed, the positive effect of being single on the chances to work disappears for those women who end up marrying a migrant.

Figure 2 Women’s likelihood to work, odds ratio estimates



Finally, in a fourth model we additionally control for living with an extended family, which has the expected negative effect on women’s propensity to work. Furthermore, the introduction of two interaction terms with the migrant husband status show that having one’s husband abroad has actually a slight positive effect for women who do not live with their husband’s family.

Preliminary conclusions

This paper contributes to the literature on consequences of migration for women left-behind by bringing evidence from an understudied context – Sub-Saharan Africa – and by adopting a dynamic, longitudinal perspective. In Senegal, a highly patriarchal context, we find that the effects of male migration depend first on the sequencing of the marriage and migration events: women who marry a migrant are less likely to work than those whose husband migrates post-marriage. Qualitative work in Senegal has emphasized the extremely high status international migrants enjoy in their communities of origin and how marrying a migrant can be a purposeful strategy for women and their families in order to guarantee financial security. Thus, women who marry a migrant may be a selected group, who has a lower ambition to work. Second, the effects of male migration depend on the household composition: for women who do not live with their in-laws, the migration of their husband encourages their economic participation. This suggests that virilocality may limit potential autonomy gains.

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