

Determinants of participation in ethnic occupational niches in the Spanish labour market

Mikolaj Stanek
Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)

Alberto Veira-Ramos
Carlos III University of Madrid

Lorenzo Cachón
Complutense University of Madrid (UCM)

Previous work

The distribution of immigrants in the labour markets tends to be quite different from that of the native populations (Castles, Miller 2003; Model 1997). In many cases, the concentration of immigrants of a certain origin in given jobs becomes unusually high, and researchers refer to those activities as *ethnic niches* (Model 1993; Waldinger 1996). Although this phenomenon is a common feature of most affluent societies, there are remarkable differences among ethnic groups regarding the level of concentration and the branches of activity where they tend to concentrate (Hudson 2003; Rath 2002). There have also been observed differences between men and women concentration patterns, often resulting in the reproduction and reinforcement of already existing gender inequalities (Bradley, Healy 2008; Schrover et al. 2007; Wright, Ellis 2000).

The arrival of more than five million immigrants to Spain during the last decade has brought to this country all above mentioned social processes. Ethnic concentration has been observed in certain branches of the economy such as the construction sector, agriculture and the domestic and hospitality services (Garrido, Toharia 2004). Most immigrants have been found to concentrate on low status occupations, with worse working conditions regarding job stability and income and with lower chances of upward mobility than the native Spanish population (Cachón Rodríguez 2009; Simón et al. 2008). Differences on labour market integration between immigrant men and women have also been profound (Parella Rubio 2003).

Research questions

Despite all research done on this topic to this date, we still consider that the process of ethnic concentration in Spain requires more attention from social scientists. We deem that further research is required in order to assess which are the main determinants conditioning the entrance of immigrant population in ethnic occupational niches and also to explain the differences on the concentration and integration patterns observed between men and women of different origins. In our paper we have firstly proceed to identity which are the main occupational niches of five groups of immigrants of different origins (Argentina, Ecuador, France, Morocco and Romania). Secondly, we have assessed the relative impact of a series of variables on the likelihood that immigrants will find a job in one of the previously identified ethnic occupational niches, namely, hospitality services workers, construction workers, domestic staff and agricultural labourers.

Methodology and theoretical approach

We implemented multinomial logistic analyses using recently released data from a sub-sample of 6.248 immigrants drawn from the Spanish National Survey of Immigrants (ENI-2007) conducting separate analyses for men and women. The survey includes detailed information on current labour market situation and on several personal characteristics (demographic features, education level, origin, year of arrival, family structure and household composition). We

contrasted hypotheses based on three main paradigms: human capital, social capital and the labour market segmentation theory (Reher, Requena 2009).

Results

- (1) We have found that the mechanisms conditioning the insertion of immigrants in the Spanish labour market are significantly different for men and women, reflecting and even accentuating the already existing differences among the native Spanish population. Data also confirms that the patterns of integration and occupational concentration in the Spanish labour market are greatly conditioned by the country of origin. While workers of French origin tend to concentrate in white-collar occupations, Argentineans tend to concentrate in the hospitality and domestic service sectors. Migrants coming from Ecuador, Morocco and Romania show similar patterns of concentration and similar gender differences as well. Men tend to concentrate in the construction sector and women in the hospitality, cleaning and domestic services.
- (2) We found strong support for the human capital theory, for our data indicates that it is those with lowest levels of education the ones that are significantly more likely to be employed as agricultural labourers or working in the construction and domestic service sectors.
- (3) The social capital paradigm is only partially backed by our findings. It seems that having contacts in Spain helps men to get employment in the construction sector and helps women to find a job working as domestic labour. Only in certain cases having a more heterogeneous network of social contacts helps immigrants to find a job outside the corresponding ethnic niches.
- (4) We have also found evidences stressing the relevance of contextual factors. Arriving to Spain during a period of marked economic growth increases the odds of becoming employed in one ethnic niche. Also, the lack of legal status favours the entrance of men into the construction and agriculture sectors and the entrance of women into the domestic services.
- (5) Finally, the results of our study suggest that not all occupational niches have the same level of “desirability” among immigrants, being working as agricultural labourer the less attractive one.

Appendix

Multinomial logistic regression coefficients for participation in selected ethnic niches (males and females)

	MALES				FEMALES							
	Hospitality workers	Agriculture labourers	Construction		Hospitality workers	Agriculture labourers	Domestic workers					
Independent variables												
Country of origin												
<i>France</i>	0,412	0,419	-1,779	**	-1,452	*	<i>a</i>	-2,380	*			
<i>Romania</i>	-1,312	**	1,130	**	0,855	**	0,224	0,920	*	0,513	**	
<i>Morroco</i>	-0,556	+	1,187	**	0,282	+	0,093	1,658	**	-0,351		
<i>Argentina</i>	0,152		-1,814	+	-0,658	**	0,016	<i>a</i>		-0,773	**	
<i>Ecuador</i>	-0,601	+	1,289	**	0,654	**	-0,227	1,017	**	0,089		
<i>Other countries (ref. cat.)</i>												
Union (married or cohabitation)												
<i>Yes</i>	-0,594	**	-0,894	**	-0,152		-0,415	**	0,474	-0,688	**	
<i>No (ref. cat.)</i>												
Occupation at country of origin												
<i>Hospitality services</i>	2,261	**	-0,895		0,173		0,925	**	0,587	0,276		
<i>Agriculture</i>	-1,093		1,630	**	0,426	*	0,844	+	1,972	**	0,647	+
<i>Construction (males) / Domestic workers (females)</i>	-0,402		0,470	*	1,465	**	0,269		1,119	*	0,888	**
<i>Other (ref. cat.)</i>												
Is this your first job in Spain?												
<i>Yes</i>	-0,512	**	0,079		-0,284	**	-0,275	*	-0,054	0,517	**	
<i>No (ref. cat.)</i>												
Level of education												
<i>No formal education</i>	0,035		0,841	**	0,629	**	0,158		0,917	+	0,440	*
<i>Primary</i>	0,138		0,929	**	0,424	**	0,086		1,579	**	0,421	**
<i>Secondary, 1st stage</i>	-0,075		0,327		0,158		0,320	+	1,314	**	0,215	
<i>Secondary, 2nd stage (ref. cat.)</i>												
<i>University</i>	-0,817	**	-1,056	**	-0,678	**	-0,352	*	-0,296	-0,732	**	
Title received or formally recognised in Spain												
<i>Yes</i>	-0,069		-0,416		-0,775	**	-0,724	**	-1,464	-0,870	**	
<i>No (ref. cat.)</i>												
Spanish Language Proficiency												
<i>Yes</i>	0,200		-0,596	**	-0,142		0,066		-0,477	0,463	**	
<i>No (ref. cat.)</i>												
Contacts at arrival?												
<i>Yes</i>	0,256		-0,253		0,177	+	0,157		-0,564	+	0,365	**
<i>No (ref. cat.)</i>												
Participation in associations (NGO, sporting, religious groups)												
<i>Yes</i>	-0,289		-0,760	*	-0,423	**	-0,339	+	-1,185	-0,337	*	
<i>No (ref. cat.)</i>												
Legal status												
<i>Documented</i>	-0,236		-1,495	**	-0,626	**	0,338	+	0,325	-0,421	**	
<i>Non-documented (ref. cat.)</i>												
Period of arrival in Spain												
<i>1990-96</i>	-1,022	**	-0,303		-0,732	**	-0,342		<i>a</i>	-0,606	**	
<i>1997-01</i>	-0,566	**	-0,425	*	-0,146		-0,139		-0,506	+	-0,381	**
<i>2002-07 (ref. cat.)</i>												
Constante	-1,225	**	-0,235		0,183		-1,380	**	-3,624	**	-0,632	**
Number of cases					3311							
Nagelkerke R2					0,373							
-2 Loglikelihood					3802,028							

**Sig. at 0,01 level *Sig. at 0,05 level +Sig. at 0,1 level

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