

Occupational Trajectories and Occupational Cost among Senegalese Immigrants to Europe

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1. RESEARCH GOALS AND HYPOTHESES

The trajectory around which the empirical analysis will unfold in this paper is determined by three main research questions. The first question deals with the analysis of factors that affect the level of occupational attainment in the destination country. The specific feature of this paper is the fact that both documented and undocumented immigrants are included in the analysis and that we can actually distinguish between them by their legal status in the labor market. Appropriate selection models are employed to control for a possible bias due to selection into employment among immigrants. The second goal is to disentangle the patterns of upward and downward occupational mobility by applying appropriate discrete-time multinomial logit techniques. Finally, the last research question is whether there is an occupational cost associated with the act of migration. This is where an attempt is made to extend the reach of similar previous research. While to the best of my knowledge previous studies only attempted to estimate short-term occupational cost of migration by comparing the last job in origin with the first job in destination, the aim here is to estimate occupational cost as a function of duration of stay in Europe. To achieve this goal occupational trajectories of non-migrants in Senegal are also included in the analysis.

Based on the theoretical models and empirical findings in similar studies so far and taking into account the extent of the information available in MAFE dataset, a number of hypotheses can be proposed and tested in this paper. First, since theoretical principle that shape U-shaped occupational pattern also apply to Senegalese immigrants in Europe, it is expected that the average occupational status in this group in the first year after the arrival will be lower than that in the last year prior to leaving country of origin. Gradual improvement of the occupational status is expected to take place with duration of stay in Europe. The second hypothesis relies on Friedberg's findings on transferability of skills and predicts that education acquired in the destination country

(or elsewhere in Europe) will have a stronger effect on upward mobility and occupational attainment as compared to education obtained in Senegal (or elsewhere in Africa). The third hypothesis focuses on the legal status of immigrants in the labor market and states that, due to a limited access to the labor market in general, and to good jobs in particular, the undocumented migrants will be disadvantaged in terms of occupational attainment. On the other hand, obtaining work permit is expected to increase chances of upward mobility.

When looking at similar research done previously, one may have an impression that this paper looks at occupational mobility of immigrants from a somewhat reversed angle. While most other papers analyze several immigrant groups in a single destination country, quite the opposite is done in this paper, since it deals with occupational trajectories of a single immigrant group in three different destination countries. It is thus very likely that some readers would expect separate analyses for each destination country. However, the main limitation of the paper is a relatively small sample size, which impedes sample breakdown by education level or destination countries (which are only controlled for with country dummies). Nevertheless, the comparison of three destination countries is not the principal goal of the paper. Instead, the theoretical coordinates of the paper are centered around concepts such as limited transferability of skills and post-migration acquisition of skills specific to destination country, both of which apply to Senegalese immigrants in all European countries. As for sample breakdowns by other categories, it was possible to perform separate estimates by gender when looking at the descriptive statistics of occupational trajectories. Differences that emerge after separate estimates by gender are also briefly commented on in the section on occupational cost of migration.

2. METHODOLOGY

Each empirical section is characterized by a different methodological approach. OLS and Heckman selection models are used when looking at occupational attainment. Discrete-time multinomial logit is employed in the analysis of occupational mobility, while individual fixed effects and random effects with Mundlak correction are used to estimate the occupational cost of migration.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based both on prominent theories from migration research and on contextual characteristics of contemporary African migration to Europe, the paper attempts to answer research questions regarding the occupational attainment, occupational mobility and occupational cost of Senegalese immigrants to Europe, as well as to develop and test appropriate hypotheses.

The empirical analysis confirms all the three hypotheses proposed in the second section. First, the data on pre-migration and post-migration occupational mobility confirm the hypothesis on the U-shaped pattern of occupational mobility for the Senegalese immigrants in the sample. But, the improvement of the occupational status takes place slowly: by the fifth year of stay in Europe only one out of four immigrants experiences upward mobility relative to the first year after migration. Second, in comparison with the education acquired in the home country, education acquired in Europe is a more powerful instrument of occupational upward mobility. Third, having no work permit is associated with lower occupational attainment, while obtaining one increases the chances of occupational mobility substantially. Apart from these three findings, a number of other interesting results were obtained. As for the differences by gender, men's occupational status was found to be somewhat higher, all else equal. Also, men are more occupationally mobile, both upwards and downwards. While there is some evidence that duration of stay in Europe is positively associated with the occupational attainment, the discrete-time analysis shows that the probability of experiencing an upward mobility actually decreases with each additional year of residence in Europe. Having some or good skills in destination country language upon the arrival facilitates the access to better jobs. There is very little evidence of differences between three destination countries, when these are measured by destination country dummies. Both fixed effects and random effects regressions show that there is a statistically significant occupational cost of migration from Senegal to Europe, which decreases with duration of stay, but does not disappear even after more than 15 years since migration. The occupational cost of migration is initially somewhat higher for women, but this difference diminishes with longer duration of stay in European countries.