

Closing the Gender Gap: The Effect of Political Gender Quotas and Female Employment Indicators in South America

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Abstract

This research paper evaluates the effect political gender quotas on female labor force indicators in South America, specifically labor force participation (formal sector) and unemployment. There has been significant progress within the region, with respect to lessening gender inequality, however the focus on access to educational opportunities maybe overstating the reduction in current gender inequality indices and their calculations (UNDP, 2015). Instead of focusing on the impact education or access to educational attainment, this research specifically analyzes the impact of political gender quotas on the female labor force. To measure the impact of these quota policies, this paper will use World Bank and International Labour Organization data on female labor force participation and unemployment in South America (excluding Suriname, Guyana and French Guyana), to analyze pre and post policy effects and their significance.

Keywords: gender equality, politics, labor force participation, econometrics, economics, social welfare, public policy, unemployment, gender studies, macroeconomics, economic development, gender, quota, labor force

Introduction

This research paper evaluates the effect political gender quotas on female labor force indicators in South America, specifically labor force participation (formal sector) and unemployment. There has been significant progress within the region, with respect to lessening gender inequality, however the focus on access to educational opportunities maybe overstating the reduction in current gender inequality indices and their calculations (UNDP, 2015). Instead of focusing on the impact education or access to educational attainment, this research specifically

analyzes the impact of political gender quotas on the female labor force. To measure the impact of these quota policies, this paper will use World Bank and International Labour Organization data on female labor force participation and unemployment in South America (excluding Suriname, Guyana and French Guyana), to analyze pre and post policy effects and their significance.

Within the region, eight out of ten countries since 1991 have implemented various forms of gender inclusive political quota systems. The intentions behind these policies is to increase female empowerment, political participation, and reduce gender inequality within the region. According to the World Bank, women comprise approximately 49.5% of the total world population making female contributions to the labor force and critical to overall economic growth (Bank, 2015; International IDEA, 2015).

Latin America and the Caribbean is an interesting case for gender specific policies and their potential impact in creating gender inclusiveness and increasing female labor force participation rates. While substantial developments have been made in that region continues to be large gender pay discrepancies, high levels of female unemployment, and lack of employment opportunities for women in the formal labor market. The shift in focus towards gender specific policies, making gender inclusion mandatory, assumes that increased female political representation leads to upticks in societal and economic welfare. This assumption is far from casual effect as there are many other factors that lead to economic growth and more efficient labor force. It's important to note, while policies may be focused on inclusion, some research has indicated that social perception and societal norms may contradict and even negate gender inclusive policies (Berik, van der Meulen Rodgers, & Seguino, 2009; Klasen & Lamanna, 2009).

Regardless, interest in the link between gender inequality and its greater implications regarding the economy has gained popular momentum in the recent years, as more and more developing nations are under pressure to create more gender equal societies. While many nations of the world have made substantial progress towards equality there are still areas needing improvement. According to the United Nations, Beijing summit (1995) focused on gender equality, while Latin America has made undeniable progress, meeting gender parity in educational attainment, the lack of equality within the labor force, as well as the political realm has given critics cause for concern (ECLAC, 2016). Since the implementation of political gender quotas, several South American countries have seen an increase in female political participation,

but have these policies proven to be effective in creating a more inclusive labor force. The question rests on the significance and effectiveness of gender specific policies, like the quotas in South America, and if they are indeed instrumental in creating inclusive environments that foster economic growth.

Literature Review

The UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures gender equity based on three overarching dimensions: health, empowerment and labour market (UNDP, 2015). Even with these three oversimplified dimensions, one can make assumptions regarding the implications associated with gender inequality in any given society and the world. For this reason, understanding and correcting negative externalities and failures caused by female gender discrimination are heavily researched by social scientists from all disciplines. (Pande & Ford, 2012) address several implications associated with gender inclusive policies from efficiency and equity stand points. From the equity aspect, they identify that female inclusion policies may improve descriptive representation and substantive representation. They argue that increasing female presence within leadership positions can aid in correcting market failures within the labor force associated with preventing or penalizing advancement opportunities for women. Similarly, some empirical studies suggest that while gender inequality is an equitable concern, reducing its implications to only discrimination, well-being and social injustice ignores the broader economic and developmental impacts (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009; Seguno, 2008). Even though injustices related to gender inequality and desire for increased descriptive representation may be motivating from a social welfare aspect, these studies suggest that increasing substantive representation can be a catalyst economically and politically.

Some researchers point to a growing body of empirical evidence from the United States and India that suggest that men and women vary greatly with regards to their policy preferences (Pande & Ford, 2012). They also suggest that increased substantive representation leads to an increase in women's policy initiatives. With a shift in female political participation and changes in policy preference, the potential for spill over into other sectors within the economy. This is directly related to the efficiency argument, in *Gender Inequality and Growth*, where the authors suggest that reducing gender barriers can result in casual positive relationships within female

education, labor and healthcare resources leading to economic growth (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009).

While the authors acknowledge the reverse causality associated with reducing gender inequality and economic growth, they also urge that increasing efficiency in the overall labor force has a sizable positive impact on economic growth (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009). In that respect, additional research also suggest that implementing political gender quotas can reduce taste discrimination and social norms while correcting beliefs about the benefit of female labor (Pande & Ford, 2012). That being said, an increased presence of political gender quotas may lead to spill over and have greater implications for the female labor force, as well as economic growth, productivity and the efficiency of labor.

Background

I. Types of Quotas

The Quota Project identifies three types of political gender quotas currently being employed: voluntary party quotas, candidate quotas and reserved seats. Voluntary candidate quotas vary significantly from country to country and like the name suggest are voluntary. These quotas typically require that the candidate lists of political parties must include a certain percentage of female options. The voluntary nature of these types of quotas make them difficult to enforce and measure their significant impact. The second type of quota is legislated candidate quota; these quotas legally require that a percentage of candidate positions are reserved for women. However, some studies question the effectiveness of these types of quotas, suggesting they are better at changing attitudes and social norms rather than increasing female leadership and political representation (Esteve-Volart & Bagues, 2012; Pande & Ford, 2012). Lastly, reserved seat quotas mandate that certain number of seats within legislative bodies can only be held by female candidates. As of 2011, only 20% of countries implementing quota systems mandated reserved seat quotas (Pande & Ford, 2012). Legislative candidate quotas are the most commonly used type of quota in South America. Even though nearly half of the countries in the world have implemented political gender quotas, their implementation and effectiveness has been met with mixed reviews and success (Duflo, 2012; International IDEA, 2015; Self & Grabowski, 2009).

II. South America and Quotas

In 1991, Argentina was the first country in the region to implement a policy that focused on the mandatory integration of women into politics. This policy was to increase female political participation, empowerment and decrease gender inequality by creating an environment of inclusion (International IDEA, 2015). The original legislature, focused on political party lists, requiring the lists to be comprised of at least 30% female candidates. In 1993, the law was expanded to include mandatory minimum allocation of seats to women based on number of open positions ranging from 20 – 50% of total available vacancies (Bank, 2015; International IDEA, 2015). Since Argentina in 1991, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, have all implemented quota systems, these range from policies focused on candidate lists for political parties to electoral law requiring parliamentary positions to filled by women.

Within South America’s Latino Americano region, there have been two countries that have abstained from enacting gender quotas within their political systems, Venezuela and Chile. In 1994, Venezuela attempted to enact a quota, requiring 30% of representatives on candidate lists to be women, however the quota was deemed unconstitutional before the next election could take place in 2000 (International IDEA, 2015). In Chile, a similar quota has been sitting in limbo, unable to gain parliamentary ratification, despite the country having a female president.

Table 1: Descriptive table showing year of quota implementation by country

	# years w polley	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
ARGENTINA	24																									
BOLIVIA	18																									
BRAZIL	20																									
CHILE**	0																									
COLOMBIA	12																									
ECUADOR	18																									
PARAGUAY	19																									
PERU	18																									
URUGUAY	6																									
VENEZUELA*	0																									

Source : Authors' descriptive table based on information collected from International IDEA Quota Project country profiles (International IDEA, 2015).

Note : Entries marked with * indicate a country that enacted a quota however, never implemented and dissolved policy before subsequent election period. Entries marked with ** indicate a country that enacted a quota following the time period observed in this study (Chile, 2017).

Over the last 30 years, South America has not only seen substantial gains for women in the political realm, but also in educational attainment. Female educational attainment has been on the rise globally, and South America provides clear and compelling evidence to support this

trend. However, this paper will solely focus on the impact of political gender quotas and their correlation to labor force participation and employment opportunities for women in South America, while using education and GDP growth as proxies for gender equality.

Methodology

This paper will use cross-sectional panel data, from 1990 to 2014, to observe and analyze trends in the female labor force and whether quota systems have had a significant effect. Country fixed effects (time dummies), will also be used to control for omitted variable bias. These time dummies will also control for the assumption that over time labor force participation will increase population grows, industrialization takes place etc. The lack of political gender quotas in Chile and Venezuela, will provide a constant control group, while the other eight countries will act as a treatment group. While Chile and Venezuela are the constant controls, using binary indicators to indicate policy implementation date, since it varies by country, will also enrich the data within the treatment group, acknowledging and analyzing pre and post policy differences. Panel data will be drawn from The World Bank and ILO data sets for labor force indicators. It will include female labor force participation and unemployment (Bank, 2015, 2016).

Current research and methodologies will be examined and reviewed to further isolate labor force indicators and the impacts of quota policies (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014; Klasen & Lamanna, 2009). This combined with literature on the effects and types of gender policies and their current uses and impacts the data will show if these types of policies can significantly change employment opportunities for women, regionally and possibly globally (Esteve-Volart & Bagues, 2012; Fodor & Horn, 2015; Seguino, 2008; Self & Grabowski, 2009; Vickstrom & González-Ferrer, 2016; You, 2016).

Empirical Model

This study will use OLS regression analysis for female labor force participation indicators will using proxies for education and economic growth to isolate policy impact. The proxy selected for education is gross secondary enrollment (female) and annual GDP growth rate for economic performance. The regression analysis equations are listed below:

$$F - LFP \text{ rate } (15+)_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Q_{it} + \beta_2 \times (Gross \ Enrollment_{i,t}) + \beta_3 \times GDP_{i,t}$$

$$F - LFP \text{ rate } (15 - 24) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Q_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Gross Enrollment}) + \beta_3 \times GDP_{i,t}$$

$$F - LFP \text{ rate } (15 - 64) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Q_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Gross Enrollment}) + \beta_3 \times GDP_{i,t}$$

$$F:M \text{ LFP ratio} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Q_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Gross Enrollment}) + \beta_3 \times GDP_{i,t}$$

$$\text{Unemp (total; female)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Q_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Gross Enrollment}) + \beta_3 \times GDP_{i,t}$$

$$\text{Unemp (youth)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Q_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Gross Enrollment}) + \beta_3 \times GDP_{i,t}$$

In addition to the simple regression equations listed additional regressions will be run using three perimeters. The first perimeter will be used to control for country and year omitted variables. To do this country and year fixed effects will be added to each regression to test significance and coefficients related to policy implementation. Then the regressions will be run using each fixed effect independently to control for any observable or unobservable predictors omitted within the model. The final regression will be run removing all fixed effects and solely focus on policy variable and its statistical significance.

Results

Table 2: OLS regression of female labor force participation and unemployment including country and year fixed effects.

VARIABLES	F-LFPR 15 +	F-LFPR 15 - 24	F-LFPR 15 - 64	F:M LFPR	Unemployment (total; female)	Youth Unemployment
Policy (Q)	0.00525 (0.0111)	-0.00371 (0.0138)	0.00265 (0.0113)	0.000531 (0.0112)	-0.00423 (0.00667)	-0.00633 (0.0105)
Enrollment Rate	-0.0514 (0.0366)	-0.105** (0.0454)	-0.0607 (0.0373)	-0.0291 (0.0367)	-0.0570*** (0.0216)	-0.0758** (0.0339)
Annual growth	GDP 0.147* (0.0828)	0.158 (0.103)	0.136 (0.0843)	0.112 (0.0831)	-0.0114 (0.0487)	-0.0133 (0.0766)
Constant	0.493*** (0.0318)	0.505*** (0.0395)	0.530*** (0.0324)	0.572*** (0.0320)	0.149*** (0.0166)	0.260*** (0.0261)
Observations	175	175	175	175	173	173
R-squared	0.673	0.209	0.709	0.778	0.564	0.525
Number of country	10	10	10	10	10	10
Country FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Year FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Source: World Data Bank (Bank, 2015, 2016)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table 3: OLS regression of female labor force participation and unemployment using country fixed effect only.

VARIABLES	F-LFPR 15 +	F-LFPR 15 – 24	F-LFPR 15 – 64	F:M LFPR	Unemployment (total; female)	Youth Unemployment
Policy (Q)	0.0364*** (0.0125)	0.00937 (0.0125)	0.0382*** (0.0133)	0.0409*** (0.0140)	0.00404 (0.00727)	0.00967 (0.0116)
Enrollment Rate	0.193*** (0.0319)	-0.0253 (0.0319)	0.218*** (0.0340)	0.285*** (0.0358)	-0.0885*** (0.0186)	-0.0932*** (0.0295)
Annual GDP growth	0.0820 (0.0757)	0.0109 (0.0755)	0.0804 (0.0806)	0.0826 (0.0850)	-0.133*** (0.0436)	-0.175** (0.0694)
Constant	0.329*** (0.0240)	0.431*** (0.0239)	0.349*** (0.0255)	0.375*** (0.0269)	0.179*** (0.0141)	0.288*** (0.0224)
Observations	175	175	175	175	173	173
R-squared	0.366	0.005	0.383	0.463	0.191	0.097
Number of country	10	10	10	10	10	10
Country FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Year FE	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Source: World Data Bank (Bank, 2015, 2016)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table 4: OLS regression of female labor force participation and unemployment using year fixed effect only.

VARIABLES	F-LFPR 15 +	F-LFPR 15 – 24	F-LFPR 15 – 64	F:M LFPR	Unemployment (total; female)	Youth Unemployment
Policy (Q)	0.0657*** (0.0112)	0.0966*** (0.0150)	0.0528*** (0.0116)	0.0587*** (0.0119)	-0.0182*** (0.00704)	-0.0502*** (0.0118)
Enrollment Rate	-0.126*** (0.0334)	-0.0807* (0.0447)	-0.0128 (0.0347)	0.00201 (0.0355)	0.0724*** (0.0214)	0.261*** (0.0359)
Annual GDP growth	0.152 (0.158)	0.0151 (0.212)	0.0744 (0.165)	0.164 (0.169)	-0.132 (0.0999)	-0.125 (0.168)
Constant	0.493*** (0.0482)	0.451*** (0.0645)	0.457*** (0.0501)	0.496*** (0.0513)	0.0739*** (0.0226)	0.0536 (0.0379)
Observations	175	175	175	175	173	173
Number of country	10	10	10	10	10	10
Country FE	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Year FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Source: World Data Bank (Bank, 2015, 2016)

*Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$*

Table 5: OLS regression of female labor force participation and unemployment excluding fixed effects.

VARIABLES	F-LFPR 15 +	F-LFPR 15 – 24	F-LFPR 15 – 64	F:M LFPR	Unemployment (total; female)	Youth Unemployment
Policy (Q)	0.0420*** (0.0121)	0.0132 (0.0122)	0.0422*** (0.0128)	0.0460*** (0.0135)	0.000125 (0.00705)	0.00138 (0.0114)
Enrollment Rate	0.178*** (0.0310)	-0.0301 (0.0313)	0.208*** (0.0327)	0.272*** (0.0346)	-0.0767*** (0.0181)	-0.0694** (0.0293)
Annual growth	GDP 0.0798 (0.0758)	0.00862 (0.0757)	0.0776 (0.0802)	0.0806 (0.0847)	-0.133*** (0.0441)	-0.173** (0.0710)
Constant	0.341*** (0.0319)	0.442*** (0.0360)	0.358*** (0.0329)	0.385*** (0.0350)	0.171*** (0.0178)	0.272*** (0.0296)
Observations	175	175	175	175	173	173
Number of country	10	10	10	10	10	10

Source: World Data Bank (Bank, 2015, 2016)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

The results in Table 2 do not show any statistical significance when using both country fixed effects and time fixed effects. By using fixed effects for both country and year variables this regression model will attempt to control for omitted variable bias within the observed group. An interpretation of this table would suggest that when employing fixed effects for both country and time, the implementation of gender quota policies, does not have a statistically significant effect on female labor force indicators.

The regression was repeated in Table 3, however, in this regression the time fixed effect is removed. When time fixed effect is removed, policy implementation shows a statistically significant effect on several of the labor force indicators. In this regression, total labor force participation for those women over the age of 15 (F-LFPR 15+), labor force participation of women ages 15-64 (F-LFPR 15-64) and the ratio of females to males participating in the labor force (F:M LFPR). In the case of total female labor force participation of those over 15 (F-LFPR 15+) and those between the ages of 15 to 64 (F-LFPR 15-64), the results show a positive relationship between policy implementation and labor force participation with coefficients of 0.0364 and 0.0382 at a 99% confidence level. There is also a positive relationship with respect to the ratio of females to males participating in the labor force with a coefficient of 0.0404. While three of the endogenous variables tested show significance results, the other three variables

tested female labor force participation 15-24 and both unemployment indicators show no statistical significance. Removing the time fixed effects and holding the country fixed effects, limits the chance of omitted variable bias as it relates to each country within the test group, however, it does not account for omitted variables over time. While some variables tested show significance, removing fixed time effects this regression may fail to account for aggregate increase in female labor force indicators over time, not necessarily due to policy implementation.

Perhaps the most robust and statistically significant results within this regression analysis occur when country fixed effects are removed and year fixed effects remain (Table 4). When running this regression, there was a statistically significant positive relationship in all labor force participation indicators and a corresponding negative relationship in both unemployment indicators. However, interpreting these results as a direct result of policy implementation has significant limitations. Without using country fixed effects, the regression may include country specific effects into the model that may unintentionally influence results. Some other limitations may include, but are not limited to: a change in social values, change in opportunity cost of female employment or a change in labor force participation in the informal sector variation within the countries observed.

Lastly the regression shown in Table 5, both fixed effects, country and year are removed. The results of this regression closely resemble those produced in Table 3 above. While there was a statistically significant positive relationship with regards to labor force participation of those 15 and above and those 15 to 64, removing both country and time fixed effect from the regression eliminates controls for omitted variable bias. However, it should be noted that when both country and year fixed effects are removed from the regression the estimated coefficients associated with the implementation of the policy are approximately one percentage point higher than the results found in Table 3.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the regression analysis conducted in this study are inconclusive and cannot definitively to show a direct correlation between the implementation of political gender quotas and female labor force indicators. However, several of the regressions did show statistically significant results congruent with the hypothesis, that quota implementation can have a positive effect on labor force participation as well as a decrease in unemployment among women. The

statistical significance of these results, suggest that additional research and monitoring over time could prove insightful with regards to the future implications of other gender inclusive policies. Further in depth analysis into specific countries, over longer periods of time, may provide more comprehensive results.

Continued research is needed to further identify the impact of political gender quotas and gender inclusive policies on the female labor force. There is some evidence that suggest that the type of quota implemented can determine the level of effectiveness on gender inclusivity and representation (Pande & Ford, 2012). Future research will provide more evidence on whether similar policies will have a significant effect on the formal labor market. Being as how, gender specific policies are still in infancy stages and lacking in long-run empirical data it will be an important future topic of research and the broader implications for gender equality around the world.

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