



GENDER INEQUALITY AT HOME WHEN MOTHERS WORK. THE CASE OF ITALY

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the gender gap in housework and childcare in Italian couples, one of the widest in Europe. Italian women still carry out three-quarters of domestic work and two-thirds of childcare. Following a considerable amount of literature, we focus on three possible theoretical explanations for the persistence of the gendered division of labor: time availability, relative resources, and conformity with traditional gender ideology. Time Use data from the 2008/09 Survey edition have been used: we considered couples, married or in consensual unions, with at least one child under 14 years of age and with the mother employed. The amount of time spent by men and women on, respectively, domestic tasks and on caring for children has been modeled as a function of several couples and household characteristics. Similarly, we analyzed the women's share of total time for housework and childcare, respectively, as dependent variables. In order to take into account the truncated nature of the dependent variables a Tobit model has been used. Results show that the family division of work is heavily biased towards women, and it is only when they take on the role of breadwinner that the amount of time their unemployed male partners spend on domestic tasks increases. Generally, when the financial resources of women are greater than those of men, they reduce the time spent on housework and gender asymmetry decreases. With regard to childcare, the gender gap is significantly reduced only when the man is unemployed and in territorial contexts where the gender system and ideology are less traditional.

Classification JEL: D13, C34, J7

Keywords: Time use, Housework, Childcare, Gender, Tobit model.

Working Paper n° 130
May 2014

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