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The influence of partners' resources on women's employment in Mexico

Abstract

We analyse how women's participation in the labour market is influenced by their partner's resources in Mexico. Theory predicts opposing partner effects: specialization and bargaining theory predict a negative association between partners' resources and women's work status, whereas social capital and gender equality approaches suggest a positive effect. In order to test these hypotheses, we structure our study around three main research questions. Is women's employment positively related to their partners' earnings? Does men's education influence women's work status within couples? Did the role of partner characteristics change over time? To answer these questions, we use data from the National Survey of Occupation and Employment of Mexico collected in 2005 and 2017. Our results show a negative association between having a low-earning partner and women's employment, whereas men's education is positively associated with women's employment. These associations become stronger over time, suggesting an increasing importance of partner characteristics for women's employment status.

Keywords: Education, Family, Inequality, Labour Market, Mexico

1. Introduction

Economic inequality has been increasing over the last decades in Europe and the United States (Alvaredo et al., 2018; Iammarino et al., 2019; McCall & Percheski, 2010). Changes in family formation dynamics have been marked as a possible contributor to these trends because they determine how individual earnings and other incomes are distributed across families (McCall & Percheski, 2010). Likewise, increases in women's labour force participation have made partners more homogamous in economic terms. This trend could possibly lead to a polarization between households with dual high-earners on one side and households with two low-earners or only one provider on the other (Esping-Andersen, 2007a; Schwartz, 2013). This moves the question of how partner resources relate to labour force participation to the forefront. More generally, studying the impact of partner characteristics is relevant to understand couple dynamics and processes that affect gender inequality within couples. Theoretical perspectives differ in their predictions about how partner resources affect women's employment. Several theories based on economic and status considerations predict a negative relationship between partner resources and employment, whereas others based on ideational and social capital factors predict the opposite. Empirical evidence conducted in industrialized societies has found a negative relationship between partner's earnings and labour market participation (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998; Henz & Sundström, 2001; Sundström & Duvander, 2002; Verbakel & De Graaf, 2009).

In this article, we raise the question to what extent this evidence can be generalized to less rich countries. What happens in a context where economic necessity is a main factor driving up the number of dual-breadwinner families, or where gender egalitarian values are not yet as widespread as in industrialized societies? Existing studies on lower income countries have focused on understanding women's labour participation, the influence of social capital on family outcomes, new types of double-earner families, and gender and social inequalities faced by women (Casique, 2008; Castro et al., 2011; Cerrutti & Zenteno, 2000; Leija et al., 2018; Martínez Jasso & Acevedo Flores, 2004). Nevertheless, there are few studies which examine the relationship between women's labour participation and their partner's resources. The current study contributes to filling this void by looking at the case of Mexico.

Mexico is characterised by a high level of economic inequality. This inequality affects women in particular, who are more exposed to job dismissal and poverty (Horbath &

Gracia, 2014) and women's situation in the labour market is a reflection of wider gender inequality in society (Casique, 2000a, 2000b; Hernández Limonchi & Ibarra Uribe, 2019; Oliveira & García, 2012). Single women participate more in the labour market than married women (Verduzco & Inzunza-Mejía, 2019). Dominant gender norms regarding the division of labour in Mexico still characterize men as having the role of economic providers and women as home carers (Aguilar Montes de Oca et al., 2013). For instance, whereas Mexican women spend 6.5 hours a day doing household tasks men spend 2.5 hours, on average. This data contrast with countries such as Denmark or Australia where men spend on average 3.5 hours and women 4 (OECD, 2011).

In this context characterised by high economic and social inequality for women, we ask the following research questions: 1. Are women more likely to work when their partners earn relatively little income? 2. Does men's education influence women's work status within couples? In addition, we pose the question: 3. Have partner characteristics become more important for women's employment outcomes over time? To answer these questions, we use data from the National Survey of Occupation and Employment of Mexico (ENOE) collected in 2005 and 2017.

2 Background

There are various theories about how men's resources can affect women's labour market outcomes (Bernardi, 1999), which will be discussed in turn.

2.1 Economic and status-based explanations

There are various theoretical perspectives that argue, based on economic and status considerations, that women are less likely to work if their partners' resources are high. Becker's "New home economics theory" focuses on human capital and productivity (Becker, 1981). In a family context, members pool their resources and take decisions in favour of maximizing the benefit for the family. In other words, partners have to decide how to distribute their time between paid work and domestic work to obtain maximum joint utility. Becker argues that there are benefits to specialization where one member of the couples focuses on domestic work and the other partner focuses on paid work. In this case, the decision about the division of labor depends on the marginal productivity of each partner in the two different areas. From this perspective, a partnered woman is less likely to participate in the labour market if their expected earnings are relatively low as

compared to the earnings of their partner. Focusing on status attainment, Oppenheimer (1977) came to a similar argument, posing that families aim to maximize their status. If one partner of the couple has high status, the employment of the other partner in a lower status occupation can reflect badly on families' social status. In that case, the individual with a lower status can withdraw from the labor market to maintain the family's social status.

An alternative economic perspective poses that rather than maximizing the family's utility or status, partners aim to fulfil their personal desires and bargain about the division of labour (Lundberg & Pollak, 1996). In these bargaining processes the so-called threat point can be divorce or a sub-optimal relationship. In both cases, resourceful partners are able to bargain for doing less unpaid work and more paid work, under the assumption that this is their preferred outcome. In the first case because the partner with more resources will lose relatively less following divorce, in the second case because of their higher bargaining power within the relationship.

However, not all theoretical perspectives pose that relative resources are the key determinant of the division of labor within couples (Oppenheimer, 1977; 1997; Benería, 2008). Oppenheimer (1977; 1997) argued that dividing paid and unpaid work more equally reduces dependency of the household on a single specialist responsible for all paid or unpaid work. Especially in contexts of economic insecurity, having more than one earner in the household can provide more economic stability. If this is the case, women with low earning partners might be particularly likely to participate in the labour market. This also implies that absolute levels of earnings of both partners might be more relevant than relative earnings. Once considering absolute levels of earnings different considerations also come into play that might push in an opposite direction. Women with high earning potential forego more income when they do not participate in the labor market. Even though they might be more likely to have high-earning partners, they might therefore also have higher incentives to be employed as compared to women with lower earnings potential (England et al., 2012).

The importance of the need for women to be employed to gain a sufficient level of income can be relatively high in Latin American countries given lower levels of income and high levels of inequality. In such contexts, women's work can become a survival strategy (de

la Rocha, 1986) where the work and wages of many of them are fundamental to maintaining family living standards (Humphries & Sarasúa, 2012).

At the same time, Oppenheimer (1997) argues that specialization might be less risky in extended family households, which are relatively prevalent in the Mexican context. Extended families have more (potential) paid and unpaid workers present in the household beyond the two partners that form the couple that is considered. This prediction can be complicated further when taking into account the potential for extended family members to help with unpaid work which could also reduce the costs related to childcare that can arise when both parents are employed in the labor market.

Hence, several theoretical perspectives suggest that the larger the difference in earnings potential between male and female partners within couples, the less likely the less-earning partner is to work. This would lead us to expect a negative correlation between men's economic resources and women's employment in our first hypothesis. However, taking into account the possible role of economic necessity, which might be particularly relevant in the Mexican context, the employment of women might depend less on the relative resources of partners, but rather on the absolute resources of both women and their partners. This implies that in couples where men have little earnings, women are more likely to work, regardless of the level of relative resources. Furthermore, decreases in economic inequality during the study period can have made these considerations less important over time.

2.2 Gender equality

The incorporation of women in the public sphere through education, politics and paid work (Astelarra, 1990; Durán Heras, 1986) has been widely accepted in society except for some countries and social classes (Durán Heras, 2006). This fact has caused a reconfiguration within households in which the classic model of the man as economic provider and the woman as housewife has been weakened and gave rise to a model where both members of the couple work. However, the mere fact that women work does not imply gender equality at home. Several authors have pointed out that while women have joined the labour market in a massive way, men have not adopted a proportional load of household tasks (England, 2010; Esping-Andersen, 2009).

Many authors, including those discussed above, have emphasized how factors such as gender norms can also be determinant of women's employment outcomes. Bargaining theories have argued that preferences within bargaining processes are determined by social norms about gender roles (Pollak, 1994). Similarly, norms about motherhood as a source of meaning for women, make the benefits women derive from paid work compete with that of the meaning attributed to motherhood (England et al., 2012). These considerations make clear that context matters for how partner resources impact women's employment outcomes. In more gender egalitarian settings, more women might bargain to be engaged in paid employment, and less men might be opposed to a dual-employment arrangement.

In this regard, Esping-Andersen (2007b) showed that education is an important factor in the division of household tasks. Men with high levels of education participate more in the home and care of their young children than those with low levels of education, as also shown by others (Anxo, 2002; Bianchi et al., 2000). Therefore, if education is a key factor that determines an egalitarian division of household tasks, women with higher educated partners might spend more time in the labour market. Hence, our second hypothesis states that we should find a positive relationship between partner education and the decision of women to remain in or enter into the labour market. This prediction stands in contrast with the specialization hypothesis formulated above if one considers education as primarily increasing productivity in the labour market rather than a factor related to gender egalitarianism. In more gender egalitarian contexts, these patterns might become stronger as more women aim to bargain for employment careers.

2.3 Social capital

A third theory of how men's characteristics can affect women's status in the labour market focuses on social capital. This theory poses that people can obtain more resources if they have access to a network whose members can provide access to such resources (Coleman, 1988). Applied to the case of a couple, we expect that partner's resources are shared. Not only in economic terms, but also in terms of human and social capital (experience, contacts and skills). A counterargument that can be made is that family and close friends are sometimes less able to provide new information because they form part of the same network (Granovetter, 2018). Nevertheless, in general, it is the partner and relatives that offer types of support that require more commitment and energy (Bernasco

et al., 1998). Therefore, this theory suggests that partners can help each other to achieve desired employment outcomes (Bernardi, 1999).

In sum, our third hypothesis suggests a positive relation between partner resources and women's labour force participation.

2.4 Existing empirical evidence

Empirical studies conducted in Europe and USA about the influence of the partner on labour market outcomes have found a negative relationship between a partner's earnings and labour market participation (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998; Henz & Sundström, 2001; Sundström & Duvander, 2002; Verbakel & De Graaf, 2009). In the case of partner's education as a resource, most of the research has found a positive relationship between education and occupational attainments (Bernasco et al., 1998). However, Van Der Lippe & Siegers (1994) have found a negative relationship between these components based on economic terms.

These results suggest that the applicability of the theories previously developed, depends on the exact partner characteristic considered. When the partner's income is higher, the other member of the couple is more likely to specialize in home duties and reduce participation in the labour market. However, education could be more important as an enhancer of egalitarian values than an economic resource given the positive relationship between men's education and women's employment.

The literature on the employment status of women according to the resources of their partner has mainly focused on Europe and the United States. Studies on this topic in Latin America are limited. Some studies have dealt with issues of equality in the distribution of household tasks, the influence of social capital on the family, the new types of double-earner families, the gender and social inequalities that women face (Casique, 2008; Castro et al., 2011; Cerrutti & Zenteno, 2000; Leija et al., 2018). Studies such as Rodriguez (2015) and Dominguez Amorós et al (2019) have shown the notable importance of men's resources (socio-professional categories) for the distribution of unpaid work within households. Men use these resources to reduce their participation in house chores. This omission creates a work overload for women, who often become double shift workers (Bonino 1995) and lead to a situation where many women have to choose between work and family (Anzorera 2008; Burin 2008; Rocha-Sánchez y Cruz del Castillo 2013,

Pedrero, 2014). However, other studies have noted that an increase in men's level of education can increase their engagement at home facilitating conciliation between home and work responsibilities and reducing women's pressure to leave the labour market (Rivero & Hernández 2014). England and colleagues (2012) did report in a comparative study that higher educated women are more likely to work than lower educated women in Mexico, and that partners' earnings were negatively related to being employed for women in the mid-2000s. The main goal of our empirical analysis is to look more closely at the impact of various partner characteristics on women's labour market careers, as well as the impact of relative resources, in the Mexican context. In addition, we look at how these associations changed over time.

2.5 The Mexican Context

During the last decade, Mexico has been affected by the financial crisis with major consequences for employment, inequality and poverty. The Gini coefficient declined from 50.5 in 2005 to 45.4 in 2018 (World Bank, 2019) and the number of poor people exceeded 50 million in 2012 (CONEVAL, 2012). This context of economic inequality is joined by gender inequality. The female employment rate in the formal sector was 47% in 2018 as compared to 58% for men in 2018 (World Bank, 2020). Moreover, the gap in income between men and women is about 18% and access for women to highly skilled jobs is still limited (Hidalgo, 2017). Although this is not always the case, labour force participation of women is often the consequence of household's economic precariousness (Lustig, 1990). In contrast to what has been observed in rich countries, this raises the possibility that Mexican women will be more likely to work when their partners earn little income.

On the other hand, Mexican society has undergone a series of transformations such as an increase in the educational level, a reduction in the number of children and an rise in women's labour participation which have contributed to transforming the role of men, gender relations in the family and the meaning of masculinity (Fuller, 2001). The most evident changes have occurred among people with more schooling in which non-egalitarian values are less persistent (del Castillo & Castillo, 2012). Therefore, the relatively recent spread of gender egalitarian values concentrated among the higher educated might accentuate the role played by education in Mexico as compared to other contexts, and this role can have changed during the study period.

Empirically, we will look at how the effect of partner resources have changed over time. Because of the increases in female labour force participation and educational expansion, we assume that the effects of education and socio-economic resources of the partners on the job status of women in Mexico will not be the same for 2005 as for 2017. We expect a greater effect in 2017 in terms of education due to the spread of gender egalitarian values among the higher educated (del Castillo & Castillo, 2012).

3 Data and Methodology

The analysis is based on data from the National Survey of Occupation and Employment of Mexico (ENOE, 2019). This survey is the main source of information on the Mexican labour market, offering monthly and quarterly data on labour force status, occupation, informal employment, and non-employment. The survey follows habitual residents of selected dwellings for five three-month periods.

In this study, we analyse two periods of time to compare whether the role of men's resources in women's employment outcomes has changed. The first period of analysis goes from the first quarter of 2005 to the first quarter of 2006 and the second period goes from the first quarter of 2017 until the first quarter of 2018. We select households where the woman is between 20 and 49¹ years old. Since the purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of partners' resources, we considered both married and cohabiting partners. Moreover, we exclude same-sex couples, women with missing or unknown information about employment status, disabled individuals, retirees, and students. These selection criteria led to the exclusion of 47% of the 2005 sample and 51% of the 2017 sample (34% and 38% because of sample restrictions and missing information on independent variables, respectively; and 13% in both waves due to missing information on employment). The sample sizes obtained for the two periods are 35,318 couples in 2005 and 31,472 couples in 2017.

In order to facilitate a comparative analysis across time we have equivalized labour income using consumer price indices to adjust income variables to 2011 prices as well as Purchasing Power Parity deflators to express results in US dollars.² We start by focusing on women's transitions into or out of the labour market during the five quarterly periods

¹ We establish this age range to focus on the stage of life where the reconciliation of work and family life is particularly challenging.

² Parity of purchasing power (PPP) harmonized see: <http://www.lisdatacenter.org/data-access/ppp-deflators/>

they form part of the sample. The panel data gives us information about women's labour market status in each quarter, and therefore does not capture short spells of non-employment or employment that occurred between waves. Having no specific information or detailed dates, we cannot use a continuous time event-history approach. Therefore, we apply a discrete-time event-history model that allows us to work with quarterly panel data.

We restricted the analysis to individuals who were employed in the first quarter of observation in the former case and to individuals who were non-employed individuals in wave one in the latter case. For this analysis we use two binary dependent variables indicating transitions from i) employment to non-employment, and ii) non-employment to employment. We define a person as employed when during the reference week of the interview they carried out some economic activity for at least one hour. Informal work is included and we do not distinguish between formal and informal work because we are interested in the transitions from employment to non-employment and vice versa. Non-employment is defined as not being active in the labour market (out of the labour force voluntarily or not looking for work). We focus on exits from the labor market to concentrate on the main theoretical mechanisms of interest in our paper which primarily reflect processes internal to the couple that lead to the decision to look for paid employment or to stop working (e.g. due to lack of income, as an outcome of bargaining or due to the pressure of gender norms) rather than being able to find paid employment, which relates more to labor market conditions. Due to their ambiguous interpretation in theoretical terms, episodes involving transitions into unemployment are right-censored in the analysis (in additional analysis, available upon request, we collapsed unemployment and employment into one category instead of right-censoring spells in the case of unemployment; results did not change, see Annex A). Table 1 gives an overview of the share of women experiencing both types of event during the two time periods studied.

-Table 1-

We run logistic regressions for each period (2005 and 2017) and event (entry into and exit from the labour market). A logistic model is used to analyse the dichotomous dependent variables. The objective of this technique is that a set of variables collected in a vector $X = (X_1, \dots, X_K)$ explain the probability that an event occurs $P[Y = 1]$. In this

study the $P[Y = 1]$ refers to the transitions from employment to non-employment or vice versa.

Mathematically, the probability that the event occurs is defined as follows:

$$P[Y = 1|X_1, \dots, X_K] = \frac{1}{1+e^{(-\beta_0-\beta_1X_1, \dots, -\beta_KX_K)}} \quad [1]$$

in which $\beta = (\beta_0, \beta_1, \dots, \beta_k)$ is the vector of parameters to be estimated.

In the analysis we use two kinds of independent variables:

i) Women's characteristics: age divided into three groups (20-30 reference category, 31-40, 41-50)³; women's income pre-taxes that includes commissions and all work income in quintiles (in some models we use an alternative continuous measure of $\ln(\text{income})$) and women's education divided into four groups (less than primary, primary complete, secondary complete, and university complete).

ii) Male partner's characteristics: partner's earnings measured in quintiles ($\ln(\text{earnings})$ in alternative specifications) and an indicator of women's earnings relative to the earnings of their partner, measured as a dummy variable (taking a value of 1 if the income of the male partner is higher than her income, and 0 otherwise); men's education divided into four groups (less than primary reference category, primary complete, secondary complete and university complete). Finally, we control for wave (it goes from 1 to 5 referring to the different waves of the survey).

4 Results

4.1 Sample Description

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the sample of years 2005 and 2017. Both women's employment and education increased across the observation period. The percentage of women with secondary and tertiary education increased from 36% in 2005 to 41% in 2017 and 20% in 2005 to 34% in 2017, respectively. In terms of income, the table shows that woman's and men's income measured in Mexican pesos increased over time. However, if we compare the income in dollars, we observe that the purchasing power of women and their partners has decreased. This is in line with previous research

³ Robustness checks using 5-year age brackets yielded very similar results.

showing that the decline in the purchasing power of wages is widespread and affects even the most educated jobs (Canto Saenz, 2019). Between 2005 and 2016, the average salary for people was reduced by approximately 10,6 % (CONEVAL, 2018).

Tables B1 and B2 in the annex show how, cross-sectionally, women's and men's characteristics relate to women's employment. In both periods, men's earnings reduce the odds of women to be employed, whereas men's education is related to a higher chance of employment. Additional descriptive statistics showed how the correlation between men's and women's earnings increased from 0.16 to 0.21, and the rank correlation between men's and women's education decreased from 0.62 to 0.55 between the study periods.

4.2 Transition out of the labour market

In Table 3 we present the analysis explaining transitions from employment to non-employment in 2005. The first two regressions of the table include women's characteristics, whereas the subsequent models incorporate the resources of the partner. The first two models suggest that women's earnings and education decrease the likelihood to leave the labour market. The effect of age is also significant; women older than 30 years are less likely to leave the labour market. This result is different from the evidence found from other countries where the likelihood of exiting the labour market increases with women's age (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco, 1994). This might reflect younger ages at childbearing in Mexico.

As regards the effects of partner's resources, Model 3 shows that women whose male partners have earnings in the lowest quintile of the distribution are statistically significantly less likely to exit the labour market as compared to all other groups. There are few differences in the likelihood to exit the labour market among women whose partners are in the 2nd lowest to the highest quintile. This finding is what one would expect based on an "economic necessity" argument rather than one of relative productivities which should lead to a more continuous effect of men's earnings. Model 4 does show how women are more likely to leave the labour market when men earn more as compared to women. In contrast to these results, Model 5 shows how education of the male partner acts positively on women's permanence in the labour market. The higher the education of the partner, the less likely the woman is to leave work. Interestingly, the same is observed in terms of relative education, women who have a partner with more education

are less likely to leave employment (Model 6). Model 7 shows how results for partner education and earnings persist once jointly entered in the analysis.

In Table 4 we test to what extent effect sizes of partner characteristics changed across periods by adding the cases from 2017 to the sample and interacting our main variables of interest with the period. We observe that the impact of partner characteristics (men's income and education), on the probability for women to leave the labour market has become stronger over time. This is the case for men's earnings (Model 1 & 2), earnings differences (Model 3) and education (Model 4) even though the effect only became stronger for secondary and tertiary education in the latter case.

4.3 Transition into the Labour market

Table 5 presents results for the transition from non-employment to employment in 2005. In contrast to the results for exits from the labour market, few characteristics of partners are significant for the entry of women into the labour market. Only women who have a low-earning partner are less likely to enter employment as compared to women with partners from certain higher earnings quintiles. Women's own characteristics acquire a fundamental relevance. In models 1 to 3, the results suggest that age is a significant variable when women are over 30 years old. In this case, women are more likely to enter the labour market than women under this age. Secondary and tertiary levels of education of women relate positively to entering the labour market.

However, if we compare both periods (Table 6) it can be concluded that, as in the case of the exit event, partner's economic resources and the level of education have become more important over time. While men's education has become more positively associated to women's labour market entry (Model 3), the opposite is observed for partner earnings where the effect became more negative over time (Model 1 and Model 2).

5 Discussion

In this article, we studied the influence of men's education and economic characteristics on their female partners' work status in two periods of time, 2005 and 2017. Previous studies conducted for Europe and the USA have pointed to the negative impact of men's economic characteristics on their partners' work (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998; Henz & Sundström, 2001; Sundström & Duvander, 2002; Verbakel & De Graaf, 2009).

On the other hand, these studies have found a positive relationship between partner resources and social status or job achievement (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998; Verbakel & De Graaf, 2009). In the case of education, most of the research showed a positive relationship between high education and social mobility of the partner (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998).

Our results indicated the possible coexistence of two types of processes in Mexico. On the one hand, we suggest the existence of traditional couples in which men are the economic providers and women are housewives. Male partners' economic resources were proved to be an important variable that conditions women's labour market access and permanence in the labour market. This result was expected if one considers theories of specialization, bargaining and status maintenance. At the same time, in disagreement with previous studies, which found that the partners' economic resources are significant only for higher positions in the social stratification system (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998), we found that the strongest effect of partners' economic resources is given in the lowest quintile. Women whose partners have earnings in the lowest quintile are statistically significantly less likely to exit the labour market as compared to all other groups. The explanation between these differences of results, can be related with the inequality and poverty registered in Mexico, which differs from the European countries used in other studies. When partners are on a low income, Mexican women might be more likely to work because there is an economic need for survival. On the contrary, when men earn enough money to support the family, women are more likely to leave the labour market.

On the other hand, we pointed out the possible existence of couples that followed more egalitarian patterns in which education is a determinant of a more egalitarian division of labour. Our findings are therefore also in line with our second hypothesis, where we suggested that men's education has a positive impact on women's labour participation. [It is noteworthy](#) that although men's income and education are positively correlated with each other, our results suggest that different mechanisms connect education and earnings to women's work status, leading to very different results for both variables. Future research can investigate to what extent this has to do with difficulties to reincorporate in the labor market after events such as parental leave. Both the negative effect of men's

earnings and the positive effect of men's education became stronger over time (between 2005 and 2017). In the case of education, this may be explained by Mexico's increasing awareness of gender equity (Carmona, 2015). These changes might have rendered education to be a more relevant predictor of the division of labour within couples as ideational factors play an increasingly important role.

It is also possible that education captures other factors rather than gender egalitarianism, as education is related to a wide variety of socioeconomic characteristics. Major alternative explanations regard education as an economic resource, but these are hard to align with the opposite results found for partner earnings (and we control for earnings in the models on education). It is possible that education relates to other ideational factors, or that women's employment is an innovation that diffuses and spreads first among the higher educated in stratified societies (see e.g. Rogers, 1962; Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Esping-Andersen & Billari's, 2015).

We found male resources to matter both in absolute and relative terms. The importance of relative resources would suggest that bargaining or status maintenance processes might be at play. However, the bargaining perspective would predict that both men's education and men's earnings reduce women's employment. A status maintenance perspective could be more congruent with results women's employment would primarily affect the family's status related to occupation and earnings (and not necessarily education).

Our study has some limitations. First, panel data gives us information on women's labour market status in each quarter, and, hence, it does not capture short spells of non-employment or employment episodes that occurred between waves. Second, we do not have retrospective data and cannot collect events that occurred before the survey. This would have provided more detailed information on women's labour market attachment.

An interesting point for reflection is that we found many statistically significant results for the decision of women to leave the labour market, but very few for the decision to enter it. A possibility is that leaving the labour market is a relatively permanent decision with a low likelihood to re-enter afterwards regardless of resources. That effects changed over time (Table 6) might suggest that re-entrance into the labour market might have become more important. Future research can investigate further whether this is the case.

The increasing importance of partner characteristics over time also justifies the closer attention for couple's processes in the study of gender and income inequality (Bredemeier & Juessen, 2013; Schwartz, 2010). Various interpretations can be given of these changes over time. On the one hand, increases in economic inequalities could have increased the importance of economic resources in society more generally. For example, in a period of high inequality, the possibility of having the choice to leave the labour market might be limited to those households where one partner has high earnings (Hobson, 1990; Oppenheimer, 1997). Similarly, in many cases, the absence or insufficiency of household income requires the incorporation of women in the labour market as a secondary worker (Cerrutti, 2000), a pattern we also observe in our data and which has become more salient over time. Another interpretation is that improvements in women's economic position have increased the importance of partner characteristics and the interplay between them in the couple's decision-making. Whereas the decision about the participation of women in the labour market might have been dictated by traditional norms in the past, today, it might depend more on the relative bargaining power and value of both partners' economic resources. Future studies can look further into why the importance of partner characteristics has increased over time, and what the role is of the marriage market, assortative mating and gender inequality.

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Tables

Table 1. Proportion of sample experiencing events

Transition in women's employment status	Employment to non-employment	Non-employment to employment
<i>2005</i>		
Wave 1/Time zero	NA	NA
Wave 2	0.19	0.14
Wave 3	0.12	0.09
Wave 4	0.09	0.07
Wave 5	0.06	0.06
<i>2017</i>		
Wave 1/Time zero	NA	NA
Wave 2	0.19	0.15
Wave 3	0.14	0.14
Wave 4	0.10	0.12
Wave 5	0.08	0.11

Source: Authors elaboration based on ENOE database

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the sample.

	2005	2017
	Average /	Average / Share
Women's employment status		
Employment	.42	.46
Non- employment	.58	.54
Women's age		
[20,30]	.24	.23
[30,40]	.43	.40
[40,50]	.33	.37
Women's Education		
Less than primary	.18	.09
Primary Complete	.26	.16
Secondary Complete	.36	.41
Tertiary Complete	.20	.34
Number of Children		
None	.04	.05
1-3	.41	.48
>3	.55	.47
Women's average work income (unadjusted mexican pesos)	1330	1952
Women's average work income (adjusted income to 2011 levels	108.2	86.58
Men's average work income (unadjusted mexican pesos)	4765	5424
Men's average work income (adjusted income to 2011 levels	385.54	238.9
Men's work income > women's work income	.76	.64
Men's Education		
Less than primary	.17	.10
Primary Complete	.24	.17
Secondary Complete	.31	.37
Tertiary Complete	.28	.36

Source: Authors elaboration based on ENOE database

Table 3. Discrete-time event history models explaining transition from employment to non-employment year 2005.

	Model	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Women's age (30,40]	0.78***	0.80***	0.73***	0.72***	0.79***	0.78***	0.73***
Women's age (40,50]	0.85***	0.75***	0.79***	0.80***	0.75***	0.75***	0.78***
Women's Education Primary Complete	0.84**	0.69***	0.65***	0.67***	0.75***	0.66***	0.72***
Women's Education Secondary Complete	0.57***	0.53***	0.51***	0.52***	0.60***	0.50***	0.58***
Women's Education Tertiary Complete	0.31***	0.33***	0.33***	0.35***	0.40***	0.30***	0.40***
N ^a of Children 1-3	1.27**	1.31*	1.27.	1.25.	1.31*	1.32*	1.27.
N ^a of Children >3	1.47***	1.25.	1.22	1.21	1.24.	1.24	1.21
Period 2	0.17***	0.18***	0.18***	0.18***	0.18***	0.18***	0.18***
Period 3	0.11***	0.12***	0.13***	0.13***	0.12***	0.12***	0.13***
Period 4	0.08***	0.09***	0.09***	0.09***	0.09***	0.09***	0.09***
Period 5	0.06***	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***
Women's earnings (ref.)							
Women's earnings q.2		1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03
Women's earnings q.3		0.75***	0.78***	0.74***	0.73***	0.73***	0.76***
Women's earnings q.4		0.02***	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***
Women's earnings q.5		0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
Men's earnings q.1 (ref.)							
Men's earnings q.2			1.62***				1.61***
Men's earnings q.3			1.82***				1.83***
Men's earnings q.4			1.86***				1.89***
Men's earnings q.5			1.54***				1.58***
Men's earnings > women's earnings				2.19***			
Men's Education Primary Complete					0.75***		0.72***
Men's Education Secondary Complete					0.78**		0.73***
Men's Education Tertiary Complete					0.68***		0.67***
Men's < Women's Education (ref.)							
Men's > Women's Education						0.79**	
Men's = Women's Education						0.89	
Number of Events	35318	35318	35318	35318	35318	35318	35318

Source: Authors elaboration based on ENOE database ⁴. We use logistic regressions models, coefficients are expressed in odds ratios. Signif. codes: '***' p < 0.001 '**' p < 0.01 '*' p < 0.05

Table 4. Discrete-time event history models explaining transition from employment to non-employment (interaction model 2005- 2017)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Women's age (30,40]	0.80***	0.81***	0.95***	0.99***
Women's age (40,50]	0.79***	0.74***	0.76***	0.79***
Women's Education Primary Complete	0.61***	0.60***	0.75***	0.62***
Women's Education Secondary Complete	0.39***	0.39***	0.56***	0.30***
Women's Education Tertiary Complete	0.15***	0.17***	0.31***	0.27***
N ^a of Children 1-3 (ref. = no children)	1.70***	1.65***	1.34***	1.39***
N ^a of Children >3	1.69***	1.63***	1.48***	1.54***
Period 2	0.23***	0.23***	0.28***	0.29***
Period 3	0.17***	0.18***	0.19***	0.19***
Period 4	0.11***	0.11***	0.10***	0.11***
Period 5	0.15***	0.15***	0.14***	0.14***
Women's earnings q.2	0.73***	0.73***	0.20***	0.77***
Women's earnings q.3	0.54***	0.43***	0.13***	0.85***
Women's earnings q.4	0.01***	0.01***	0.10***	0.77***
Women's earnings q.5	0.00***	0.00***	0.09***	0.82***
Year (ref. = 2005)	0.78***	0.69***	1.99***	1.34***
Men's earnings	1.00*			
Men's earnings * 2017	1.00***			
Men's earnings q.2		1.67***		
Men's earnings q.3		1.85***		
Men's earnings q.4		1.90***		
Men's earnings q.5		1.64***		
Men's earnings q.2 * 2017		1.35***		
Men's earnings q.3 * 2017		2.21***		
Men's earnings q.4 * 2017		1.81***		
Men's earnings q.5 * 2017		1.94***		
Men's earnings > women's earnings			1.30***	
Men's earnings > women's earnings *			0.74***	
Men's Education Primary Complete			1.10	0.97
Men's Education Secondary Complete			1.02	0.93
Men's Education Tertiary Complete			0.99	0.91
Men's Education Primary * 2017				1.07
Men's Education Secondary * 2017				0.87*
Men's Education Tertiary * 2017				0.81**
Number of Events	66779	66779	66779	66779

Source: Authors elaboration based on ENOE database⁵. We use logistic regressions models, coefficients are expressed in odds ratios. Signif. codes: '***' n < 0.001 '**' n < 0.01 '*' n < 0.05

Table 5. Discrete-time event history models explaining transition from non-employment to employment to year 2005⁴

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Women's age (30,40]	1.68***	1.68***	1.68***	1.68***	1.68***	1.68***
Women's age (40,50]	1.03***	1.03***	1.03***	1.04***	1.03***	1.03***
Women's Education Primary Complete	1.04	1.04	1.05	1.03	1.04	1.04
Women's Education Secondary Complete	1.34***	1.35***	1.36***	1.33***	1.35***	1.34***
Women's Education Tertiary Complete	2.00***	2.04***	2.06***	2.04***	2.07***	1.98***
N ^a of Children 1-3	0.78**	0.78**	0.78**	0.78***	0.78**	0.78**
N ^a of Children >3	0.78**	0.78**	0.78**	0.78***	0.78**	0.78**
Period 2	0.25***	0.25***	0.25***	0.25***	0.25***	0.25***
Period 3	0.15***	0.15***	0.15***	0.15***	0.15***	0.15***
Period 4	0.12***	0.12***	0.12***	0.12***	0.12***	0.12***
Period 5	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***
Men's earnings		0.999				
Men's earnings q.2			0.94		0.94	
Men's earnings q.3			0.87**		0.96**	
Men's earnings q.4			0.92		0.92	
Men's earnings q.5			0.86**		0.87**	
Men's Education Primary Complete				1.02	1.03	
Men's Education Secondary Complete				1.03	1.05	
Men's Education Tertiary Complete				0.97	0.99	
Men's < Women's Education (ref.)						
Men's > Women's Education						0.99
Men's = Women's Education						1.03
Number of Events	35318	35318	35318	35318	35318	35318

Source: Authors elaboration based on ENOE database⁶. We use logistic regressions models, coefficients are expressed in odds ratios.

Signif. codes: '***' p < 0.001 '**' p < 0.01 '*' p < 0.05

⁴ We use logistic regressions models, coefficient are expressed in odds ratios. Statistical significance: '***' p < 0.001 '**' p < 0.01 '*' p < 0.05

Table 6. Discrete-time event history models explaining transition from non-employment to employment (interaction model 2005- 2017)⁵.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Women's age (30,40]	1.74***	1.75***	1.75***
Women's age (40,50]	1.13***	1.12***	1.14***
Women's Education Primary Complete	1.06	1.04	1.03
Women's Education Secondary Complete	1.29***	1.25***	1.23***
Women's Education Tertiary Complete	1.51***	1.44***	1.42***
N ^a of Children 1-3	0.78***	0.78***	0.78***
N ^a of Children >3	0.77***	0.77***	0.77***
Period 2	0.48***	0.48***	0.48***
Period 3	0.39***	0.39***	0.39***
Period 4	0.38***	0.38***	0.39***
Period 5	0.37***	0.37***	0.37***
Year	1.89***	2.13***	2.00***
Men's earnings	0.99		
Men's earnings *2017	0.99***		
Men's earnings q.2		0.94	
Men's earnings q.3		0.87**	
Men's earnings q.4		0.94	
Men's earnings q.5		0.96	
Men's earnings q.2 * 2017		0.56***	
Men's earnings q.3 * 2017		0.84	
Men's earnings q.4 * 2017		0.97	
Men's earnings q.5 * 2017		0.63***	
Men's Education Primary Complete			1.05
Men's Education Secondary Complete			1.13**
Men's Education Tertiary Complete			1.22***
Men's Education Primary Complete * 2017			1.05
Men's Education Secondary Complete * 2017			1.08.
Men's Education Tertiary Complete * 2017			1.08**
Number of Events	66779	66779	66779

Source: Authors elaboration based on ENOE database ⁷We use logistic regressions models, coefficients are expressed in odds ratios. Signif. codes: '***' p < 0.001 '**'p< 0.01 '*'p< 0.05

⁵ We use logistic regressions models, coefficient are expressed in odds ratio. Signif. codes: '***' p < 0.001 '**'p< 0.01 '*'p< 0.05

ANNEX A. Results using alternative specification of employment (being in active in the labor market, versus being inactive).

Annex A1 Discrete-time event history models explaining transition from employment to non-employment (interaction model 2005- 2017).

	Model	Model	Model	Model
Women's age (30,40]	0.80***	0.83***	0.98***	0.94***
Women's age (40,50]	0.73***	0.75***	0.77***	0.85***
Women's Education Primary Complete	0.61***	0.58***	0.78***	0.76***
Women's Education Secondary Complete	0.37***	0.35**	0.61***	0.60***
Women's Education Tertiary Complete	0.14***	0.15***	0.33***	0.27***
N ^a of Children 1-3	2.30***	2.22***	1.63***	1.65***
N ^a of Children >3	2.56***	2.48***	1.92***	1.97***
Period 2	0.36***	0.37***	0.38***	0.37***
Period 3	0.34***	0.34***	0.34***	0.33***
Period 4	0.31***	0.31***	0.31***	0.30***
Period 5	0.31***	0.31***	0.31***	0.30***
Women's earnings q.2	1.08	1.04	0.23***	0.79***
Women's earnings q.3	0.82***	0.70***	0.16***	0.84***
Women's earnings q.4	0.01***	0.01***	0.12***	0.74***
Women's earnings q.5	0.00***	0.00***	0.11***	0.76***
Year	0.94	0.92	2.49***	1.46***
Men's earnings	1.00**			
Men's earnings (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)	1.00***			
Men's earnings q.2		1.73***		
Men's earnings q.3		1.91***		
Men's earnings q.4		1.83***		
Men's earnings q.5		1.69***		
Men's earnings q.2 (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)		1.01***		
Men's earnings q.3 (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)		1.87***		
Men's earnings q.4 (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)		1.79***		
Men's earnings q.5 (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)		1.79***		
Men's earnings > women's earnings			1.10***	
Men's earnings > women's earnings (Interaction with year			0.68***	
Men's Education Primary Complete			0.71*	0.97*
Men's Education Secondary Complete			0.89**	0.93**
Men's Education Tertiary Complete			0.42***	0.97**
Men's Education (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)				1.26
Men's Education (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)				0.94*
Men's Education (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)				0.87**
Number of Events	66779	66779	66779	66779
Source: Authors elaboration based on ENOE database ⁵ We use logistic regressions models, coefficient are expressed in odds ratios.				

Annex A2 Discrete-time event history models explaining transition from non-employment to employment (interaction model 2005- 2017)⁶.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Women's age (30,40]	1.80***	1.83***	1.80 ***
Women's age (40,50]	1.19***	1.17***	1.18***
Women's Education Primary Complete	1.00	0.93	0.93
Women's Education Secondary Complete	1.55***	1.44***	1.42***
Women's Education Tertiary Complete	2.35***	1.98***	2.08***
N ^a of Children 1-3	0.79***	0.80***	0.80***
N ^a of Children >3	0.77***	0.80***	0.78***
Period 2	0.41***	0.41***	0.41 ***
Period 3	0.38***	0.37***	0.38***
Period 4	0.30***	0.30***	0.30***
Period 5	0.28***	0.28***	0.28***
Year	1.31***	1.63***	1.19***
Men's earnings	0.99**		
Men's earnings (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)	1.00***		
Men's earnings q.2		0.98	
Men's earnings q.3		0.91.	
Men's earnings q.4		0.93	
Men's earnings q.5		0.90*	
Men's earnings q.2 (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)		0.12***	
Men's earnings q.3 (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)		0.49***	
Men's earnings q.4 (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)		0.64***	
Men's earnings q.5 (Interaction with year 2005 as reference)		0.75***	
Men's Education Primary Complete			1.05
Men's Education Secondary Complete			1.02
Men's Education Tertiary Complete			1.97
Men's Education Primary Complete*year			1.91***
Men's Education Secondary Complete*year			1.74***
Men's Education Tertiary Complete*year			2.18**
Number of Event	66779	66779	66779

Source: Authors elaboration based on ENOE database⁷We use logistic regressions models, coefficient are expressed in odds ratios. Signif. codes: '***' p < 0.001 '**'p< 0.01 '*'p< 0.05

⁶ We use logistic regressions models, coefficient are expressed in odds ratio. Signif. codes: '***' p < 0.001 '**'p< 0.01 '*'p< 0.05

Annex B Cross-sectional analysis of being employed in first wave of period or not

Table B1. Logistic regression model explaining being employed in the first wave of 2005

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Women's age	1.55***	1.55***	1.59***	1.55***	1.55***	1.56***
Women's age	1.06***	1.06***	1.06***	1.06***	1.06***	1.06***
Women's Education	1.16*	1.16**	1.18**	1.11**	1.12**	1.17**
Women's Education	1.69***	1.70***	1.68***	1.59***	1.59***	1.72***
Women's Education	3.18***	3.21***	2.90***	2.97***	3.00***	3.28***
N ^a of Children	0.69**	0.69**	0.74*	0.69**	0.69**	0.69**
N ^a of Children	0.63***	0.63***	0.67**	0.63***	0.63***	0.63***
Men's earnings q.2		0.75***			0.75***	
Men's earnings q.3		0.70***			0.73***	
Men's earnings q.4		0.67***			0.69***	
Men's earnings q.5		0.62***			0.63***	
Men's earnings > women's earnings			0.33***			
Men's Education				1.11***	1.11***	
Men's Education				1.15***	1.15***	
Men's Education				1.13**	1.14**	
Men's < Women's Education						
Men's > Women's						1.09
Men's = Women's						1.06
Number of cases	7256	7256	7256	7256	7256	7256

Table B2. Logistic regression model explaining being employed in the first wave of 2017

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
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Women's age (30,40]	1.51***	1.49***	1.53***	1.47***	1.50***	1.51***
Women's age (40,50]	1.92***	1.93***	1.88***	1.93***	1.95***	1.81***
Women's Education	1.08	1.06	1.11	1.10	1.08**	1.06**
Women's Education Secondary Complete	1.07	1.07***	1.11***	1.10***	1.08***	1.11***
Women's Education	2.45***	2.54***	2.29***	2.72***	2.72***	3.00***
N ^a of Children 1-3	0.60***	0.59***	0.67***	0.60***	0.59***	0.59***
N ^a of Children >3	0.51***	0.50***	0.54***	0.51***	0.51***	0.50***
Men's earnings q.2		0.49***			0.46***	
Men's earnings q.3		0.16***			0.14***	
Men's earnings q.4		0.26***			0.25***	
Men's earnings q.5		0.44***			0.40***	
Men's earnings > women's earnings			0.50***			
Men's Education				0.82**	0.86	
Men's Education				1.10***	1.19***	
Men's Education				1.37***	1.08***	
Men's < Women's Education (ref.)						
Men's > Women's Education						1.08
Men's = Women's Education						1.06
Number of cases	6193	6193	6193	6193	6193	6193