

Contextualizing the Education Effect on Women's
Employment: A Cross-National Comparative
Analysis

Article Review

By

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Title: Contextualizing the Education Effect on Women's Employment: A Cross-National Comparative Analysis

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Outline of Thesis

The theory of the article is present right at the first statement of the article. “More highly educated women are more strongly involved in the labor market” (p. 246). The article is broken down systematically and presents the following to promote this statement:

1. Micro-level Mechanisms
2. Contextual Conditions
3. Theoretical Framework
4. Data Description and Data Used for Analysis
5. Description for Contextual Conditions
6. Empirical Results

The most important quote happens during the first outlined section of the article. This is the most important statement for living on this planet. “Education is key to understanding labor market behavior” (p. 247). Without educated individuals, countries cannot be part of the global economy. When individuals are not educated, the countries where they live have to use the countries resources to care for the families. When they are educated, they make better choices for their families. They are able to make positive contributions to their respective economies.

The article reviewed the different permutations of married couples who had varying levels of education and how that education affected employment trends in five European countries. Those countries were Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, and Norway. Over 10 thousand heterosexual couples who had a female partner between the ages of 20-45 were sampled in this article. As stated, “The results indicate that more highly educated couples are more likely to have dual-earner arrangements in each country, yet the strength of education

effects varied substantially between countries across the family life cycle. Not only were there comparisons between each country, there were also different levels of “family” that were compared.

The article helps me kick off the important need of completing research regarding my participants in adult learning training events in a global manner. At the end of the day, when training ANYONE who is not from the United States, education levels of adults WILL vary based on multiple reasons.

Outline of Main Points

The following section breaks down the main points of the full article, including quotes. This article ties specifically into my impact area/practice area. Even though these classes are on K-12 international education, this article ties in the importance of the education requirements in Europe and how educated individuals use that education in their employment endeavors.

To start with, the article discusses the basics principles of attraction. Basically, higher educated women tend to attract higher educated men. Highly educated individuals have better incentives for being highly educated in terms of economic rewards. They have access to personal and professional development in the positions they hold. Depending on the positions that they hold, there may be requirements for continuing education. There tend to be more stresses upon the highly educated to maintain their statuses.

Lower educated women tend to attract lower-educated men. Even though their education requirements are less than those of highly educated individuals, they have other stresses upon them, specifically, if they have a family, with children, to be working, not only, one, but maybe multiple jobs to pay the family’s bills.

There are five sub, micro-level mechanisms discussed that outline education effects.

They include:

1. “They have access to more rewarding jobs in intrinsic terms,
2. They tend to hold more modern attitudes concerning women’s role in society,
3. They face fewer demand-side constraints to employment,
4. The counteracting mechanism-the income effect-would suggest that more highly educated women are less likely to be employed because they tend to have partners with high incomes,
5. These basic mechanisms derived from economic and sociological theories of labor supply and employment are likely to be of varying relevance in different countries, depending on moderating contextual conditions” (p. 248).

Data was used for this article from a study that was conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The study used showed the effects on couples’ employment with different opportunities and issues for high and low educated individuals in the five countries noted. There were different methods of obtaining the information for this study from computer-assisted interviews to face-to-face interviews, or a mixed mode based on specific country requirements. This study was used as it provided a large sampling of results as compared to other studies that compared couples and their education levels. The ages of the individuals were between 20-45 and married. “Depending on the country, between three quarters to 80% of these couples have children below age 12” (p. 251). This statement shows that the study not only reviewed the fact that there were married couples, but they also reviewed how having families affected the individuals’ employment opportunities based on having families AND education. They also reviewed the results of the study based on varying permutations of the couple’s

employment arrangements. For each permutation, the results were based on a couple where one couple was employed a specific way and the other a second way.

“In examining the effect of education on couples’ employment arrangements, we distinguish among the *dual-breadwinner model* (both partners work full time), the *male-breadwinner model* (the man works full time, the woman is non-employed), the *modernized male-breadwinner model* (the man works full time, the woman part time), the *female-breadwinner model* (the woman works more than the man, i.e., the man is non-employed while the woman works part time or the woman works part time and the woman works full time), and the *no-full-earner model* (both are non-employed or only the man works part time)” (p. 252).

The article includes the different life cycle options for determining these results. They include if the couple has children, the ages of the children, along with child care issues. There were many variables to using this study and completing this article.

What did the study reveal? Just like we have been learning in the class these last weeks, education is different based on not only country, but based on region, tradition, and culture. They showed the largest gaps in earnings for women were found in Hungary then followed by Austria. Child care also was an issue mostly for couples in Germany where the costs for child care are high “(87% of the earning in the added job would be eaten up by the costs of employment)” (p. 254). They were also considered moderate costs in Austria and Norway at “64% and 57%” (p. 254) respectfully. They were also low costs to those individuals living in Hungary and France at “49% and 41%” (p. 254) respectfully. As compared to child care in the US, if I was the individual who had to pay half of my salary for child care, I would absolutely weigh out all the options to determine if employment was the correct course of action. Education would need to guarantee employment and knowing the economic gains prior to engaging in higher education to

obtain those higher salaries, knowing of the potential of paying for the child care and education costs.

In summary of the article, there are multiple issues that determine the probabilities that a woman will be educated and working. They include child effects and education effects. Unlike within the US, international cultures have presented where women are not given opportunities like men to be educated. Tradition states that women are to be in the homes, caring the home and having the children, much like it was a few decades' prior in the US.

Couples who have families, no matter if they are high-educated or low-educated have to determine the costs required when both individuals engage in employment in relation to child care. They state that Austria, Germany, and Hungary have strong issues with child care and employment. In these countries, it was shown that when the couple had children, women had lower levels of employment. In the other countries, even if the couples had children, child care seemed to be less of an issue.

It has been suggested "that cross-national differences in women's employment derive mainly from the behavior of the low-educated, whereas the high-educated tend to be in paid work, irrespective of the presence of children and the policy context" (p. 258). In plain terms, the more educated a woman is, the more initiative they have for searching and finding paid work, no matter if they have children or not. The more highly educated a woman is, the more likely they are to be employed and to remain employed.

"Our results underscore the importance of the family life cycle when studying education effects on couples' employment arrangements" (p.259).

Personal Impact of Article

This article has a direct affect in how I will develop and teach training globally. My projects consist of training adults in the Manufacturing Industry. The current project is a rollout of a brand new software program for a global automotive interiors manufacturer. The bulk of the employees who have been trained thus far are engineers and/or North American employees. For the employees who are engineers or US employees, their education is not in question. They need to have the advanced degrees. For US employees specifically, there is a guarantee that they have at least a high school education, even for the administrative individuals.

As the project shifts my responsibilities to training the employees who work in the manufacturing plants, the individuals who work the machines to make the individual parts for a car's interior, the employees in the US plants will have at least a high school education. Once I start traveling to the global plants, their education levels will become in question. Part of this questioning comes from the fact that since I am a contractor, I do not know their hiring practices. The main question that would come to my mind is, "What is the minimum education requirement when applying to work in their plants?"

Education is only one area of concern for me when training in other countries. Along with the education levels comes the concern for me regarding culture, tradition, etc. How do these locations perceive females with leadership capabilities? Will they receive my training thoughtfully, or look upon me negatively, knowing that I am a woman and telling them what to do? All of these questions will need to be reviewed and researched prior to heading to these locations. This part of the training process is early, but will hit me quickly. Locations currently where I will travel? They include Canada and potentially Japan.

We have already trained engineers from their Mexico plant. For these individuals, we gave them the tools to allow them to train their plant employees. The engineers received train-the-trainer education on top of training to complete their positions. For the plants located in Mexico, the company decided, due to budgetary constraints that they would prepare employees to train their co-workers. The training was favorably received. They individuals also had contact to the training team once they started their employee training if they needed help.

We also completed train-the-trainer projects with the locations in Europe. Again, the belief is that the company did not want to spend the extra money required to send us as the training team to the European locations. I can also speculate that they did not want to send us for the issues discussed in this article. Again, additional questions. At what level are the employees' educations? How does their culture perceive females in leadership roles who are not a member of the company? In past employment with global companies, when interacting with European co-workers, they did not accept my leadership and/or training expertise. However, when told the same information by my male supervisor, the employee cooperated. Very frustrating, however, when dealing with global companies, all of these points need to be handled.

Going forward, as I continue to engage in development and training of individuals on a global level, I will need to research the following points: 1. Education level of individual, 2. Culture/Tradition of individual, 3. Culture/Tradition of company. How do individuals and the company at large perceive females in the organization?

Works Cited

Berghammer, Caroline; Haas, Barbara; and Steiber, Nadia. (2016). Contextualizing the Education Effect on Women's Employment: A Cross-National Comparative Analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78, 246-261.