Children of immigrants and labor market achievement: an early assessment of the ethnic penalty in Italy

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Introduction

The children of immigrants are becoming an increasingly relevant component of European societies, and their study is gaining momentum and broadening its range and scope (Heath et al., 2008). Anyway, as demonstrated in a number of empirical contributions, their integration is still problematic along a number of different dimensions (Fajth and Lessard-Phillips, 2023). Of particular concern is the socio-economic inclusion of migrants' descendants in the host labor market, as a way to evaluate the processes of ethnic stratification in the receiving country and of transmission of social inequality (Zhou and Bankston, 2016). In this sense, the empirical evidence points to a general penalization of the children of immigrants on labor market attainment, if compared with their native counterparts (Heath and Cheung, 2007a).

Nevertheless, the considerable increase of research on labor market attainment of this group has been focused on the old migration countries, remaining largely unexplored in the new receiving countries (Gabrielli and Impicciatore, 2022). Among the latter, Italy represents a very interesting case study as a peculiar socio-economic context where first-generation migrants have already emerged as particularly disadvantaged: according to processes of inter-generational transmission of inequality, hence, these disadvantages may be likely to be passed also to subsequent generations of migrants. Anyway, up to today, the relatively low quota of economically active immigrants children (due to their on average young age) has prevented from performing quantitative analyses on their ethnic penalty on labor market.

Objectives, data and methods

This work aims at filling this gap, by exploiting a particularly suitable source of data represented by two Eurostat "ad hoc modules" of the 2008 and 2014 European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS). Applying multivariate statistical techniques to these data, it will be possible to provide an early assessment of the ethnic stratification of different migrants generations in the Italian labor market.

The empirical strategy inspiring this work is based on a modified version of the origin-education-destination diagram (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996), namely the basic model in stratification research, where the social background of origin (O) is replaced by the migration status (M) (see Heath et al., 2008). We are then interested in estimating the MD link, which represents the direct effect of migration status on destination (see Figure 1).

The main independent variable (migration status) distinguishes the following groups: 1) natives: those born in Italy with both Italian parents; 2) migrants from high income countries: those born in a high income country and arrived in Italy when older than 12 years; 3) migrants from high emigration countries: those born in a less developed country and arrived in Italy when older than 12 years; 4) generation 1.5: those born abroad but migrated in Italy when between 7 and 12 years of age); 5) second-generation migrants: those born in Italy with at least one foreign parent + those born abroad but migrated in Italy when younger than 7 years;

In order to pursue our research questions, we apply a two-step linear probability model (when considering probability of being employed as dependent variable) and OLS model (when considering the Isei score as dependent variable).