

## **What's up? The aftermath of Covid19 on women's employment in Italy and South Korea**

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The shock caused by the pandemic of COVID-19 had a strong impact on gender inequality in all developed countries. Analyzing the evolution of female employment, together with the policies implemented during the pandemic, it's fundamental to understand the gender inequalities, particularly in those countries characterized by Family-oriented welfare systems.

Family-oriented welfare systems in Southern Europe and East Asia share a long-standing tradition of depending on families for social care functions, which also affected their demographic structure, with later and fewer marriages and declining childbirths. (Saraceno, 2016; Leon, Migliavacca, 2013, Yang, Estevez-Abe, Choi, 2016; Hong & Lee, 2021). Yet, during the past ten years, governments differed in their work-family reconciliation policies. Italy is akin to a case of "policy drift", where social investment received little attention from policymakers, whereas South Korea managed to invest considerably in childcare services and family allowances during the past decade, despite still relying heavily on private care providers. In this sense, whilst both welfare states share in common a long-standing tradition of familialism, they nevertheless followed a different policy path for a sustained period of time before Covid19 hit the globe in 2020.

Is this different policy legacy associated to patterns of women's participation in the labour market in the aftermath of Covid19?

This paper engages in a comparison of these two familialistic welfare states through a comparative case study analysis. The two countries under scrutiny represent an interesting combination in that they are similar in terms of social expectations regarding gender responsibilities, family care, and limited employment opportunities for women, yet they differ in their policy reforms from the past decade, i.e. family policies and the specific policy interventions taken in response to the pandemic. This paper aims to examine how national policies and family coping strategies have combined in response to the pandemic emergency, resulting in different employment patterns for women of different educational and skill levels. Through a comparative institutional analysis of their respective family and anti-pandemic policies, the use of official data from OECD databases national statistical offices (ISTAT - Italian Institute of Statistics, and KOSTAT - Statistics Korea), and descriptive analyses on female employment type and quality drawn from two waves of the Italian PLUS data

(2018 and 2021) and the Korean KLoWF data (2018 and 2020), we examine the ways in which different social policy reforms in these two countries might have played a role in the subsequent development of women's employment in the aftermath of the Covid19 pandemic.