RESEARCH PROJECT
Gender Dynamics in Labor and Learning:
Investigating Technological Adoption and Parental Job Quitting in Italy

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Purpose of the project and research program

This research project aims at investigating gender differences in two domains which are potentially relevant in the determination of labor market outcomes. Specifically, we will conduct two field experiments involving two groups: university students and parents with young children (age 0-3).

The first experiment is aimed at analyzing females’ and males’ approaches to the explore-exploit dilemma, which characterizes the trade-off between the exploitation of familiar alternatives and the exploration of new alternatives (with unknown rewards) which characterize many labor market decisions (e.g. accepting a job offer, negotiating the wage, applying for a promotion, etc). In this project we will concentrate on the adoption of new technological solutions that can be used for studying, such as the use of Artificial Intelligence and on their impact on learning activities and outcomes. Extensive literature has documented a gender difference in the attitudes toward technology therefore become of extreme importance to study how male and female students can take advantage the available technological innovation in during their university experience.

The second project aims at understanding the determinants of the decision to quit the job during the first three years of a child’s life. This phenomenon persists even in regions with low female unemployment, where a significant share of young parents, predominantly women, opt out of their jobs. Notably, this occurs despite Italy offering relatively long and flexible maternity leave options. A key factor behind this trend may be the lack of sufficient support from partners, as a more equitable division of household responsibilities could lead to fewer job resignations among young mothers. Through a survey experiment, we aim to identify the determinants of such decisions and the impact of social norms related to gender roles. The factors under investigation include the inability to secure a place in public nurseries, absence of family support, high costs of nursery services, challenges in achieving a satisfactory work-life balance, and the employer’s reluctance or inability to offer flexible working hours or part-time work.

By integrating the design and findings of these two surveys, the project seeks to offer a comprehensive view on the emergence of gender differences in the labor market outcomes in two critical moments: before entering the market, when perspective workers are cumulating their human capital and then in the moment in which children are born. The expected outcome is to provide evidence-based policy recommendations for the design of effective learning strategies which could equally benefits males and female students and promoting gender equity in familial responsibilities and career choices, contributing to a more equitable society.
Activity Program

The research fellow will closely work with the research group in a supportive environment with frequent meetings and will be involved in the lively and high-quality research environment at the Department of Economics, University of Bologna. He/she will be involved mainly in the following tasks:

A) First project: design of an experiment involving students in their decision to use the AI opportunities in their learning activities, follow the data collection process, constructing a database integrating administrative and survey data on university students.

B) Second project: design an intervention targeting young families with children in the age 0-3; design a survey aimed at mapping the factors affecting the decision to quit the job after the birth of the child, follow the data collection process, constructing a database integrating administrative and survey data on the subjects involved in the study.