ABSTRACT

FLFP is an essential measure since it contributes to economic development while also ensuring gender equality (Durmus & Hilal, 2020). However, FLFP rate differed across countries and regions based on the various economic, institutional, social and cultural aspects of society. Urbanization is one of these factors, which could affect the FLFP rate both negatively and positively, depending on the nature and constraints that females could face in specific labor market.

This study looks at the impact of urban growth, along with other factors including male unemployment, per capita GDP, female wages, female education, and fertility, on females' participation in labor force in selected South Asian countries. The study offers a comprehensive analytical technique and uses annual data from 1990 to 2022. It begins by addressing slope heterogeneity, cross-sectional dependence, and mixedorder stationary in panel data. The Cross-Sectional Auto-regressive Distributive Lag (CS-ARDL) model is then used to evaluate both short-term and long-term impacts. To validate the findings, robustness checks are performed using the AMG, MG, and CCEMG models.

According to the CS-ARDL analysis, urban growth, GDP per capita and male unemployment have a statistically significant and negative impact on females' participation in labor force in the context of urbanization both in the long run and short run. Conversely, female education has a significant and favorable impact on FLFP both in the short run and in the long run analysis. While, female wages demonstrates a complex and u-shaped relationship in the long run and inverted ushaped relationship in the short run. Fertility has a insignificant and less clear cut impact on FLFP in the context of urbanization. Importantly, the AMG, MG, and CCEMG models' results support the CS-ARDL findings. The outcomes of current study hold significant implications for policymakers, particularly in the context of urban growth, there is need to consider gender-boosting urban growth and augmenting female labor force participation and expanding opportunities for females in education will be beneficial for gender equality. Consequently, it becomes imperative for governments to place heightened importance on elevating the standards of research institutions and educational establishments. In addition to leveraging the insights garnered from our study, policymakers should also formulate strategies geared towards enhancing the quality of the workforce.