

Peer Review

Review of: "Exposing Regional Disparities in Spain's Judiciary Civil Service Exams"

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Report on "Exposing Regional Disparities in Spain's Judiciary Civil Service Exams"

In the introduction, you raise several issues: (i) "regional disparities ... in the selection of judicial personnel," (ii) "precarious employment conditions of interim judicial staff," and related to these issues: (iii) "social legitimacy of the judiciary and ... broader patterns of inequality."

Your empirical analysis addresses the first issue, regional disparities. I think the empirical results have alternative interpretations to the ones you provide, and so I would put less emphasis on (ii) and (iii) because I could not find empirical evidence on these issues.

You find that the empirical distributions of the written and subjectively graded exams (a) differ in their distributions between regions and (b) also differ in how they relate to an "unbiased" multiple-choice exam.

(1) Because each region only grades exams relating to jobs in that region, all that matters in the end is the ranking WITHIN the region, NOT BETWEEN the regions. (2) In addition, applicants might differ between the regions, for example, by having different alternative labour market opportunities. (3) Regions may also have different preferences regarding which type of candidates they would like to select, which may be one of the points of regional autonomy.

For all these three reasons, I cannot conclude from these empirical results that these regional differences compromise the "social legitimacy of the judiciary" or that they are "flawed" in any way.

Do you have data on the individual characteristics of the candidates? I guess I was chosen as a referee due to our article D. Meurs; P.A. Puhani (2024): Culture as a Hiring Criterion: Systemic Discrimination in a

In case you have socio-demographic information on the candidates, you might check how different groups fare differently between regions. This may also be assessed while holding the multiple-choice exam results constant.

I think your study has potential, but more information is needed before drawing strong conclusions.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.