



Education for children in sub-Saharan Africa: Predictors impacting school attendance



Jini L. Roby^{a,*}, Lance Erickson^b, Chanel Nagaishi^c

^a School of Social Work, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, USA

^b Department of Sociology, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, USA

^c Utah County Children's Justice Center, Provo, UT, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 February 2016

Received in revised form 1 March 2016

Accepted 2 March 2016

Available online 4 March 2016

Keywords:

Orphans

Sub-Saharan Africa

Education

School attendance

Living with non-relatives

Household wealth

Urban and rural

Head of household

ABSTRACT

Under the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child is entitled to free primary school education and access to secondary school or occupational training, and education has become one of the basic indicators of child wellbeing. Large scale studies published in the 1990s and early 2000s generally showed that significant educational disparities existed based on orphan status and a child's relationship to the head of the household. Poverty, gender and rural residence were also shown to contribute to the disparities. Since the data relied on by these studies were collected, the global community has conducted major campaigns to close these gaps, through the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This study (N = 124,592) examined these factors using eight country-years from five sub-Saharan African countries, since half of the children out of school live in that region. Findings show that considerable progress has been made to close the disparity based on orphan status, and the gender gap is also closing. However, poverty remains a challenge across all variables, and there are pockets of gender disparity for both boys and girls, particularly in areas where deeply rooted cultural and child raising patterns are retained. Most alarmingly, children who live with non-relatives have the lowest attendance rate. Continued efforts to target these groups of children and their households are urged, as well as research on the underserved children.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Education for children has now been firmly established as a basic human right. The Convention on the Rights of the Child ("the CRC", [United Nations General Assembly, 1989](#)), the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history with 196 nations ratifying it ([UNICEF, 2015a](#)), requires member states to provide every child an equal opportunity to receive compulsory and free primary education, and to have access to secondary schools or vocational training. States are also mandated to take measures to encourage regular school attendance rather than simply tracking enrollment (CRC, Art. 28).

Accordingly, several global efforts have focused on promoting children's educational rights. Among those are the Education for All ("EFA") initiative, launched in 1990 by the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank; and the Millennium Development Goals ("MDGs", [UNICEF, 2015a](#)) adopted by the member nations of the United Nations in 2000. Under MDG 2, the global community would ensure that by 2015, all children would be able to complete a full course of primary education, while under Goal 3, gender disparity in primary and secondary education would be eliminated by 2005, and in all levels of

education by 2015. Together, the EFAs and MDGs formed a strong and clear global commitment to improving the education of all children, most particularly those who are poor and in difficult circumstances in developing regions (EFA, Goal #3).

What is known about the achievement of these goals for the children in sub-Saharan Africa? According to UN organizations, the MDGs were successful in decreasing the number of primary school age out-of-school children. However, 57 million children between age six and eleven still remain out of school, and more than half of these live in sub-Saharan Africa ([UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015](#)). Hence, reaching all children continues to be one of 17 goals under the Sustainable Development Goals ([United Nations, 2016](#)), launched to continue the global development agenda beyond the MDGs.

Who are the children out of school? Most of the large scale studies ([Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006](#); [Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010](#); [Case, Paxson, & Ableidinger, 2004](#); [Monasch & Boerma, 2004](#)) used data from the 1990s to early 2000s, and an independent corroboration of the EFA or MDG reports have not been conducted since that time, although some smaller studies ([Beegle, De Weerd, & Dercon, 2006](#); [Roby, Lambert, & Lambert, 2009](#)) have explored this question in the region. To fill this knowledge gap, this paper presents the findings on children's school attendance in 5 sub-Saharan African nations, comprising eight country-years using Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: jini.robby@byu.edu (J.L. Roby).

data collected on 124,592 children aged 6–14 between 2004 and 2012. We sought to learn the variables that predict children's school attendance, in relation to their household and demographic circumstances. These data were collected over eight years during the MDG period (2000–2015), and our findings constitute an independent source of the progress being made during the initial MDG and EFA periods.

1. Review of the literature

As a threshold matter, we note that the operationalizing of schooling outcomes is inconsistent within the literature – which may lead to incompatible findings between studies. In some instances, schooling is measured by the amount of education a child has attained (e.g., [Beegle et al., 2006](#)), while at other times enrollment rates (e.g., [Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006](#); [Gundersen, Kelly, & Jemison, 2004](#); [Kobiane, Calves, & Marcoux, 2005](#); [Parker & Short, 2009](#); [Yamano, Shimamura, & Sserunkuuma, 2006](#)), attendance (e.g., [Ainsworth, Beegle, & Koda, 2005](#); [Bennell, 2005](#); [Sharma, 2006](#)), or a combination (e.g., [Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010](#)) is used. Interpretation across studies is complicated even further when terms such as enrollment and attendance are used interchangeably within one study (e.g., [Case et al., 2004](#)). The differentiation is important as in 2012, 76% of primary school aged children in sub-Saharan Africa were enrolled but only 67% were attending ([UNICEF, 2015b](#)), and [Roby et al. \(2009\)](#) found similar results in Mozambique. Our study examines school attendance rather than enrollment or attainment, but for purposes of our literature review we will refer to the terms used in the original publications.

Research on schooling surged in the 1990s after the launching of the EFAs and through the early 2000s after the adoption of the MDGs ([Lloyd & Blanc, 1996](#); [Bicego, Rutstein, & Jonson, 2003](#); [Case et al., 2004](#)), although they used older data. Due to the rapid escalation of the AIDS pandemic during the same period, the education literature out of sub-Saharan Africa also focused much attention on children orphaned or affected by HIV/AIDS, their care arrangements, household wealth, and the children's relationship to the head of household (e.g., [Ainsworth et al., 2005](#); [Case et al., 2004](#); [Monasch & Boerma, 2004](#)). Later, noting that households caring for kin children were often raising their biological children at the same time, the possibility of disparate treatment between biological and kin children of the caregiver's, including in school attendance, has also been explored ([Roby, Shaw, & High-George, 2014](#)).

An 'orphan' is generally defined as a child who has lost one or both of their parents to death differentiated as "single" or "double" orphans, and further differentiated as "maternal" and "paternal" orphan categories depending on whether their mother or father is deceased, respectively. DHS data forms incorporate these same concepts of orphan status. A number of studies have explored orphan status in relation to school attendance, resulting in mixed findings. While [Case et al. \(2004\)](#) and [Monasch and Boerma \(2004\)](#) found that orphans were less likely to be enrolled in school than non-orphans, but other studies ([Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006](#); [Yamano et al., 2006](#)) were unable to find a significant relationship. This may be due in part to methodological differences related to measurement of orphan status or school outcomes or due to sample characteristics. For example, although some orphans may have higher emotional and psychological incentives to return to school than non-orphans ([Bennell, 2005](#); [Mbugua, 2004](#)), this could be masked in statistical analyses that do not have measures of time since attending school is likely to be difficult after a recent trauma of losing parents ([Ainsworth et al., 2005](#); [Sharma, 2006](#)). However, panel studies used to address these concerns found that school attendance of older children, ages 11–14, were not affected by orphan status or recent adult deaths in the household ([Ainsworth et al., 2005](#)).

The child's relationship to the head of the household, regardless of orphan status, has also been studied as a variable related to school attendance, since kinship care has long been a traditional form of child fostering in Africa ([Beegle, Filmer, Stokes, & Tiererova, 2010](#); [Foster, Levine, & Williamson, 2005](#); [Roby et al., 2014](#)). In cases of parental

death cultural norms typically mandate that the orphaned children become absorbed into the kin system ([Roby, 2011](#)); across 13 African countries, extended family provided care for 90% of double orphans ([Monasch & Boerma, 2004](#)). [Evans and Miguel \(2007\)](#) argue that Africa's system of kinship care could mitigate against the adverse effects of orphanhood on schooling. In contrast, [Sharma \(2006\)](#) hypothesized that relatives would not be as willing to invest in a child's education because they would not directly benefit from the future financial returns.

Emerging research suggests that the wellbeing of the fostered kin child, including school attendance, may depend on the degree of relatedness to the head of household. Hamilton's Rule posits that as the relationship between the caregiver and child becomes more distant, investments in that child will decrease, and this has been borne out by some localized research ([Beegle et al., 2006](#); [Bishai et al., 2003](#); [Case et al., 2004](#); [Crawley, 2001](#); [Roby et al., 2014](#); [Sharma, 2006](#)). A study in Lesotho found that children living with a grandmother were as likely to be enrolled in school as children living with a mother ([Parker & Short, 2009](#)). In rural Zimbabwe willingness to foster was highest for grandchildren, but steadily declined as relational distance increased ([Howard et al., 2006](#)).

A study in Kenya demonstrated that orphans were treated as second-class citizens, through discrimination, abuse, or enslavement when taken in by extended family ([Crawley, 2001](#)). In Uganda, biological relatedness was a key predictor of child mortality, suggesting that the more distant the relationship the less likely the child was to survive ([Bishai et al., 2003](#)) and [Roby et al. \(2014\)](#) found that kin children were attending school at a lower rate than the biological children in their kinship placements and reported doing more household work. Here again, poverty may combine with relatedness to compound the difficulty. In spite of positive kin and child attitudes about education, extreme poverty often hampers the children's ability to access it ([Clacherty, 2008](#)). Thus, even though some kin are typically willing to care for orphaned children, their poverty may impede their ability to do so adequately.

What about children who live within a household with unrelated individuals? There are only a few studies about such children; and little is known about them. Many of these children are in informal alternative care; that is, there is no government involvement in arranging such care of children or any oversight or monitoring ([U.N. Guidelines on Alternative Care, 2010](#)). Their numbers and situation are largely unknown, although it is suspected that they range in the tens of millions globally ([Roby, 2011](#)). Some of these children may be children of family friends, boarders attending school, or household servants.

Household poverty is one of the principal barriers to children's school attendance, particularly in Africa where families are required to pay for uniforms, books, and supplies even in countries with universal primary education policies ([Case et al., 2004](#); [Roby et al., 2009](#); [U.N., 2013b](#)). Other authors have contended that household wealth is ultimately responsible for lower schooling outcomes ([Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006](#); [Bennell, 2005](#)).

Global trends also indicate that females are at a greater disadvantage when it comes to school attendance, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa ([UNESCO, 2015](#)), although steady changes are occurring. There has been a major push for gender parity under both the EFAs and MDGs, and in some cases girls are now attending school at a greater rate than boys. However, in some countries girls may drop out earlier due to early marriage and boys may drop out earlier to participate in labor.

The literature generally shows that rural areas have lower school attendance rates compared to urban counterparts. Children residing in urban centers are nearly twice as likely to be enrolled in school as children living in rural areas ([United Nations, 2013b](#)). Several reasons have been found for this: schools are fewer and further away ([Al-Samarrai & Reilly, 2000](#)), households tend to be more impoverished, and programs assisting children in need of educational assistance tend to be focused in urban areas. In earlier studies, there were indications that more orphans were prevalent in rural areas living within relatively impoverished female headed households ([Bicego et al., 2003](#); [Nyamukapa, Foster,](#)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/345840>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/345840>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)