



Is child labor a barrier to school enrollment in low- and middle-income countries?



Diane L. Putnick*, Marc H. Bornstein¹

Child and Family Research, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, Public Health Service, Suite 8030, 6705 Rockledge Drive, Bethesda, MD 20892-7971, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Child labor
School enrollment
LMIC

ABSTRACT

Achieving universal primary education is one of the Millennium Development Goals. In low- and middle-income developing countries (LMIC), child labor may be a barrier. Few multi-country, controlled studies of the relations between different kinds of child labor and schooling are available. This study employs 186,795 families with 7- to 14-year-old children in 30 LMIC to explore relations of children's work outside the home, family work, and household chores with school enrollment. Significant negative relations emerged between each form of child labor and school enrollment, but relations were more consistent for family work and household chores than work outside the home. All relations were moderated by country and sometimes by gender. These differentiated findings have nuanced policy implications.

Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Children in impoverished households in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) may contribute to their family's welfare by working outside the home or for the family or by managing household responsibilities while parents work. UNICEF (2007) estimated that 1 in 6 children aged 5–14 was involved in some sort of child labor. However, the prevalence of child labor is difficult to estimate because of inconsistent definitions of child labor. Some definitions of child labor include only paid work outside the home (i.e., economic or market work), whereas other definitions include unpaid work, family work, and excessive household chores because each form of work may relate to child schooling, health, and well-being (ILO, 2009). By contrast with its contribution to the family, engaging in child labor is widely believed to have a strong negative impact on schooling (Bezerra et al., 2009; Orazem and Gunnarsson, 2003; Ray and Lancaster, 2005) but some research reports little or no relation (No et al., 2012; Ravallion and Wodon, 2000). We hope to resolve this ambiguity by exploring relations of different types of child labor with school enrollment in a diverse set of 30 LMIC.

1. Three types of child labor

Child labor is often divided into three major categories: work outside the home, family work, and excessive household chores. Children's work outside the home has received the most empirical attention. Work outside the home usually consists of employment in agriculture, services, or industry and can be paid or unpaid. Family work consists of any (usually unpaid) work that children do for the family. Family work is most often agricultural (e.g., subsistence farming; Edmonds and Pavcnik, 2005), but it also includes work for other family-owned businesses. Finally, household chores include childcare, cleaning, cooking, laundry, shopping, fetching water and wood, and home maintenance. Most children engage in household chores as part of their play routines and as a means of socialization into their culture (Lancy, 2012). Excessive household chores (herein defined as ≥ 28 h per week; UNICEF, 2006) are considered a "hidden" form of child labor because they may interfere with schooling, are unpaid, and often go unreported (Gibbons et al., 2005).

2. Child labor and poverty

Child labor is more common in so called "developing" countries than developed countries (Fares and Raju, 2007). The countries included in this study all constitute low- and middle-income

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 301 496 6832; fax: +1 301 496 2766.

E-mail addresses: putnickd@mail.nih.gov (D.L. Putnick),

Marc_H_Bornstein@nih.gov (M.H. Bornstein).

¹ Tel.: +1 301 496 6832; fax: +1 301 496 2766.

developing countries (UNICEF, 2006). Although there is considerable variation within individual countries, children and caregivers in LMIC are likely to have a low standard of living (World Bank, 2012) and few material resources (Bradley and Putnick, 2012), and they are unlikely to have access to governmentally sponsored social assistance programs (World Bank, 2012). The ILO (2006) estimated that over 70% of child labor is agricultural; in most cases, children in LMIC work for their family's farm (Edmonds and Pavnik, 2005). Thus, children in LMIC may engage in child labor because their families need them to work to survive. Galli (2001) suggested that paid child labor contributed 10 to 20% of family income, depending on the location. If indirect contributions of unpaid family work (e.g., family farm or business work) and household chores (e.g., childcare) are considered, a 10 to 20% contribution to family income may be a substantial underestimate.

3. Child labor and education

One of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG 2) is to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (United Nations, 2013). Most countries have made strides toward this goal by improving access to schools. Primary school enrollment rates have improved steadily in most countries since the year 2000 (World Bank, 2014). However, some countries, especially the lowest income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, are far from reaching the goal of universal education (United Nations, 2013). Some scholars implicate child labor as a barrier to achieving universal education because poor families need children to work, which prevents them from attending school. Just as school enrollment has increased, engagement in child labor has decreased globally (Diallo et al., 2010). Nonetheless, the empirical link between child labor and schooling has so far been incompletely documented. The ambiguity about the association between child labor and schooling stems from at least four issues: (1) most efforts to demonstrate the association between child labor and schooling involve only a single country or a single region within a country, (2) studies vary in their inclusion of different types of child labor, (3) studies vary in their operationalization of labor (e.g., how many hours of work constitute labor), and (4) studies vary in the indicators of education (e.g., enrollment vs. attendance vs. school performance). In this investigation, we included 30 LMIC and 3 types of child labor in addition to a global index, defined child labor according to UNICEF's (2006) standard guidelines, and focused on school enrollment exclusively.

If children are working, are they less likely to be enrolled in school? The two activities are not necessarily mutually exclusive; the majority of working children continue to be enrolled in school. Some studies of individual countries report that children who work are less likely to be enrolled in school (Amin et al., 2006; Beegle et al., 2009; Fares and Raju, 2007; Gibbons et al., 2005; Guarcello et al., 2008; Huebler, 2008), but others find little to no relation between child labor and school enrollment (No et al., 2012; Ravallion and Wodon, 2000). In one of only a few systematic studies that included multiple countries, Gibbons et al. (2005) investigated 18 African countries and found negative relations between a composite indicator of child labor and school enrollment in 10 countries, a positive relation in 1 country, and no relation in 7 countries. Similarly, Guarcello et al. (2008) reported that economically active 7- to 14-year-old children had lower school attendance rates than non-economically active children in 48 of 60 developing countries, higher attendance rates than non-economically active children in 7 countries, and essentially equivalent rates in 5 countries. These studies suggest that child labor might serve different functions in different countries (Morrow, 2010).

The effects of different types of child labor on education are also unclear. Goulart and Bedi (2008) assessed economic work inside or outside the household and household domestic work in 6- to 15-year-old children. Economic work had a significant negative relation with school success (i.e., not repeating a grade), but domestic work was unrelated to school success. Guarcello et al. (2008) reported that hours of economic work, as well as household chores, were related to the probability of attending school in Bolivia, Cambodia, Mali, and Senegal (see also Beegle et al., 2009, for Vietnam). Finally, in a study of 16 countries, Allais (2009) reported that engaging in 28 or more hours of economic work was associated with over 30% lower school enrollment relative to working fewer than 14 h, and 28 or more hours of household chores was associated with nearly 20% lower school enrollment for girls and 10% lower enrollment for boys relative to working fewer than 14 h. Unpaid family work, the most common type of child labor in the developing world (Putnick and Bornstein, 2015), has rarely been studied. Given the ambiguity in the literature on relations between different types of child labor and education, here we disaggregate the three types of child labor in relation to school enrollment.

4. Factors affecting the link between child labor and schooling

Some family and personal variables may confound relations between child labor and education. For example, the link between caregiver education and child school enrollment is well documented. Children with educated primary caregivers (especially mothers) are more likely to be enrolled in school (Gibbons et al., 2005; Huebler, 2008; Kurosaki et al., 2006) and are less likely to participate in child labor (Huebler, 2008; Kurosaki et al., 2006). Child age may also relate to both child labor and schooling. Older children may be more likely to drop out of school as well as engage in child labor (Rosati and Rossi, 2003). To account for variation in these factors, caregiver education and child age were controlled in analyses.

Some family and personal variables may also moderate relations between child labor and education. As previously described, relations between child labor and education may not be consistent across countries (Gibbons et al., 2005; Guarcello et al., 2008). Child gender is another factor that likely moderates the association between child labor and education. Putnick and Bornstein (2015) documented gender differences in patterns of child labor across 38 developing countries, and several researchers have reported differences in rates of school enrollment for girls and boys (Beegle et al., 2009; Gibbons et al., 2005; Huebler, 2008). Whether the relations between child labor and education are similar for girls and boys remains an open question. Consequently, we explore the relations of child labor with education by country and by gender to determine whether these factors moderate the effects of child labor on school enrollment.

5. This study

This study explores relations of child labor with school enrollment in more than 185,000 7- to 14-year-old children in 30 LMIC. In addition to employing a composite index of all types of child labor, we explore work outside the home, family work, and excessive household chores separately to determine whether each type of labor has similar relations with schooling. We control for child age and caregiver education and also examine potential moderating effects of country and child gender.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6841309>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6841309>

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