The Combination of School and Work among Adolescent Children as a Household Strategy of Lone Mothers in Mexico

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In her study about female heads in Mexico, Sylvia Chant (1991) pointed out that single mothers in that country face a contradiction regarding their children well-being. On one side, their greater autonomy regarding the use of resources and the decisions in the household allows them to keep their children in school for longer periods without having to negotiate with their husbands. This, according to Chant's ethnographic study, is important specially for girls; single mothers reported to be specially interested in their daughters' education as a way of preparing them in case they also have to face single motherhood in their future. In spite of this greater motivation to keep their children in school as long as possible, Chant also reports that due to the lack of resources (economic and in social and human capital), children of single mothers may have to leave school earlier in order to work or to take over the domestic responsibilities of working mothers.

The results from my own research suggest that single mothers may have found another way of combining a strong incentive to invest on their children's education with the need to increase household resources. According to nationwide representative data, children of lone mothers tend to combine work and school more often than children in other type of households. Furthermore, the probabilities of staying in school for children between 12 and 16 years of age are slightly higher for children of single mothers who work

compared to children in other types of households (table 1). The possibility of combining work and school is largely determined by mother's resources, for example, through the access to the informal labor market or—to a lesser extent—to formal jobs.

DATA AND METHODS

This paper uses information from a nationwide representative survey conducted in 1997 in Mexico and multivariate analysis techniques to look at the determinants of adolescent children's educational and labor status. The analysis focuses on the variation in school enrollment and labor force participation of adolescents depending on their coresidence status relative to their father and on mother's working status. The paper also explores to what extent the presence of extended kin (working or not working) in the household may influence in adolescent's activities. The statistics for this paper are from the Demographic Dynamics National Survey, 1997 (Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica Demográfica, ENADID 1997). The Survey is based on a representative nationwide sample and provides information for all household members on age, sex, relation to the head of the household, migration status, presence of the mother, presence of the father, educational attainment and labor status. From the survey, I extracted the personal information on all children 12 to 16 years of age and built household and community variables based on the information of all household members.

Of the whole subsample of Mexican children between the ages 12 and 16, I excluded from the analysis those children who reported to be heads of the household (75 cases), spouses of the head (163 cases), domestic workers (121 cases) and those with missing information about the relation with the head of the household (1 case). I also excluded

those children who were living temporarily in the household (49) and children with no information on school attendance (49) and on working status (1). The number of children excluded from the subsample represents 1.2% of the total number of children ages 12 to 16. The final data set includes personal, family, dwelling and community information for 37,227 Mexican children between the ages of 12 and 16.

In the survey, all individuals answered whether they were currently going to school. Those who replied positively to the question were defined as enrolled in school. Regarding their labor status, the survey asked whether the individual was working (8,608 cases) or not working but did have a job the prior week (91 cases). Those who replied yes to any of these two options were defined as working.

For the analysis, I estimated a multinomial logit model predicting the enrollment and labor status of Mexican children between 12 and 16 years of age. The variables used for the analysis are depicted in table 2. The variables selected are considered the main determinants of school enrollment and labor status. Given the differences by sex in enrollment and labor status in Mexico, the models were estimated separately for boys and girls.

FIRST RESULTS AND PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS

Tables 3 and 4 summarize the first results from the analysis. Among the most important findings of this research is that the combination of work and school may be an option for children of working mothers to stay in school and still gain an income which may be important among poor households. The results from the multivariate analysis also

suggest that the detrimental effect of the absence of the father on adolescent's school attendance is mainly explained by the lack of socioeconomic resources and that this effect may be compensated by the income earned by working mothers.

To a certain extent, the data indicate that the combination of school and work is an option more frequently used by single mothers as a way to keep their children in school and compensate for the need of a higher income within the household. The study also show that the process of understanding household strategies in single-mother households must consider the working status of mothers.

REFERENCE

Chant, Sylvia. 1991. *Women and survival in Mexican cities. Perspectives on gender, labour markets and low-income households*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Table 1. Educational and labor status of adolescnets 12 to 16 years of age, by type of family and mothers' labor status. Mexico, 1997 (percent)

BOYS

Type of family	Enrolled and not working	Enrolled and working	Not enrolled and working	Not enrolled and not working	Total
Both parents at home:					
mother not working	65.0	9.1	18.8	7.1	100.0 (8,970)
mother working	60.3	19.1	15.8	4.8	100.0 (5,490)
Only father at home	58.7	12.6	20.8	7.8	100.0 (499)
Only mother at home:					
mother not working	59.9	9.7	21.2	9.2	100.0 (895)
mother working	65.4	12.6	14.9	7.1	100.0 (2,004)
Neither parent in the household	55.4	13.4	23.7	7.6	100.0 (1,094) **(18,952)**

GIRLS

Type of family	Enrolled and not working	Enrolled and working	Not enrolled and working	Not enrolled and not working	Total
Both parents at home:					
mother not working	69.4	2.1	7.6	20.9	100.0 (8,105)
mother working	65.9	10.5	12.0	11.6	100.0 (5,549)
Only father at home	57.7	3.1	12.0	27.2	100.0 (418)
Only mother at home:					
mother not working	63.0	2.8	9.9	24.3	100.0 (851)
mother working	67.9	8.5	10.6	13.0	100.0 (1,986)
Neither parent in the household	51.9	4.3	14.6	29.1	100.0 (1,366) **(18,275)**

Source: Author's calculations based on data from *Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica Demográfica*, 1997 (INEGI 1997).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Mexican children between the ages of 12 and 16. Independent variables to be included in the model. Mexico, 1997

Variable	Description	Mean or Percent	Standard Deviation
Age: 12-13	Age at the moment of the survey. Added as	41.6	
14-15	a categorical variable	38.8	
16		18.6	
Mean age (years)		13.9	0.5
Years of education completed:	At the moment of the survey		
Whole population		6.6	2.1
Not enrolled		5.8	2.5
Migrant	If the child migrated from one state to another at least once during the last five years.	6.0	
Number of younger children in the household	All children younger than the respondents and regularly living in the HH	1.9	1.7
Number of older boys	Older male adolescents living in the HH (up to age 20).	0.5	0.7
Number of older girls	Older female adolescents living in the HH (up to age 20)	0.5	0.7
Family-owned business	If at least one member of the HH reported to be employed in a family-owned business.	20.4	
Household migration experience to the U.S.	At least one of the members of the HH lived in the U.S. during the last 5 years or was living in the U.S. at the moment of the survey.	10.5	
Natural logarithm of the household per capita income	Natural logarithm of the sum of the income reported by all members of the HH divided by size of the HH.	5.5	1.6
% EAP employed in manufactures		16.3	
% Women 15 and older working in the municipality		40.5	
N= 37,227			

Source: Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica Demográfica, 1997 (INEGI 1997)., 1997 (INEGI 1997).

Note: All the household information excludes domestic servants and lodgers. HH=household. When appropriate, the standard deviation is included in a separate column.

A total of 912 households (2.4% of the sample) reported to have no income at all. They were given the mean income by size of the location and education of the parents. The variable "household income" captures all the economic earnings coming from labor and nonlabor sources. Thus, it considers, for example, resources received through remittances in the case of households with migration experience to the U.S. Regarding the inclusion of both, income and education in the model, the correlation between both variables (excluding the missing cases on income) was 0.30.

Table 3. Multinomial logistic regression predicting educational and labor status. Boys 12 to 16 years of age. Mexico, 1997

Variable	Enrolled and working		Not enrolled and working		Not enrolled and not working	
Age: 12-13	-0.824	**	-2.793	**	-1.320	**
14-15	-0.374	**	-1.010	**	-0.441	**
16	--		--		--	
Migrant	-0.139		0.170		0.276	**
Younger children	0.115	**	0.200	**	0.155	
Older boys	-0.238	**	-0.132	**	0.056	
Older girls	-0.171	**	-0.130	**	0.121	
Both parents:						
mother not working	--		--		--	
mother working	0.231	*	-0.058		0.142	
Only father	0.746	**	0.778	**	0.567	
Only mother:						
mother not working	0.327		0.308		0.252	
mother working	0.444	**	0.121		0.296	
Neither parent in the HH	0.527	**	0.639	**	0.492	**
Other income earners	0.292	**	0.255	**	0.079	
Other nonworking adults in the HH	-0.376	**	-0.277	**	-0.070	
Family-owned business	2.718	**	1.659	**	-0.298	
HH migration to the U.S.	0.194		0.256	*	0.376	**
Parental education	-0.109	**	-0.236	**	-0.218	**
Ln (income)	0.006		-0.046		-0.047	
Size of the community:						
Less than 2,500	0.321	**	0.915	**	0.013	
2,500-99,999	0.003		0.359	**	-0.004	
100,000 or more	--		--		--	
% EAP in manufactures	-0.004	**	0.015	**	0.020	**
% of women working	0.017	**	0.001		-0.010	
Constant	-2.540	**	-0.171		-0.631	

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the *Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica Demográfica*, 1997 (INEGI 1997)., 1997 (INEGI 1997).

Wald Chi2(63)= 3742**

Pseudo R2=0.2330

* p<0.01

** p<0.001

Table 4. Multinomial logistic regression predicting educational and labor status. Girls 12 to 16 years of age. Mexico, 1997

Variable	Enrolled and working		Not enrolled and working		Not enrolled and not working	
Age: 12-13	-0.790	**	-2.495	**	-1.756	**
14-15	-0.292		-1.046	**	-0.589	**
16	--		--		--	
Migrant	0.245		0.498	**	0.357	*
Younger children	0.140	**	0.257	**	0.207	**
Older boys	-0.289	**	-0.102		0.131	**
Older girls	-0.063		-0.050		0.021	
Both parents:						
mother not working	--		--		--	
mother working	0.782	**	0.219	*	-0.318	**
Only father	0.501		0.568	*	0.639	**
Only mother:						
mother not working	0.543		0.752	**	0.291	
mother working	1.334	**	0.602	**	0.229	
Neither parent in the household	0.794	**	1.124	**	1.115	**
Other income earners	0.229	**	0.235	**	0.056	
Other nonworking adults in the HH	-0.590	**	-0.649	**	-0.243	**
Family-owned business	2.533	**	1.257	**	0.482	**
HH migration to the U.S.	0.279		0.137		0.218	*
Parental education	-0.098	**	-0.217	**	-0.227	**
Ln (income)	0.066		-0.025		-0.065	**
Size of the community:						
Less than 2,500	-0.071		0.780	**	0.603	**
2,500-99,999	0.084		0.633	**	0.226	*
100,000 or more	--		--		--	
% EAP in manufactures	0.006	**	0.020	**	0.020	**
% of women working	0.022	**	0.022	**	-0.013	**
Constant	-4.496	**	-2.184	**	0.442	

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the *Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica Demográfica*, 1997 (INEGI 1997)., 1997 (INEGI 1997).

Wald Chi2(63)=3068**

Pseudo R2=0.2143

* p<0.01

** p<0.001