Impact of working conditions, caregiving and migration on educational and mental health outcomes of children in Mexico

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Impact of working conditions, caregiving and migration on children in North America

- Educational, health and mental health outcomes of children in:
  - Mexico (multi-level approach)
  - United-States (cross-sectional)
  - Canada (longitudinal approach)

Why do we care?

- The largest flow of immigrants in the world today is from Mexico to the US. There are 10.7 million people born in Mexico who are residing in the US (United-Nations, 2006)
- Children who remain behind in their native country constitute a population largely overlooked in research on the impacts of immigration

Educational Achievement of Children in Mexico

What do we know? Overview of Main Determinants

- Expansion of education in Mexico since 1960 and of urbanization (Mier et al., 2003) ↑
- Speaking an indigenous language (Mier et al., 2003) ↓
- Child labor (Levine et al., 2001) ↓
- Conditional cash transfers (de Janvry et al. 2006) ↑
- Living in rural areas (Kandel & Kao, 2001) ↓
- Being a girl (Mier et al., 2003) ↓

Educational Achievement of Children in Mexico
Impact of Family Environment

- High level of parental education (Anderson, 2002)
- Parents' desired schooling (Kandel & Kao, 2001)
- High number of children in household (Binder, 1998)
- Social capital (Ferguson, 2006)
- Remittances are not significant except for primary school (Kandel & Kao, 2001)
- Migration of family members has a positive effect on grades (Kandel & Kao, 2001) but not to seek additional schooling (Kandel & Massey, 2002)

Mental Health of Children in Mexico

- The lone study on parent-child interaction and anxiety in Mexican adolescents found:
  - Anxiety is correlated with parent-child interactions, as perceived by child
  - Remarks from father implying inferiority and inedequacy have a negative impact
  - Harsh orders given by a mother have a negative impact

(Hernandez & Sanchez-Sosa, 1996)

Working Conditions and Caregiving in Mexico

- While we already know that in developed countries poor working conditions can lead to children being hungry, depressed and having poor health care (Heymann, 2003), we do not know the impact of working conditions with Mexican immigrant families.

- While we know that caregiving becoming a burden can lead to physical and mental health problems (Haug et al. 1999), we do not know much about the impact of Mexican immigrant women's time spent taking care of family members.

Research Goal

Main Goal:

- To understand how Mexican immigrant parents can succeed taking care of their children

Two objectives:

- What is the impact of working conditions on Mexican immigrant families?
- What is the impact of Mexican caregivers' time spent taking care of family members?

Data: Transatational Working Families (2004)

- Source: Project for Global Working Family, Harvard University
- Sample: 1503 Mexican households
  - All municipalities in Mexico of 50,000 or more people with at least 20% of the households reporting the migration of a family member from Mexico to the U.S.
  - Children under the age of 15
  - Primary caregiver who regularly received an income from a salaried or informal job
  - Multistage cluster disproportionate sampling
    - Equivalent numbers of respondents from each municipality
    - Equivalent numbers of migrant and non-migrant households
  - Questions at the household and child level: In this paper we are only using the household level data

Table 1: Comparative Demographics (p<.0001)

Heymann et al., 2006

	Children in Migrant Families	Children in Non-Migrant Families
Child's relationship to respondent: biological or step child	80.6%	88.3%
Mother is the child's only parent in household	39.3%	17%

Table 2: Comparative Demographics (p<.01)

Children's Outcomes for Migrant Households Heymann et al., 2006

	Caregiver(s) Migrated	No Caregiver(s) Migrated
School problems	20.0%	10.2%%
Emotional problems	13.2%	4.3%
Child(ren) with health problems	13.2%	4.9%

Measures

Outcomes

- Have any of the children you care for ever had any trouble at school- behavioral or academic?
- Have any of the children you care for dropped out of school?
- Do any the children you care for have emotional problems?

Measures (cont'd)

Covariates

- **Respondent:** gender, age
- **Family:** family structure, number of adults, number of children aged 0-5, 6-14,15-17
- **Educational attainment:** for each parent in years
- **Work status:** for respondent, hours worked per day, whether it is very hard to take time off, whether self-employed
- **Household income**
- **Caregiving:**Type of childcare arrangements: respondent care, informal care, formal care, sibling care, selfcare, whether the respondent takes care of adults
- **Migration:** One caregiver is in the US, spouse is in the US, remittances per month

Measures (cont'd)

- Missing data
  - dummy variables were used (Allison, 2004).
- Missing data rates
  - Less than 2%, except for the spouse educational attainment (10%)

Methods

Logistic Regression Analysis

$$Y_i = Cov_i + \varepsilon_I$$

- Y_i = Outcomes for $child_i$:
  - Academic behavioral problems
  - Drop out
  - Emotional problems
- Cov_i = covariates
- Primary sampling unit: Schools

  (Standard errors corrected for the non-independence of observations within municipalities)

Methods (cont'd)

- Model 1: Covariates on academic and behavioral problems
- Model 2: Covariates on drop out
- Model 3: Covariates on emotional problems

Results

Behavioral & Academic Problems (Odds Ratio)

Formerly Married	2.68*
# of adults	0.80*
# of children 0-5	0.68*
# of children 6-14	1.27*
# of children 15-17	1.69**
Hours worked per day	1.08*
Selfcare	3.08**
One caregiver in US	2.02*
Observations: 1503 **:p<.01; *:p<.05	

Results (cont'd)
Drop-Outs (Odds Ratio)

Age	0.97*
Respondent education	0.91*
Spouse education	0.91*
# of children 6-14	1.27*
# of children 15-17	4.52**
Spouse in US	0.45*
Observations: 1503 **:p<.01; *:p<.05	

Results (cont'd)
Emotional Problems

Male	0.22**
Very hard to take time off* *Stands as paid leaves in order to represent the informal sector	2.57*
One Caregiver in US	2.91*
Observations: 1503 **:p<.01; *:p<.05	

Conclusion:
Working conditions, Caregiving & Migration

- Having a caregiver in the US has a negative impact
- Immigration variables have the strongest impact on the educational and emotional outcomes of Mexican children.
- Apart from children who take care of themselves at home, there are no other caregiving variables that have a significant impact
- Hours worked and very hard to take time off are the working conditions variables that have a negative impact

Policy and Research Implications

- Mexican migration to the US is an important movement that has negative impacts on Mexican children's educational and emotional outcomes.
- Migration is a very complex and multifaceted issue. We need to increase our understanding of what Mexican families need the most:
  - Help with caregiving responsibilities, when someone is migrating to the US?
  - Better care arrangements so that children are cared for safely and develop well?
  - Increased educational attainment of parents?
  - Improved working conditions related to caregiving, such as paid leaves or a decrease in the number of hours worked?
- More research needs to be done on the impact of migration to the US on Mexican children's outcomes. We need to be able to develop policies and interventions that will address the specific needs of this growing population.

Limitations

- Omitted variables bias / endogeneity
- Relatively small sample size constrains the number of variables that can be used.
- Lack of objectivity since based on respondents' answers

Thank you!

Questions?