

Gender and Migration effects on education and health outcomes: The case of Ghana.

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Although the effects of migration on education and health outcomes have received little attention, the gender effects of migration have received even less. Nonetheless, policy-makers in developing countries are creating policy to stop women from migrating. For example, the Sri Lankan Cabinet has granted its approval to prohibit migration for employment by mothers with children under five years of age. In the case of mothers with children older than five, a report will be required with a recommendation from a committee headed by the Divisional Secretary certifying that appropriate arrangements have been made with regard to the children. Meanwhile, the effects of migration on education and health are still unclear. This paper seeks to measure the differential effects by sex of the migrant on education and health outcomes of children in the household.

It is particularly important to discern whether the impact of migration on children is influenced by the gender of the migrant(s) in the household. The existing research on this topic is scarce. A 2002 study by the University of the Philippines finds that respondents are more likely to “be sad or worried about their family” if the mother is absent than if the father is absent, while the 2003 study by the Scalabrini Migration Center finds that, on average, children miss an absent mother more than an absent father (University of the Philippines, Tel Aviv University, and KAIBIGAN 2002; Scalabrini Migration Center 2004). Examples are also provided in Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) of children who grow up without their mother being severely depressed, particularly if the mother left when they were young. Given the importance of this issue and the dearth of significant evidence, research in this area should be of great value.

One might expect poorer educational outcomes, as shown in the voluminous literature on the negative outcomes associated with single-parent families. However, remittances from an absent household member may allow the purchase of higher-quality schooling, which in turn may promote better educational outcomes. In practice, the little research on this topic has shown a positive impact of migration in most countries. Acosta (2007) shows for El Salvador and Mansuri (2007) or Pakistan that migration and remittances result in an increase in the level of education for both girls and boys. In fact, in Pakistan, the increase is much larger for girls—for example, migration increases girls’ school enrollment by as much as 54 percent compared with just 7 percent for boys. In the case of El Salvador,

migration and remittances reduce the level of absenteeism of boys and girls during primary education and prolong the education of girls, but not of boys, beyond age 14. In the Philippines, recent research finds that, due to the higher incomes associated with remittances, children of migrants are much more likely to attend private schools than children of non-migrants. Within each school, children of migrants receive slightly higher grades than children of non-migrants (Scalabrini Migration Center 2004, cited in Piper 2005; Bryant 2005). Another study on the Philippines shows that an increase in remittances results in greater school attendance and a reduction in child labor (Yang and Martínez 2006). Other research, however, shows migrant and non-migrant Filipino children with essentially identical academic performance and probabilities of attending school (Bryant 2005). In terms of expenditure patterns in households left behind by migrants, Guzman et al. (2007) explore whether expenditure patterns are influenced by the sex of the migrant sending the remittances and the sex of the household head receiving the remittances. The authors find that households receiving remittances from women allocate a larger expenditure share on health and other goods, but a lower share on food, than do households receiving remittances from men. These allocations have implications for the welfare of children living in the receiving households.

In addition to educational outcomes, it is frequently argued that children of absent migrants suffer from psychological problems or problems with interpersonal relationships. However, existing research from the Philippines finds no difference between children of migrants and children of non-migrants along the following dimensions: Social Anxiety Scale for Children, Children's Loneliness Scale, relationship problems, psychological problems, or likelihood of having premarital sex, drinking alcohol, or smoking (Scalabrini Migration Center 2004; Battistella and Conaco 1998; Choe et al. 2004, cited in Bryant 2005). Similar research from Indonesia and Thailand supports these broad findings, with one exception. The presence of both parents in Thailand does seem to lower the risk that an adolescent will smoke, drink, or have premarital sex (Choe et al. 2004). Although the bulk of the evidence for these three countries points to the fact that children who are left behind do not suffer disproportionately compared to other children, solid research from other parts of the world is warranted in order to explore this issue further.

Data and Methods

This paper will use the Ghana Living Standard Survey 2005. In this survey there were more than eight thousand households that were interviewed and followed during three or four months. This survey includes a complete questionnaire on expenditures, health status, education status and expenditures. It

also includes a special module on migration that includes information on the migrant such as demographics, educational status, location, and remittance behavior.

In order to identify the proper effects of migration outcomes, we will use multiple techniques such as Instrumental Variables---using the Ghana Living Standard Survey of 1992---and propensity score matching to compare the treatment and controls households depending on the gender of the migrant, and the members of the households left behind.

We will distinguish between internal and international migration, In addition, we will discriminate by the household composition regarding children's age and sex.

Expected Results

Although the literature has shown positive and negative results as a result of the migration process, we expect a differential effect by the gender of the migrant with a positive impact of remittances on education. Educational outcomes, in terms of school attendance might improve as a result of male migration, but worsen when females migrate.

In terms of health the evidence suggest that we can expect differential outcomes depending on the assimilation of health knowledge by the migrant and the transmission of knowledge to the household.

We expect that there is going to be an SES gradient that along with migration and gender of the migrant will have different impacts on the health measurements of the children in the household.

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