The Impact of Female-Headed Households on Schooling Outcomes in the Mbonambi Area of KwaZulu-Natal.

By
Senzo Zondo (200902732)

Submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree of MASTER OF COMMERCE (Economics)

MAY 2016
SUPERVISOR: Prof. I. KASEERAM
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DECLARATION

I, Senzo Zondo do hereby declare that the content of this thesis is my own work, except where otherwise specified and has never been submitted elsewhere for the purpose of attaining a degree.

Signature                      Date
..................................  May 2016
DEDICATION

I dedicate this Research Project to my late grandmother Nicolinah Zondo for the endless love and support she has offered to me during the study period. She passed away during final touches of this study and her encouraging words and undying spirit still alive. Despite the challenges and family issues, she has been by my side to see me progress in life.
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Abstract

The literature is mixed in regard to the schooling outcomes of children raised in female headed households in rural areas. Some studies have found that children from female headed households may experience better schooling outcomes, but high levels of poverty and inequality often prevent female heads from acting on their preferences to invest more heavily in their children thus resulting in below average schooling achievement of their children. Mbonambi is a rural area located within the heart of Northern Zululand which comprises a high proportion of female relative to male headed households primarily due to men opting for labour migration to urban areas and only rarely returning home.

The main focus of this study was to investigate the relationship between female-headed households and their children’s schooling outcomes compared to that of their male counterparts. The researcher used a questionnaire to conduct interviews to obtain primary data from both female and male headed households in the Mbonambi locality employing the systematic random sampling method. The researcher gathered a sample of 455 children living in 301 households, of which 193 and 108 comprised female and male headed households, respectively. The questionnaire was designed such that information was gathered on possible factors that impacted on a child’s performance which was observed by viewing the child’s most recent school report. The possible factors were obtained from the literature and included parental involvement, parental gender, parental education, parental age, household total income, family size, health status of the child.

The cross tabulation Chi-squared approach as well as the more rigorous logistic regression model was employed to analyse the survey data. The logistic regression modelled the dichotomous dependent variable: schooling outcomes (pass =1 or fail=0) as the dependent variable and a set of independent variables as explanatory variables.

The findings of the regression results which in most cases were corroborated by the cross tabulation statistics demonstrated that there are no differences in the schooling performance of children coming from both male and female headed households. This analysis supports the hypothesis that women have been empowered to manage their households as well as men do. Additionally the results showed that income, the
education attainment of parents, a larger family size and Parental involvement in their children’s education are important factors in increasing the probability of a child performing well at school. Moreover a significant proportion of the female heads were women over fifty years of age and their children tended to perform poorly at school relative to the younger parents.

The study concluded that government interventions to raise the income level of the Mbonambi community especially women in the form of access to credit and educational grants and other opportunities in the agricultural sector will have positive spinoffs in regard to the educational attainment of their children. Moreover, that strong social network can empower older women and smaller households to provide positive emotional support for their children to perform well at school.
Table of Contents

Title
Declaration
Dedication
Acknowledgements
Abstract
Table of Contents
List of Figures
List of Tables
List of Acronyms

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction
1.1 The Research Problem
1.2 Aims and Objectives and Research Questions
1.3 Research Hypotheses
1.4 Methodology
1.5 Ethical and Safety Issues
1.6 Chapter Organization

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction
2.1 Utility Theory
   2.1.1 Gender and Development
   2.1.2 Women In Development
2.2 Unitary Model
2.3 Household Demand for Schooling Theory
2.4 Secondary Theoretical Perspectives
2.4.1 Dependency Theory 20
2.4.2 The Pathways theory of change 20
2.4.3 The Vicious Circle Theory 22
2.5 Importance of Education 24
2.6 The Principle of Gender Equality 26
2.7 Socio-Economic Status (SES) 27
2.8 Cultural Modernity 28
2.9 Poverty Traps and Social Exclusion among Children 30
2.10 Conclusion 32

Chapter Three: EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction 33
3.1 Clarifying Discrimination and Empowerment of Women 36
3.2 Economic and Social results of Female-Headed Households 38
3.3 Social beliefs on gender and its impact on education 39
3.4 Educational Spending 41
3.5 Poverty and Inequality 44
3.6 Living on Remittances 46
3.7 Political Agendas 47
3.8 Impact of Unemployment on the Household 48
3.9 Assets and Income 51
3.10 Intra-Household Resource Distribution and Female’s Power in Bargaining and Decision Making 52
3.11 Persistent Barriers to Well-being in Female-Headed Households 55
3.12 Family Size and Birth Order 57
3.13 Parental Involvement and Children’s Well-Being 59
3.14 Experience of Brazil 61
3.15 Experience of sub-Saharan Africa 62
Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction 65
4.1 The Area under Study 65
4.2 Sampling Design 66
4.3 The Survey Instrument 70
4.4 Model Specification 70
4.5 List of Variables and Descriptive 75
4.6 Justification of Independent Variables 77
4.7 Nagelkerke Pseudo R² Statistic: Goodness of Fit 84
   4.7.1 The Wald Test 85
   4.7.2 The F-test and Prob (F) 86
4.8 Limitations and Gaps in the study 86
4.9 Conclusion 87

Chapter Five: Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

5.0 Introduction 88
5.1 Data Analysis 88
5.2 Descriptive and Cross Tabulation Analyses 89
5.3 Results of Logistic Regression Analysis 98
5.4 Interpretation of Individual Coefficients 100
5.5 Diagnostic (Goodness of Fit Test) 102
5.6 Conclusion 102

Chapter Six: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

6.0 Main Hypotheses 104
6.1 Results 104
6.2 Limitations

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Mainstreaming gender education from childhood stage

6.3.2 Efforts Aimed at Job Creation

6.3.3 Strengthening Proper Strategies to Improve Women's Social Capital

6.3.4 Strengthening Financial Empowerment through Access to Opportunities and Resources

6.3.5 Rollout of Agricultural Extensions Services to Female-Headed Farmers

6.4 Conclusion

References

Appendix

Appendix A0: Ethical Clearance Certificate

Appendix A1: Maximum Likelihood Estimation of Logistic Regression Model

Appendix A2: Consent Form and Questionnaire

Appendix B:

Table 1: Summary of Interviewed Households and their Children

Table 2: Descriptive of Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Mbonambi Households

Table 3: The Relationship between Parental Age and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation

Table 4: The relationship between Schooling outcomes and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation

Table 4.1: The Relationship between Schooling Outcomes and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation in Percentages

Table 4.2: The Relationship between Schooling Outcomes and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation
Cross Tabulation (Fo, Fe and Chi-Square Stat) 148

Table 5: The Relationship between Parental Education and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation 149

Table 5.1: The Relationship between Parental Education and Parental Gender as a Percentage of their respective Groups 149

Table 6.1: The Relationship between Family Income and Schooling Outcomes Cross Tabulation (Fo, Fe and Chi-Square Stat) 150

Table 7.1: The Relationship between Schooling Outcomes and Family Size Cross Tabulation (Fo, Fe and Chi-Square Stat) 151

Table 8.1: Relationship between Schooling Outcomes and Parental Involvement Cross Tabulation (Fo, Fe and Chi-Square Stat) 152

Table 9.1: The Relationship between Child Health Status and Schooling Outcomes Cross Tabulation (Fo, Fe and Chi-Square Stat) 154

Table 10.1: The Relationship between Parental Age and Schooling Outcomes Cross Tabulation (Fo, Fe and Chi-Square Stat) 156

Table 11: The Relationship between Parental Education and Schooling Outcomes Cross Tabulation 2 (Fo, Fe and Chi-Square Stat) 158
List of Figures

Figure 1: The Profile of the National Economically Active Population by Race and Gender 50

Figure 2: The Provincial Demographics of the EAP by Race and Gender 50

Figure 3: The Mbonambi Map 68

List of Tables

Table 1: Summary Interviewed Households and their Children 88

Table 2: Descriptive of Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Mbonambi Households 89

Table 3: The Relationship between Parental Age and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation 91

Table 4: The relationship between Schooling outcomes and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation 92

Table 4.1: The Relationship between Schooling Outcomes and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation in Percentages 92

Table 5: The Relationship between Parental Education and Parental Gender Cross Tabulation 93

Table 5.1: The Relationship between Parental Education and Parental Gender as a Percentage of their respective Groups 93

Table 6: The Relationship between Family Income and Schooling Outcomes Cross Tabulation 94

Table 7: The Relationship between Schooling Outcomes and Family Size Cross Tabulation 95

Table 8: Relationship between Schooling Outcomes and Parental Involvement Cross Tabulation 96

Table 9: The Relationship between Child Health Status and Schooling Outcomes Cross Tabulation 96

Table 10: The Relationship between Parental Age and Schooling Outcomes Cross Tabulation 97

Table 11: The Relationship between Parental Education and Schooling Outcomes Cross Tabulation 98
Table 12: Estimation Results for Logistic regression

Table 13: The goodness of fit statistics for logistic regression
List of Acronyms Used

AIDS- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ANC- African National Congress
CHHs- Child-Headed Households
CSO- Central Statistics Office
DSD- Department of Social Development
CSG- Child Support Grant
DCSF- Department for Children, Schools and Families
DESA- Department of Economic and Social Affairs
EAC- Economically Active Population
EC- Eastern Cape
EITC- Earned Income Tax Credit
FAO- Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDI- Foreign Direct Investment
FHH- Female-Headed Household
FS- Family Size
GAD- Gender And Development
GDP- Gross Domestic Product
HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICDP- International Conference on Population and Development
IFAD- International Fund for Agricultural Development
KZN- KwaZulu-Natal
LDCs- Least Developed Countries
MHH- Male headed Household
MLTA- Mbonambi Local Tribal Authority
MPs- Members of Parliament
MWHHs- Married Women Headed Households
NC- National Census
NCLR- National Council of La Raza
NFHS- National Family Health Survey
NGOs- Non-Governmental Organisations
NSS- National Sample Survey
OECD- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OR- Odds Ratio
PC- Parental Consumption
PISA- Programme International Student Assessment
SA - South Africa
SADC- South African Development Corporation
SANGOCO- South African National Government Organisation Coalition
SARB- South African Reserve Bank
SASA- South African Schools Act
SASSA- South African Social Security Agency
SEACMEQ- Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium on Monitoring Education Quality
SES- Socio Economic Status
SG- Support Grant
SONA- State Of the Nation Address
SPSS- Statistical Package for Social Sciences
StatsSA- Statistics South Africa
TA- Traditional Authorities
UBPL- Upper Boundary Poverty Line
UK- United Kingdom
US- United States
USA- United States of America
UN- United Nations
UNDP- United Nations Development Programme
UNECA- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF- United Nations Children’s Fund
UNISA- University of South Africa
WHHs- Widow Headed Households
WID- Women In Development