

School Enrollment in Lesotho: Do Grandmothers Matter?

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Introduction

Family structure and changes in family structure are widely believed to impact child well-being. In this project, I use the 2001 Lesotho Demographic Survey to look at the relationship between residence with a grandmother and current school enrollment for children 6-14 in Lesotho. I first examine the prevalence of co-residence with a grandmother in Lesotho. I then look at the characteristics of children living with grandmothers, the characteristics of grandmothers living with children, and the characteristics of households in which grandmothers and grandchildren co-reside. Next I consider the relationship between residence with a grandmother and current school enrollment. Finally, I consider whether the relationship between residence with a grandmother and school enrollment varies by characteristics of the grandmother, characteristics of the child, and other characteristics of the household.

Background

Lesotho is a small, land-locked country that is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Lesotho faces a number of macro level forces that have implications for the social structure of the family and child well-being.

The 2.2 million people of Lesotho are extremely poor, with more than 50% of the population with income below the poverty line (Gay and Hall 2000). Male labor migration to South African mines has left Lesotho economically dependent on the neighboring South Africa and had major implications for household structures in Lesotho. Furthermore, retrenchment from the mines in post-apartheid South Africa has exacerbated Lesotho's economic problems and created additional household structure changes in recent years.

With an adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of approximately 29% (UNAIDS 2004), Lesotho is also struggling to deal with the consequences of the AIDS epidemic, which has had and will continue to have major implications for family and household formations. AIDS has its greatest affect on the adult population, leaving the very young and the very old (Drew et al. 1998). In 2003, approximately 19% of children in Lesotho were orphans of which an estimated 56% were orphaned due to AIDS (Children on the Brink 2004 UNICEF, USAID). This suggests that grandmothers may play an increasingly important role in the lives of children as a consequence of AIDS illness and death. According to 1997 figures from Zimbabwe, 43% of AIDS orphans lived in households headed by a grandmother (Wilson and Adamchak 2001).

Family structure has previously been linked to differences in education in sub-Saharan Africa. Townsend et al. (2004) found that children's residential situations in rural South Africa were associated with educational attainment in ways that varied by sex and age of the child. Case et al. (2004) used DHS surveys to examine the impact of orphanhood on school enrollment in 10 sub-Saharan African countries and found that children living in households headed by "other relatives" were less likely to be in school than those living with grandparents, and in some cases orphans who lived with grandparents were less likely to be in school than non-orphans living with grandparents.

In this project, I look at the impact of residence with a grandmother on current school enrollment status in Lesotho in the context of poverty, changing labor migration, and HIV/AIDS.

Data, Sample, and Methods

The data source for this project is the 2001 Lesotho Demographic Survey (LDS), collected by the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics with technical, financial and logistical assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (Bureau of Statistics, Lesotho, 2002). This inter-

censal survey (between the 1996 and 2006 decennial censuses) provides a nationally representative update on basic population measures for the Lesotho population. Importantly for this analysis, it includes information on household membership, household characteristics, and education. The sample for this research consists of the approximately 16,000 children age 6-14 that were listed as members or visitors in the enumerated households. Logistic regression techniques are used to explore whether having a grandmother living in the household is associated with whether a child is currently in school.

Preliminary Results

Living with a grandmother is common in Lesotho, and varies by characteristics of the child (see Table 1). Overall, about 1 in 4 school age children live with a grandmother in the household; among orphans, this figure climbs to between 30 and 50%, with maternal and double orphans most likely to be living with a grandmother. Younger children are more likely to be living with a grandmother than older children, but boys and girls are equally likely to be co-resident with a grandmother. Those living without a mother are also more likely to be living with a grandmother than those living with a mother.

Table 2 shows the school enrollment for children in Lesotho. School enrollment is relatively high, and is higher for girls than boys—some 89% of girls 6-14 are currently in school compared to 83% of boys 6-14. Peak schooling occurs at age 9 for boys, with 88% school enrollment, and at age 10 for girls, with 95% school enrollment.

Table 3 explores whether an association between co-residence with a grandmother and school enrollment exists, controlling for basic sociodemographic factors. Preliminary results suggest that living with a grandmother is positively associated with current school enrollment net of other factors. On-going analysis will explore the relationship between grandmother co-

residence and school enrollment in greater detail, including how the effect of living with a grandmother varies with characteristics of the child, characteristics of the grandmother, and other household characteristics.

References

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Table 1. Characteristics of Children 0-14 in Lesotho by Whether a Grandmother is Co-resident in the Household, 2001.

| | % living with grandmother |
|--|---------------------------|
| all children 6-14 | 23% |
| age 6 | 28% |
| age 10 | 24% |
| age 14 | 19% |
| boys | 23% |
| girls | 24% |
| living with mom and dad | 9% |
| living with mom only no dad | 13% |
| living with dad only no mom | 37% |
| living with neither mom or dad | 50% |
| maternal orphans* | 40% |
| paternal orphans* | 30% |
| double orphans | 50% |
| *includes double orphans | |
| Source: Lesotho Demographic Survey, 2001 | |

Table 2. School Enrollment of Children 0-14 in Lesotho by Age and Sex, 2001.

| | never attended | currently attending | left school |
|--|----------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Boys 6-14 | 13% | 83% | 5% |
| age 6 | 28% | 71% | 1% |
| age 10 | 11% | 86% | 3% |
| age 14 | 11% | 78% | 11% |
| Girls 6-14 | 6% | 89% | 4% |
| age 6 | 25% | 73% | 1% |
| age 10 | 3% | 95% | 2% |
| age 14 | 2% | 84% | 14% |
| Source: Lesotho Demographic Survey, 2001 | | | |

Table 3. Logistic Regression of Current School Enrollment on Whether a Grandmother is Present in the Household for Children 6-14 in Lesotho, 2001

| Independent Variables | Child Currently Enrolled in School (n=16220) | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | |
| Intercept | 1.811 (0.026) | *** | -4.163 (0.378) | *** | -4.788 (0.386) | *** |
| Grandmother Status | | | | | | |
| Grandmother Present in Household | -0.033 (0.053) | | 0.118 (0.056) | * | 0.369 (0.062) | *** |
| Child Characteristics | | | | | | |
| Age | | | 1.480 (0.077) | *** | 1.509 (0.077) | *** |
| Age ² | | | -0.072 (0.004) | *** | -0.073 (0.004) | *** |
| Male (omit female) | | | -0.587 (0.048) | *** | -0.588 (0.048) | *** |
| Household Location | | | | | | |
| Urban (omit rural) | | | 0.055 (0.114) | | 0.058 (0.115) | |
| Household Wealth Proxies | | | | | | |
| Working Radio in Household (omit no working radio) | | | 0.399 (0.052) | *** | 0.380 (0.053) | *** |
| <i>Main Fuel for Cooking</i> | | | | | | |
| Wood, Cow Dung, Crop Waste, Other (omit electricity or gas) | | | -0.716 (0.114) | *** | -0.715 (0.115) | *** |
| Paraffin or Coal (omit electricity or gas) | | | -0.261 (0.122) | * | -0.244 (0.123) | * |
| <i>Main Toilet Facility</i> | | | | | | |
| No Toilet (omit sewage system or VIP) | | | -0.651 (0.077) | *** | -0.647 (0.078) | *** |
| Pit Latrine, Bucket System, Public Toilet, Other (omit sewage system or VIP) | | | 0.001 (0.087) | | 0.005 (0.088) | |
| Other Household Characteristics | | | | | | |
| Mother and Father Present in Household (omit neither mother or father present) | | | | | 0.479 (0.065) | *** |
| Father Only Present in Household (omit neither mother or father present) | | | | | 0.225 (0.089) | * |
| Mother Only Present in Household (omit neither mother or father present) | | | | | 0.682 (0.065) | *** |

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

(standard errors are in parentheses)

Source: Lesotho Demographic Survey, 2001