Education for Orphans in Africa: Predictors Impacting School Attendance

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Research Questions

How does orphan status affect the school attendance of children in Africa?

- Numerous studies have examined the effects of orphanhood on schooling outcomes with mixed results.
- Some have found that orphans are significantly less likely to be enrolled in school (e.g., Case, Paxson, & Abledinger, 2004), while others were unable to find a significant relationship (Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006; Yamano, Shimamura, & Sserunkuma, 2006).

Does the child’s relationship to the head of household act as a protective factor?

- It has been posited that Africa’s system of kinship care could mitigate against adverse effects of orphanhood on schooling.
- A concept known as Hamilton’s rule states that as the relational distance between a child and caregiver increases, investments in that child will decrease (Case et al., 2004).

Results across Africa demonstrate this tendency - children who resided with their grandparents received higher educational investment than those living with more extended family (e.g., Howard et al., 2006).

- Results across Africa demonstrate this tendency - children who resided with their grandparents received higher educational investment than those living with more extended family (e.g., Howard et al., 2006).

However, extreme poverty often hampers the child’s ability to access education, in spite of positive kin attitudes toward it (Roby, 2011).

Method

- USAID Demographic and Health Survey Data
  - 5 African countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda, Zimbabwe)
  - 8 total data sets
  - Spanning years 2004-2012
  - N = 124,592 children ages 6-14

- School attendance was measured using the question “Did [name] attend school at any time this year?” Answers were coded as “Attended at some time” or “No.”

- Control variables included sex, wealth, and place of residence (urban/rural).

Findings

- In most cases, Hamilton’s Rule is confirmed across these five African countries. Living with one or both parents is a protective factor regarding schooling outcomes.

  - Unexpectedly, paternal orphans residing with other relatives for the purpose of obtaining an education is ultimately responsible for lower attendance.

  - This could be due to continued maternal involvement and/or sending children to reside with other relatives for the purpose of obtaining an education.

- Children living with non-relatives are consistently, significantly disadvantaged in regards to school attendance. This is true for all orphan groups, including non-orphans.

- In many cases, children who resided with their grandparents, but not with both parents, are significantly more likely to attend school than non-orphans living with one or both parents.

  - This could be due to continued maternal involvement and/or sending children to reside with other relatives for the purpose of obtaining an education.

- Even if a child lives with his or her father, being a maternal orphan is a significant risk factor in terms of school attendance.

Likelihood of School Attendance by Orphan Status and Relationship to Head of Household Compared to Non-Orphans Living with One/Both Parents (Measured in Odds Ratios)

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Models include full controls

References