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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CRITICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF CHILD LABOR CHARACTERISTICS IN ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines child labor characteristics in Ethiopia using the data collected by Young Lives project. The study indicates that more than 55.73 percent of the 7 to 17-year-olds has participated in labor market. The result also shows a higher percentage of children participating in economic activities in rural areas than urban areas. We find supportive evidence of the luxury axiom that poverty drives child labor. Our result shows that poverty appears to be the main culprit of the prevalence of child labor in both rural and urban areas.

INTRODUCTION

A child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding for his/her full and harmonious development. However, not all children are at advantage to enjoy their childhood. Millions of children are toiling at inhumane working conditions to earn their livelihood. Many of them worked under hazardous and unhygienic conditions and for more than 10 hours a day. This is not a new problem. In different parts of the world, at different stages of history child labor has been a part of economic life. In particular, children have worked in large numbers in factories from the time of the industrial revolution in Europe. In contemporary times, the incidence of child labor is very high in Third World countries (Basu and Kaushik, 1999). Similarly Basu and Zafiris (2003) suggested that Child participation in economic activities has been viewed as one of those factors that negatively affect the child life, chances of wellbeing as well as impede country's economic progress. According to Anker (2000), Child labor is an important source of income for poor families. It is widely believed that poverty is the main reason for child labor in poor countries, and that the survival of many poor families depends on the cash and in-kind income generated by children. Besides, Basu and Van (1998), argue that the mass phenomenon of child labor does not reflect the selfishness of parents wanting to enjoy more leisure time while their children work, but rather than stark poverty and household survival compels them to send their children to work. Moreover, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2010), for example, 218 million children aged 4-15 were trapped in child labor in 2004 of which 126 million were in what ILO refers to as 'hazardous' work. Of these children, 69% were engaged in agriculture, 22% were in services, and 9% were employed in industry. While Asia and the Pacific region have the largest population of child laborers, Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is top in terms of activity rate with 26.4% of the children aged 5-14 engaged in economic activities followed by Asia and the Pacific region (18.8%).

Like other sub- Saharan African countries, child labor is common in Ethiopia. Although children in Ethiopia are expected to start going to school at the age of seven, World Bank report by 2010 show that more than 42.8 percent of boys aged 7-14 and 57.2 percent of girls in the same age group had not been enrolled in school in Ethiopia (World Bank Report, 2010). Traditional factors such as rigid cultural and social roles in Ethiopia further limit educational attainment and increase child labor. The Ethiopian culture encourages children to work to develop skills. Children are considered as assets to generate income in time of poverty. Children should, therefore, be given work at home early in life and be obliged to assist parents. Hence, identifying, understanding and describing those characteristics of child labor in Ethiopia are the main concern of this study.

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Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Issues of Child Labor

The concept of child labor has attracted a number of definitions. The literature identifies the difference between 'child work' and 'child labor'. The first mainly refers to work which is not particularly harmful for the child and does not damage his or her educational opportunities. On the contrary, 'child labor' relates to work which is likely to damage children's physical and psychological health and development, as well as their chances of enjoying other rights, mainly the right to education. Child labor refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely, or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with an excessively long and heavy workload (Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997).

An ILO's Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age, 1973, and the ILO Convention No.182, 1999, worst form of child Labor is work that harms children's well-being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. Besides Child labor is defined as a work that is damaging to a child's physical, social, mental, psychological and spiritual development, because it is work performed at too early an age or under hazardous conditions. It deprives children of their childhood, their dignity and rights. The minimum age of employment is the minimum age of completion of compulsory schooling or at least 15 years old, although 14 can be consistent with the convention in very poor countries. The worst forms of child labor, as defined by the ILO Convention No. 182, include: a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; and d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

However, The ILO's definition of child labor does not include the activities performed by children inside the house (all forms of domestic work and family care) on the ground that these kinds of work do not harm children's education, health and physical and psychological development. Hence, in this paper, we use the terms child work and labor interchangeably because we do not want to engage in the controversy of including children's activity at home in the definition of child labor. Furthermore, we found that it is difficult to apply ILO's definition of child labor, as we are using data from children of 7 to 17 years old and the ILO definition requires a different intensity of child work for different age groups. The labor proclamation of Ethiopia, proclamation No.377/2003, is one of the main proclamations that stipulate the minimum age for employment is 14 years. Children below the age of 14 are not allowed to work at all. According to the proclamation, the 14 year age is put as a bottom line for the labor market in the country. Nevertheless, children in the age group of 14-17 are only employed or enter in to employment contracts with a list of conditions that are presented in the labor law. The proclamation in chapter 2 of Article 89 Sub-Article 3 also stated that "it is prohibited to employ young workers on an account of its nature or due to the condition, in which it is carried out, endanger the life or health of the young workers performing it. Sub-Article 4 of the same Article lists the type of activities that the ministry prohibits child employees in the age group of 14-18 as work in the transport of goods, work connected with electric power generation, underground work and work in sewers and digging tunnels.

Nature of Child Labor

According to Bhalotra (2003), the vast majority of working children in developing countries is engaged in agricultural work, typically on family-run farms. Parents are, therefore, the main employers of children and consistent with this, the work participation rates of children tend to be higher in rural than in urban regions. This is noteworthy in view of media attention having focused on child work in export-sector factories, many of which are in urban locations. In Latin America and Asia, a non-negligible fraction of children also work outside the household for a wage. This is much less common in Africa, where wage labor markets are more incipient. Different theoretical and policy-level discussion has neglected to recognize the implications of the fact that most child labor is household-based. Thus, considerable attention has been dedicated to consideration of the impact on child labor of minimum wages or trade sanctions (Basu 1999; Basu 2003).

Child-Specific Characteristics and child labor

Child-specific characteristics that may be expected to influence the current-period probability (or intensity) of child labor include age, gender, relation to the head of household (or to the relevant adult decision-maker), and accumulated years of education. Most studies include a gender dummy as a repressor, although this is restrictive relative to allowing separate equations for boys and girls. Consider, briefly, the expected effects of each characteristic. There is no unambiguous theoretical prediction of the effect of age on child labor but the evidence from many countries is that it is positive and quadratic. Child labor may be expected to be increasing in age if labor productivity is increasing in age. Alternatively, child work may be perceived less harmful or more socially acceptable as the child grows older. At the same time, school participation may be positively related to age. There is some evidence that poor health delays school enrolment in developing countries (Glewwe and Jacoby, 1995). Thus the estimated impact on child labor may be positive or negative. In the case of girls, both school and any work that takes the girls outside the home may become less acceptable as girls get older: in Pakistan, for example, the participation rates of girls in wage work exceed those of boys up to age 15, after which they decline in favor of home-based work. Thus the effect of age is likely to be gender-specific (Bhalotra, 2003). One of the specific characteristics of child

that influences the participation of child in labor market is gender. According to Bhalotra (2003), In Africa and Asia, the educational attainment of girls tends to fall below that of boys. The data do not always show girls as more heavily engaged in work than boys because they are often more likely than boys to be classed as inactive. This probably corresponds to a greater engagement in household chores. Gender differences in child labor may arise if boys and girls face different returns to education or if parents perceive, for example, boys to be more likely to offer old-age support to them. Given work participation, the type of activity that children engage in may also be gender-specific. Although the physical strength and endurance of boys and girls may not differ much until adulthood, anticipation of gender-segmentation in work activities may imply a segregation of tasks in childhood.

The data for rural Pakistan suggest that boys take wage work only when their income contribution is necessary to household subsistence whereas girls take wage work even when the household could survive without this (Bhalotra, 2000). Another pertinent finding is that, in settings as diverse as those of rural Ghana and Pakistan, the probability (and intensity) of girls' work on household-run farms is increasing in land size, income constant. In contrast, land size has no significant effect on boys' work (Bhalotra and Heady 2000). Regarding to biological relation to decision maker, evidence from a cross-section of African countries indicates that biological children of the head, as opposed to other relatives and non-relatives, are more likely to attend school (Paxson and Ableidinger, 2002). The motivation for this may be genetic to the extent that better educated children are likely to do better on the marriage market, to be richer and healthier and, thereby, to yield, on average, more descendants. Alternatively, the motivation may be economic if parents believe that their own children will be more likely to remit to parents a fraction of their education-augmented income (Baland and Robinson, 1998)).

Evidence of the biological-child effect is less apparent for child labor than it is for schooling. The evidence for two countries in Bhalotra and Heady (2000) is mixed: sons and daughters of the household head are more likely to be in work in rural Pakistan, although only daughters are less likely than other child relatives to be in school. In rural Ghana, sons of the head are less likely to be in work and daughters are no more or less likely to work than other 10-14 year old girls in the household; the effects on school attendance are insignificant. The other child specific characteristics is completed school years (grade level of the child). The completed years of education of the child is likely to influence child work participation conditional on age. For instance, if returns to school increase with the number of school years or if there are sheepskin effects then parents may concentrate investments in one child rather than spread schooling investments across children in the household (Horowitz and Wang, 2001).

Household Characteristics and child labor

Parental education is an alternative index of socio-economic status and a good predictor of household income. Controlling for household income, parents' education is found to have significant effects on child education (Strauss and Thomas (1995), cited in Bhalotra, 2003). Distinguishing the education of the father and the mother of the child typically reveals effects of different sizes and significance. If education determines bargaining power between spouses and if mothers and fathers have different preferences over children then we would see different effects of mother's and father's education on child labor. Bhalotra (2003) argues that, in the context of child labor, mothers are more altruistic towards children then we would tend to see a stronger negative effect flowing from increases in mother's education. This is also what we would tend to see if the productivity of child schooling depends upon mother's education to a greater degree than upon father's education. This is because mothers spend more time at home with children and whether directly through home teaching or indirectly, her education influences what her child gets out of a year of schooling.

Alternatively if most fathers work but only very educated mothers work, and if mothers and children are substitutes in household production then we may find a smaller negative effect on child labor from mother's as compared with father's education. Policy interventions should consider not just the direct impact of mother's education on child labor and schooling but also the likely indirect effect working through reduced fertility. The absolute level of women's education is very low in most developing countries and the returns are often very high (Appleton 1999, cited in Bhalotra 2003). The household size is one of the household characteristics that determine the child to participate in labor market or attend a school. It has been argued that children from larger households are more likely to work, as a consequence of resources per person being smaller in larger households (Patrinos and Psacharopoulos, 1997). Since size and composition are clearly correlated, the relation between household size and child work will depend upon whether household composition is held constant.

The relation of household size and child labor will also depend, in rural areas, upon whether farm size is held constant. Controlling for land size, we may expect child hours of work to be decreasing in household size because of diminishing returns. The household composition is correlated with the household size. The size and the composition of the households are equally a decisive factor of children participation to work (Galli, 2001). On the other hand the preference heterogeneity in the household affects child labor. A growing literature argues that (a) men and women have different preferences within households and (b) the relative power of women in deciding how to spend household resources (including deciding on the level of investment in child quality) is increasing in their earning power.

Community Characteristics and child labor

Social norms have been shown to affect socio-economic decisions of child labor (Rogers and Standing 1981). In a development of the multiple-equilibrium model of Basu and Van (1998), Lopez-Calva (2000) explores the role of social norms relating to how acceptable child labor is. Policy intervention in a model of this sort has the potential to solve coordination problems between households and switch the

economy from equilibrium with child labor to an equilibrium in which children do not work. Andvig (1999) argues that if it were possible to change norms about what girls and boys should do, economic efficiency would improve. Social norms do seem responsive to economic change. For instance, Nurye (2007) writes that in Ethiopia, "Cultural practice and the family setup emphasize interdependence more than autonomy, affiliation rather than individual cooperation". This is confirmed by findings from Abebe and Kjorholt (2009) that, "children are valued as part of the family collective, not as autonomous individuals occupying independent positions in society. They are likely to perceive their needs as interdependent with those of other family members rather than taking priority over them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data source and collection strategy

In order to get adequate information about the child labor and its characteristics the study used a panel data collected by Young Lives project (two years round data collected in 2006 and 2009). The key objectives of Young Lives data is: (i) to improve the understanding of causes and consequences of childhood poverty, (ii) to inform the development and implementation of future policies and practices that will reduce childhood poverty. The first Young Lives survey was carried out in 2002 and selected a cohort of 2000 children aged 6 to 18 months using sentinel site sampling approach. It consists of a multi-stage sampling procedure, whereby households within a sentinel site were selected randomly. Twenty sentinel sites were selected across the country using purposive strategy and within each site households were randomly sampled until 100 children of the appropriate ages were found. The second survey was undertaken in 2006 and the third survey in 2009. The data was collected from one city administration (Addis Ababa) and four regions (namely, Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray). The main criterion for selection was national coverage. The five regions selected account for 96 percent of Ethiopia's population.

Method of analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques have been employed to analyze the data collected from Young Lives project. The study used statistical tools including descriptive statistics for the analysis. Descriptive analysis such as percentage and averages were used to make analysis in the form of tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Child Labor in Ethiopia

Situation of children occupation

The division of child labor within households is around sex and kinship relations, and which varies according to the type of household. The sexual division of labor is coupled with an allocation of school and household occupations among children. In this age group, more than 1 child out of 2 is economically active or participates in labor market. In total, boys are slightly more involved in the labor market than girls. Boys' participation stands at 50.4 percent slightly above that of girls which is estimated at 49.6 percent. The slight gap is observed in all regions.

Table 1. Activity of children age, sex and residence area by region

	A.A	Amhara	Oromia	SNNP	Tigray	Total
Age						
7-11	24.60	30.99	35.53	32.73	32.90	32.17
12-14	34.19	32.16	28.46	31.96	36.32	32.42
15-17	41.21	36.84	36.01	35.30	30.78	35.41
Sex						
male	47.60	53.41	52.09	47.75	50.98	50.40
female	52.40	46.59	47.91	52.25	49.02	49.60
Residence						
urban	100.00	23.59	28.94	34.79	26.06	36.78
rural	0.00	76.41	71.06	65.21	73.9	63.22

Source: Own computation based on Young Lives data

The residence area the distribution of children shows boys are more proportionally active than girls in both rural and urban area. The labor force of boys would be highly used in farm works which are dominating in our country especially in rural economy while girls would be more involved in domestic works (household chores) in both rural and urban areas. As we showed above, 63.22 percent of children 7-17 years age are participating in labor market in rural areas against 36.78 percent in urban areas. In rural areas, mostly working children are in agricultural sector as family helps and this spends their time in farms.

Children's main activities

Table 2, indicates children's main activities in the five regions where our sample children are located. An analysis based on the occupation status of children has permitted to distinguish children who are exclusively workers, children who combine work with school, children who are sent to school without any implication in the labor market and the children of inactive or leisure (not going to school and absent from the labor market). It emerges that children who exclusively work represent about 9 percent of the total observation of children having 7 to 17 years old and the Amhara region captures largest share (about 11 percent) followed by SNNP (about 10 percent).

Similarly, children who exclusively attend full time education only capturer the larger share of children activity and it represent 49 percent of the total observation of children with the highest school attendance registered in Addis Ababa (about 83 percent) and the lowest in Oromia region (about 40 percent). Among the 76.67 percent of children who are sent to school, more than 27 percent of the children give part of their time to economic occupations and the largest proportion was from Tigray (about 37 percent) followed by Oromia (more than 34 percent).The lowest number of sampled children not going to school and absent from the labor market (idle or inactive) was from Addis Ababa (about 9.6 percent) and Tigray (about12.21 percent)

Urban –Rural difference

Moreover (Table 2) presents differences between rural and urban children's activities in each region. Approximately about

Table 2. Children's main activities by region, residence area and gender difference

Activity	A.A	Amhara	Oromia	SNNP	Tigray	urban	rural	Male	Female	Total
Study	83.07	45.22	39.87	50.45	42.18	69.47	37.08	31.15	67.14	49
Work	2.24	10.92	9.65	10.01	8.79	2.58	12.69	13.55	4.33	8.98
Work & study	5.11	31.38	34.41	21.69	36.81	13.69	35.80	43.65	11.43	27.67
Inactive	9.58	12.48	16.08	17.84	12.21	14.26	14.42	11.66	17.10	14.36

Source: Own computation based on Young Lives data

70 percent of urban and about 37 percent of rural children were in school without being involved in any work activities. The bi-activity (study in combination with work) is essentially a rural phenomenon; the proportion of children who combined with work was larger in rural areas (about35.8 percent) than in urban areas (13.69 percent). As a matter of fact, agricultural incomes do not allow farmers to offer leisure time to their children. As a result, they are forced to work in order to contribute to the costs of their education. The distribution of the children who work in the rural area and urban area being given, it is logical to notice that many of them are farm workers. Similarly, the number of children engaged in *work only* was higher in rural areas (12.69) than in urban areas (2.58). About 14.42 percent of children residing in rural areas and 14.26 percent of children in urban areas were not going to school and absent from the labor market (inactive). Besides, it is possible to see, for example, that in Tigray at least 41.85 percent of rural children combined school with work, the highest among the five regions. Moreover, in all regions larger proportions of rural children had combined school with work as their main activity except Addis Ababa.

Gender differences

Gender differences in activities can be visible in our study and boys are many more bi-active (43.65%) than girls (11.43%). Similarly, the number of boys (13.55 percent) who engaged in *work only* higher than girls. However, the proportion of girls (about 67 percent) who exclusively attend full time education is higher than boys(about 31 percent) because boys have higher participation rates in market work than girls and lower participation rates in domestic work(household chores). Girls are on the other hand inactive or idler (17.10%) than boys (11.66%).

Living Conditions of Economically Active Children (link between child labor and household poverty)

Poverty has been identified as a significant push factor in children engaging in child labor. The high levels of engagement in labor activities among Ethiopian children have been attributed to high poverty levels prevalent in most parts of the country especially in rural areas where access to basic social services is severely limited. The link between child labour and the household poverty is widely and unambiguously recognized in the literature. In this paragraph, we are interested in the household income. The household income is apprehended through the adult equivalent income and the quintiles have been ranked by wealth order. Thus quintile1 represents relatively poorest households and quintiles5 represents relatively the richest households.

Table 3. Poverty and main activities of child by quintile of income per capita per household

Per capita	study	work	work and study	inactive
Lowest	41.7	23.20	32.95	6.15
Second	45	21.16	28.5	5.3
Third	46.52	21.03	29.42	3
Fourth	50.38	16	28.19	5.52
Highest	60.96	14.61	19.43	4.99

Source: Own computation based on YL data

The above table shows that in terms of wealth quintiles the child labor pattern is not conclusive, but schooling shows a steady increase with higher levels of welfare and Work participation of child continuously declining as the welfare of the household increases. This means that households with low income resort more to child labor in order to increase the level of their wealth: that is the luxurious axiom put forward by Basu and Van (1998). It also shows the endogeneity of the household income to the supply of child labor which clearly soften the correlation between the adult equivalent income of the household and child labor. The Even more children of the poorest household have the tendency to participate in labor market in combination with schooling and declines when the household attains the higher quintiles while it remains to confine the second share of our observation next to full education attainment (*study only*). A negative effect of parental income on child labor says that the children of the poor are more likely to work than the children of the rich (Bhalotra, 2003)

Duration (time spend) of children's work

The current criteria for identifying child labor used by the ILO's SIMPOC for its global child labor estimates is:

(i) a child under 12 who is economically active for one or more hours per week; (ii) a child 14 and under who is economically active for at least 14 hours per week; (iii) a child 17 and under who is economically active for at least 43 hours per week; (iv) a child 17 and under who participates in activities that are "hazardous by nature or circumstance" for one or more hours per week; and, (v) a child 17 and under who participates in an "unconditional worst form of child labour" such as trafficked children, children in bondage or forced labour, armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, illicit activities. Taking into account this classification brings the Table 4 above which show that among those previously classified as working children, more than 44 percent are not, according to the criterion of time of work. Overall, 32.79 percent of children, with 10.52 percent prohibited, work less than 14 hours weekly; 61.89 percent, with 39.89 percent prohibited, work between 14 and 42 hours weekly and more than 5 percent of children spend more than

Table 4. Working hours per week by age group

Age	mean	less than 14 hour	between14 and42 hr	greater than42 hr	Total
7-11	10.39	10.52	20.87	1.27	32.66
12-14	15.83	11.87	19.02	1.37	32.26
15-17	18.87	10.40	22.00	2.68	35.08

Source: Own calculation based on Young Lives data

42 hours per week to economic activities. As one can see, children from age 7-11 on average work 10.39 hours weekly, from age 12-14 on average works 15.83 and the remaining age group (15-17) work 18.87 hours weekly on average. As children get older, they allocate more time to economic activities.

Conclusion

The study used a descriptive statistics to give the empirical literature on child labor. Child labor is a phenomenon that has potential negative effects on education of child and it is not independent of the decision to school. Hence, addressing school participation cannot be independent of labor participation issues. The descriptive statistics indicates that more than 55.73 percent of the 7 to 17-year-olds has participated in labor market. It emerges that children who exclusively work represent about 9 percent of the total observation of the sample and children attend full time education only capturer the larger share of children activity and it represent 49 percent. Children who combine work with school accounts more than 27 percent and the largest proportion was from Tigray (about 37 percent). Moreover, our result also shows a higher percentage of children participating in economic activities in rural areas than urban areas. The number of children participated in *work only* was higher in rural areas (12.69) than in urban areas (2.58). About 14.42 percent of children residing in rural areas and 14.26 percent of children in urban areas are neither participating in work nor attend a school (inactive).In terms of wealth quintiles schooling shows a steady increase with higher levels of welfare and Work participation of child continuously declining as the welfare of the household increases. Regarding to time spend on economic activities, overall 32.79 percent of children work less than 14 hours weekly; 61.89 percent of children work between 14 and 42 hours weekly and more than 5 percent of children spent more than 42 hours per week to economic activities.

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