Parents’ attitudes on migrant child labor in Ghana: What can we learn from research in Turkey and Tajikistan?

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Background: Child labor in the global context

- Approximately 11% of children (ages 5 to 17) worldwide engage in child labor
- 40% of these children work in the services and industry sectors
- Children who are oldest and male are at higher risk for child labor
- Poverty/lack of access to credit are cited as the main determinant of child labor

(Basu & Van; 1998; Baland & Robinson, 2000; ILO, 2013a)
Background: Child labor in Ghana

- Ghana has the highest incidence of child labor (22%) among Sub-Saharan countries
- Slightly more male children (23%) engage in child labor compared to female children (21%)
- Migrant child laborers are significantly more vulnerable relative to children working locally

(GSS, 2014; ILO, 2013b)
Kayayei girls

- Adolescent girls are at increasing risk for rural-to-urban migration for child labor, primarily to work as Kayayei in markets
- Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions are the primary sending communities
- Reasons for female adolescent migration include:
  - poverty
  - unequal/overburdened gender roles
  - early marriage
- Kayayei girls are exposed to serious threats to their health and emotional well-being

(Essel et al., 2007; Boateng & Korang-Okrah, 2013; Sebti, 2013)
Rationale

• Negative impact of child labor on children’s physical and emotional well-being, and their educational trajectory

• Limited knowledge on families’ parental beliefs and attitudes about childhood, child education, and child labor in rural areas in Northern Ghana

• Parents as primary agents to shape children’s developmental trajectories

(Castro & Hunting, 2013; Fares & Raju, 2007; Guarcello et al., 2008; Holgado et al., 2014; ILO, 2013a)
Evidence from Kurdish migrant mothers in Turkey

• Role of poverty
• Role of neighborhood context
• Bi-directional relationship between school and work
• Role of gender

(Sensoy Bahar, 2014; 2015)
Evidence from parents and children in Tajikistan

- Normalization of child labor in Tajikistan
  - Role of gender- and age-based expectations
  - Role of poverty and transitional economy
  - Reduction of stigma associated with CL

- Parents’ and children’s perspectives on child labor
  - Benefits
  - Risks

(Akilova, forthcoming)
Things to consider in the Ghanaian context

• The role of cultural norms and religion in regards to female adolescent migration and child labor practices

• The role of family structure

• Parents’ and communities’ perceptions on children’s roles in the family

• Other context-specific risk factors in Northern Ghana
References


