P05 / Family-Support Policies in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Tool to Promote Child Care and Development

Topic : OTHER SECTORIAL POLICY

Chair : Monica Ruiz-Casares (Toronto Metropolitan University)

Second Chair : Jose Ignacio Nazif-Munoz (Université de Sherbrooke)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Quality care is key to the safety, wellbeing, and socialization of children (Norman et al., 2012). In contrast, lack of supervision may result in unintentional injuries and other negative effects for children and parents (Baldry et al., 2019; Damashek et al., 2014; Flanagan et al., 2019; Morrongiello et al., 2012; Rouse & Schwebel, 2019), including reporting to child welfare authorities (Ruiz-Casares et al., 2012; Sedlak et al., 2010). Child neglect is, however, characterized by the breakdown of the social organization around children and parents, rather than parental behaviors alone (Garbarino & Abramowitz, 1992; Lacharité, 2014). In fact, oftentimes, child care arrangements such as leaving children home alone result from low social support or lack of accessible child care services rather than culture or parental choice (Morantz et al., 2013; Ruiz-Casares & Heymann, 2009).

A recent review on child supervision in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) (Miconi et al., 2018) identified family-friendly policies, extended social support networks, and increased public awareness among some of the potential facilitators of adequate supervision in these settings. Furthermore two groups of policies have been recognized of particular importance for families with young children: labour and education (Heymann et al., 2011). Indeed there is accumulating evidence of the beneficial effects of paid parental leave on parental, child, and family wellbeing in high-income countries (HIC) (Nandi et al., 2018) and LMIC (Heymann et al., 2013; Nandi et al., 2016). In fact, enacting or strengthening paid leave policies has been advanced as a key strategy to achieve several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (Heymann et al., 2017). It can also increase father's involvement in childcare and education (Haas & Hwang, 2008). Nevertheless, since most of the published evidence originates in HIC, it is unclear how these findings apply to LMIC. Moreover, even in LMIC where granting paid maternity or gender-neutral parental leave is regulated, coverage is problematic, and solutions are scarce for the poorest families (Vilar-Compte et al., 2019).

Similarly about half of all countries do not provide early childhood care and education (ECCE) services for children under 3 years (UNESCO, 2006). ECCE services are key to supervise young children during work hours while contributing to children's development and school readiness in HIC (Cortázar, 2015) and LMIC (Aboud et al., 2013; Li et al., 2016). Therefore, this panel is interested in papers that will look at how family-support policies contribute to enhancing child supervision and development in LMIC (e.g., by increasing parental availability to care or by providing quality substitute caregiving options). More specifically we are interested in furthering our understanding of the role of public policies in supporting child supervision and development in LMIC as well as the socio-ecological factors that facilitate or hinder their implementation in these contexts.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Our panel is interested in interdisciplinary perspectives to answer the question: how do family-support policies contribute to enhancing childcare/supervision and development in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC)? Papers that explore the role that public policies play in supporting these outcomes in different sectors such as Labor, Education, and Child Welfare are particularly welcome. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal, national and international/comparative studies that explore the contribution of family-support policies to changes in child care over time or at any given point in time in any or several of those countries will be considered. Equally relevant are studies that compare world regions and identify hypotheses to explain differences across them. They may do this by increasing parental availability to care or by providing access to quality, affordable alternative childcare options.

We are also interested in socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors that either facilitate or hinder the implementation of these policies and ultimately, the provision of adequate child supervision in LMIC. There is accumulating evidence that many young children in LMIC spend time unsupervised by adults (Dahlblom et al., 2009; Ruiz-Casares et al., 2018). Large variation in prevalence rates and associated factors within and across LMIC (Ruiz-Casares et al., 2018) reveal significant inequities in child supervision and raise questions about the conditions under which parents and families must fulfill their caregiving responsibilities and the extent to which they are adequately supported in that process. Researchers employing a variety of methods (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed) and perspectives (e.g., from policy-makers, service providers, investors, parents, and children) to explore this phenomenon at the individual, family, community, national or international levels are encouraged to submit their work for consideration by the Panel Chairs. Collectively, papers in this panel will provide state-of-the-art information on parenting policy efforts in LMIC and critically examine their success at promoting child supervision and development in those settings.

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Session 1

Tuesday, June 27th 15:50 to 17:50 (POD368)

Approaches to Family Support Across Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Comparative Family Leave Policies After Birth and Beyond

Gonzalo Moreno (WORLD Policy Analysis Center, University of California Los Angeles)

Amy Raub (WORLD Policy Analysis Center, University of California Los Angeles)

Aleta Sprague (WORLD Policy Analysis Center, UCLA Fielding School of Public Health)

Jody Heymann (Fielding School of Public Health; WORLD Policy Analysis Center - University of California, Los Angeles)

Across countries, ensuring that families can balance paid work and parenthood has been proven to improve both children's outcomes and gender equality in the economy. Over the past several decades, paid leave for new mothers has become almost universal across both high-income countries (HICs) and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs); however, less attention has been devoted to the provision - or absence - of other complementary leaves that allow for the care and development of children, including paternity leave and parental leave, as well as separate leave for children's health needs that can be taken when an older child is sick or is otherwise unable to attend school or alternative caregiving settings. While the policy design and implementation intricacies of caregiving policies in HICs are well-known, much less has been written about the adoption of these policies in LMICs – a doubly challenging environment, given the decreased availability of early childhood education and financial support to parents compared to HICs.

Drawing on recently released findings on global gender equality policies, this paper will aim to fill some of these gaps by providing the latest available data on family leave policies across LMICs worldwide, including: maternity leave; paternity and parental leave; and leave specifically for children's health needs. We will provide comparative, cross-national descriptions of the different elements that are crucial to leave policy design, such as, for example, leave length, replacement payments, eligibility criteria, and job protection. In order to understand patterns in the availability of leave, we will also present all comparative data disaggregated by income level and region, as well as longitudinal data on selected policy indicators going back more than 25 years. To complement this descriptive cross-country approach, we will provide country-specific examples of successful policy design, including those most relevant to the labor market characteristics of LMICs, so as to better understand the possibilities and limitations of policy reform in this comparatively more challenging environment.

Definitions, regulation, and prevalence of inadequate supervision in 46 low- and middle-income countries: A policy review and population-based analysis

Anthony Musiwa (McGill University)

samaneh mansouri (Université Laval)

Monica Ruiz-Casares (Toronto Metropolitan University)

Existing definitions of inadequate supervision are usually framed as child neglect and linked to interventions to prevent injuries among children (Schnitzer et al., 2015; Zielewski et al., 2006). Current research around parenting practices emanates largely from high income countries (Doi et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021), which poses transferability challenges in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) (Miconi et al., 2018: Ruiz-Casares et al., 2018). This is of particular concern as nearly 90% of the 36 million children under-five often left home alone or in the care of another young child live in LMIC (UNICEF, 2022). How do current

child rights, welfare, and protection policies in LMIC define and regulate inadequate supervision? How has introduction of these policies impacted prevalence of non-adult supervision in LMIC?

From January-September 2021, we systematically searched and reviewed national child rights, welfare, and protection policies from 46 LMIC in online databases (CRIN, Natlex, etc.), region-specific repositories (e.g., Africa Child Policy Forum), and websites of key national institutions (e.g., parliaments, ministries of justice). Guided by definitions in the existing literature while paying attention to any unique ones, we extracted and coded definitions or interpretations of child neglect and inadequate supervision from the texts. We analyzed the data thematically to understand common and divergent trends in how inadequate supervision was defined/interpreted and regulated in the texts. An analysis of patterns in the definitions and regulation of inadequate supervision followed as well as assessment of possible impacts of the child rights, welfare, and protection policies on prevalence of inadequate supervision in the countries in our sample. Using multilevel mixed effects, we also analyzed latest population-based surveys to examine significant factors associated with, and the adjusted incidence rate ratios of inadequate supervision in our sample LMIC.

Our paper aligns with this panel's objective to "understand[ing of] the role of public policies in supporting child supervision and development in LMIC". It will provide key insights around existing understandings and regulation and their possible impacts on prevalence of inadequate supervision in 46 LMIC. Ultimately, the goal is to inform context-specific policies and practice to effectively support families and children and to generate hypotheses for further research around this issue in LMIC.

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The Governance of Child Protection in Cambodia

Jeremy Shiffman (Johns Hopkins University)

With a turbulent history including the legacy of the Khmer Rouge genocide, civil war and orphanage tourism, Cambodia has a myriad of problems with respect to protecting groups of vulnerable children, including those facing physical and sexual violence, living on the streets, residing in institutions and subject to labor trafficking. One of the core issues for addressing child protection pertains to ensuring effective governance of the national child protection system, including ensuring sufficient budgets, developing effective policy, building sub-national capacity for identifying and supporting children at risk, and creating a capable social workforce.

This study is part of a larger externally funded research program examining the governance of child protection systems in low and middle-income countries, including Cambodia, Uganda and Zambia. We conducted 39 in-depth interviews with individuals and organizations involved in child protection in Cambodia, including international donors and organizations such as UNICEF, national government officials, non-governmental organizations, and social workers. The aim was to identify factors shaping the effectiveness of Cambodia's child protection system. We drew on public administration and international relations theory to identify these factors.

There are several salient findings. First, while the Cambodian state has increasingly embraced child protection as a priority, that embrace has been slow as the child protection agenda originally had international rather than domestic origins, so was not derived organically and in a number of respects

ignores domestic context. Second, political and administrative factors such as incomplete decentralization, small budgets, weak civil society support and low social worker capacity hamper implementation of child protection policy. Child protection has advanced in Cambodia over the past two decades; however, ongoing progress depends on enhancing sub-national capacity, reducing donor dependence, and ensuring priority and sufficient budgets to address the many needs of vulnerable children.

Labor market policies: the effect on children home alone in low and middle-income countries

Camila Pereira (Université de Sherbrooke)

Toufica Sultana (Toronto Metropolitan University)

samaneh mansouri (Université Laval)

Monica Ruiz-Casares (Toronto Metropolitan University)

Introduction: Many children under 5 years in low and middle-income countries (LMIC) spend time at home alone, making this a frequent pattern of care in several countries. Low levels of parental supervision can result in childhood injuries, sexual abuse, poorer school performance and several risk and antisocial behaviors that can increase vulnerability. Multiple factors can be associated with non-adult child supervision, revealing significant inequalities in child supervision in LMIC. One of those factors is parents' and immediate family members' availability to care. It is thus important to support families in providing adequate childcare. Policies and programs focusing on labour and education are particularly relevant for families with young children, as these require intense care and supervision. Policies such as paid parental leave and breastfeeding breaks may help families to expand their availability to care children. Objective: This study examines the association of specific labor market policies on children home alone in LMIC across two Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) waves. Materials and Methods: We conducted a mixed-method study. The study sample for the quantitative component consisted of 49,791 children under-five from two waves of MICS in Mauritania (2011-2015), Turkmenistan (2015-2019), Gambia (2010-2018) and, and São Tomé and Príncipe (2014-2019). We measured children home alone as the dependent variable (yes/no) and labor market policy as independent variable, measured using three indicators: breastfeeding breaks for mothers, maternity, and paternity leaves. Further, key Informant Interviews (KII) from these countries were conducted to identify policy changes over time. We estimated covariate-adjusted Prevalence Ratio (aPR) with 95% confidence interval (CI) using Multivariable Poisson Regression to examine the effect of labor market policy on children home alone between waves. Preliminary Results: The prevalence of child home alone increased over time Mauritania, Turkmenistan, and São Tomé and Príncipe and it decreased from 11.12% (2010) to 9.36% (2018) in Gambia. Labor market policies changed across two waves in Turkmenistan, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Gambia. We observed a negative association (aPR: .85; 95% CI:0.82, .89; $p<0.001$) between the introduction of labor market policies and children home alone across MICS waves. Conclusion: Family-support labor market policies seem to reduce the number of children home alone. Analysis is required to identify how these policies operate in expanding families' time availability to care children.

An evaluation of the comprehensive child protection support services in South Korea: Focusing on preventing maltreatment recurrence and improving safety

Bong Joo Lee (Seoul National University)

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the comprehensive child protection support services (CCPSS) in South Korea. Data were collected through a survey of children and parents receiving child protection services in four treatment and six comparison child protection agencies, over an 18-month period. We used the difference-in-difference method to examine the effectiveness of CCPSS while controlling for both observed and unobserved characteristics of the treatment and comparison groups. We focused on two primary outcomes of the program: (1) maltreatment recurrence rate and (2) probability of being at high risk of child maltreatment. The results showed a decrease of 4.4 percent points in the child maltreatment recurrence rate of the treatment group, compared to the comparison group at the end of CCPSS implementation. We also found positive effects of the program on reducing the risk of further maltreatment among maltreated children. Policy implications and limitations of the study are also discussed.