

T.D. MUSHORIWA, B.B. CHITSAMATANGA & E. MBOKOCHENA

A Comparative Analysis of the Views of Zimbabwean Rural and Urban Adolescents on Children's Household Work

ABSTRACT: It is important to study children's views on the household work they perform, because the studies, for example J.J. Goodnow (1996), have again and again demonstrated that the way children are brought up directly impacts on their future lives. How children are treated and the work that they are expected to accomplish in the home have a bearing on almost all aspects of their development. This article presents the results of a study on the views of rural and urban adolescents on children's household work. Specifically, the study-tapped adolescents' views regarding the age at which children should begin household work, the value of children's household work, and whether children should be remunerated for doing household work. A total of 200 adolescents were involved in this study. Data were collected from the respondents through a questionnaire supplemented by interviews. A crosstab was used to report results in percentages. Generally, there was support for children's household work, especially from rural respondents. The majority of the respondents felt that children should begin household work between 8 and 10 years and that they should not be paid for such work. The study recommended, among other things, that both rural and urban children should help with household chores, but they should be afforded opportunities to study and to play.

KEY WORD: Household work, views of rural and urban adolescents, comparative analysis, Zimbabwean society, and study and play.

RESUME: Artikel ini berjudul "Sebuah Analisis Perbandingan tentang Pandangan Remaja Pedesaan dan Perkotaan di Zimbabwe Mengenai Pekerjaan Anak dalam Rumah Tangga". Sangat penting untuk mempelajari pandangan anak-anak pada pekerjaan rumah tangga mereka, karena studi-studi, misalnya J.J. Goodnow (1996), telah berulang kali menunjukkan bahwa cara anak-anak yang dibesarkan secara langsung berdampak pada kehidupan masa depan mereka. Bagaimana anak-anak diperlakukan dan pekerjaan yang harus mereka capai di rumah memiliki pengaruh pada hampir semua aspek perkembangan mereka. Artikel ini menyajikan hasil studi tentang pandangan remaja pedesaan dan perkotaan pada pekerjaan anak di rumah tangga mereka. Secara khusus, studi ini bertumpu pada pandangan remaja mengenai usia berapa anak-anak harus mulai bekerja dalam rumah tangga, nilai pekerjaan rumah tangga anak, dan apakah anak-anak harus dibayar untuk melakukan pekerjaan rumah tangga mereka. Sebanyak 200 remaja terlibat dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan dari responden melalui kuesioner yang dilengkapi dengan wawancara. Sebuah tabel silang digunakan untuk melaporkan hasil dalam persentase. Umumnya, ada dukungan untuk pekerjaan anak-anak dalam rumah tangga, terutama dari responden pedesaan. Mayoritas responden merasa bahwa anak-anak harus mulai mengerjakan pekerjaan rumah tangga antara usia 8 dan 10 tahun dan bahwa mereka tidak harus dibayar untuk pekerjaan tersebut. Studi ini merekomendasikan, antara lain, bahwa anak-anak, baik di pedesaan maupun di perkotaan, harus membantu pekerjaan rumah tangga, tetapi mereka harus diberikan kesempatan untuk belajar dan bermain.

KATA KUNCI: Pekerjaan rumah tangga, pandangan remaja pedesaan dan perkotaan, analisis komparatif, masyarakat Zimbabwe, serta belajar dan bermain.

INTRODUCTION

The current study explored and compared the views of rural and urban adolescents with regard to the age at which children should begin chores, the value of

such work, and whether or not children should be paid for performing such chores. It is important to study children's views on the household work they perform because studies, for example J.J. Goodnow (1996),

have again and again demonstrated that the way children are brought up directly impacts on their future lives. How children are treated and the work that they are expected to accomplish in the home have a bearing on almost all aspects of their development. In fact, J.J. Goodnow (1996) found that the issue of the kind of work children do in the home is a burning one among many adolescents with many tending to resent household work.

The present study is also significant in that, it attempts to extend previous research that mainly focused on parents' ideas as to when children should begin work, the value of such work, and whether children should be paid for such work or not. Apart from that, since the young are any country's greatest resource and hope for the future (Flanagan *et al.*, 1998) and since adolescents form the bridge to that future, it is critical to ensure that the way they are brought up is in line with their expectations if we are not to compromise meaningful development. This study, therefore, sought to bring into sharper focus what the apparently "invisible" child thinks and feels about the work he/she does in the home.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, there has been an increase in interest on the impact and influence of the family on children's development. Literature, for example, J.M. Bowes and A. Hayes (1999); J.E. Ormond (2003); J. Baron (2007); and T.D. Mushoriwa (2010) indicate that the child's context such as the family influences the child's behaviour and developing ideas. The child's responsibilities in the home contribute to the responsibilities that he/she eventually learns and willingly accepts. It is in this light that J.J. Goodnow (1988 and 1996) argues that the work which the child does in the home helps children to learn responsibilities not just for others.

Such work benefits not only the child and the immediate members of the family, but also society at large. In Zimbabwe, for example, because of the economic meltdown, children, as young as 5 years, help to supplement family income by

vending various items, others engage in cross-border trading with countries such as Botswana, South Africa etc, while still others work on farms or do domestic work. While such developments may teach children responsibilities, the writers assumed that the situation may be different when it comes to family household chores – some children may not like it or may want to be paid for it.

E. Turiel (1996) contends that children, who do household work, learn the value of self-reliance and care of one's property as well as concern for the welfare of others. Thus, in this sense, one of the basic functions of the family seems to be that of equipping its offspring with skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are important and relevant not only to themselves but also to the family or society at large. Given such an argument, it suggests that children's household work teaches them such things as care of the self, for example, cleaning one's bedroom or making the bed and care for others (people for example, keeping the kitchen or plates clean for the benefit of members of the family).

In some cultures or families, children volunteer to do household work (Goodnow, 1988); while in others, children are either requested or forced to do household work (Goodnow & Delaney, 1989). It is against this background that the present study was conducted, to assess and compare children's views on the household work they do or are given. Thus, the study aimed to address the following questions: (1) Do children appreciate household work?; (2) Do they see such work as valuable both to themselves and to the group members/family?; (3) At what age should such work begin?; (4) Are children not keen to be paid for doing the household work?; and (5) Are there differences in views regarding household work between rural and urban children?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The nature of the study (descriptive) dictated that the research design be of a survey type. Surveys are particularly suitable for this kind of research not only because of the advantage of being able to be used on relatively large samples as is the case in

this study ($n = 200$), but also because they permit detailed descriptions of phenomena with the aim of capturing current views and/or practices. The current study aimed at capturing the views of adolescents on household work; hence, the survey research design was very appropriate.

Instruments. A modified form of the questionnaire developed by C. Flanagan *et al.* (1998) was the instrument used to collect data. Questionnaires were seen as suitable because they allowed the respondents to give their views freely, especially considering the fact that respondents were children. In this regard, D.A. Poole and L.T. White (1995); and H.B. Elischberger and C.M. Roebbers (2001) warn researchers that when they involve children in research, they must seriously think about the data-collecting instrument if they are to obtain reliable and valid data. In this case, the questionnaire was ideal not only because the adolescents were literate, but also because it allowed them to give their real views without influence from anyone. Children are often susceptible to the influence of adults.

The questionnaire required respondents to give their views, by choosing a statement that went with their opinions, on children's involvement in household work. As already seen, questions included those about the age at which children should begin work in the home, the value of such work, and whether or not children should be paid for such work.

Follow-up interviews were carried out with 40 of the 200 participants. These interviews probed into subtle issues which the investigator felt could not be revealed through the questionnaire. Thus, the follow-up interviews allowed the writers to penetrate beyond initial answers but within the confines of the research design information generated allowed a deeper and more meaningful analysis of the results.

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire. Despite the fact that the questionnaire was adopted from C. Flanagan *et al.* (1998) with minor modifications, it was felt necessary to test – run it for reliability and suitability. Ten raters who

were considered experts in the field of attitudes and child development were asked to rate the questionnaire (out of 20) as a measure of children's views on household work. An inter-rater reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. This meant that to a very large extent, the raters agreed that the questionnaire was a very reliable and suitable (valid) instrument for the task.

Pilot Study. After initially testing the questionnaire for validity and reliability, the questionnaire was piloted with a group of 40 children to see if it worked as intended. After minor modifications, the questionnaire was adopted for use with the sample for the main study.

Sample. A total of 200 adolescents ($n = 200$), identified through stratified random sampling, were involved in this study. Of these, 100 were from rural areas (Mashonaland East) while the other 100 were from an urban area (Harare). It was necessary to have an equal number of rural and urban respondents in order to see if rural and urban adolescents share similar views concerning children's household work.

Procedures. The questionnaire was personally delivered by the writers to the participating adolescents and collected back the following day. This procedure ensured 100% return rate.

The adolescent was first informed by the writers that while some people think that children should not do household work, others feel that children should have jobs to do around the home. The adolescent was then asked to respond to the questionnaire which had the following three questions:

Question 1: At what age do you think children should be expected to do household work?

- A. Never
- B. Under the age of 5 years.
- C. Around 6 or 7 years but not before that.
- D. Between 8 and 10 years but not before that.
- E. When they are 11 or above years.

Question 2: What would you say is the major value of having children do household work?

- A. None. No value at all.
- B. It helps the parents, it takes away some of the parents' workload.
- C. It is good training for the child's physical development.

Table 1:
 Crosstab of Participants' Responses to the Questionnaire (n = 200)

TASK	RESPONSE		
	Rural (N=100)	Urban (N=100)	Total (N=200)
Q1: Age to begin work.			
Never	0 (0%)	6 (6%)	6 (3%)
< 5 years	6 (6%)	0 (0%)	6 (3%)
6 – 7 years	25 (25%)	5 (5%)	30 (15%)
8 – 10 years	53 (53%)	27 (27%)	80 (40%)
11 + years	16 (16%)	62 (62%)	78 (39%)
Q2: Value of children's work.			
No value.	0 (0%)	12 (12%)	12 (6%)
Helps parents.	21 (21%)	14 (14%)	35 (17.5%)
For physical development.	13 (13%)	28 (28%)	41 (21.5%)
Individual and social responsibility.	66 (66%)	46 (46%)	112 (56%)
Don't know.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Q3: Payment.			
Payment for each job.	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	3 (1.5%)
Allowance as general payment.	7 (7%)	44 (44%)	51 (25.5%)
Payment for big jobs at times.	18 (18%)	40 (40%)	58 (29%)
No payment.	75 (75%)	13 (13%)	88 (44%)
Don't know.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

- D. It helps children learn that they are part of a family and everyone should help the group.
- E. Not sure.

Question 3: Do you think children should be paid for the household work?

- A. Yes, they should be paid for each job they do.
- B. Yes, they should be paid an allowance as general payment for the jobs they do.
- C. Sometimes. They should be paid for big jobs.
- D. No, they should not be paid for the jobs they do.
- E. Not sure.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Responses were coded and results were reported in percentages in a crosstab. The results are presented, in table 1 below.

Drawing from table 1 above, question 1 indicates that while 6% of urban children think that they should never do household work, no rural child feels the same. This difference may be attributed to differences in orientation between the two groups. To the rural child, work in the home is critical for his/her survival. The child has to work not only for his/her benefit but also for the benefit of the whole family group. In some rural areas, children start doing household work at about 6 years. They fetch water, firewood, etc.

On the other hand, the urban child sees no value in doing household work because most of his/her needs are provided for by working parents who may, over and above that, employ a housemaid. This is perhaps why urban children indicated that even at 5 years, no one should do household work, while 6% of rural children indicated that even at 5 years and below, children should already do household chores. This seems to suggest that the child's cultural background/milieu influences, to a great extent, his /her views on household work. In line with such observation are research findings by J.M. Bowes and A. Hayes (1999); and J.G. Bachman *et al.* (2003) which showed that the context in which the child grows up influences his/her developing ideas about many things.

Twenty-five percent (25%) of rural children and only 5% of urban children think that children should begin household work from 6 to 7 years; while 53% of rural children and 27% of urban children think that household work for children should commence between 8 and 10 years. Again, these figures tend to portray trends in which urban children are rather reluctant

to do household chores, perhaps only at an early stage. This is so because 62% of them (urban) immediately indicate, to a statement that follows, that children should begin household work at 11 and above years; while only 16% of rural children think that children should begin household work that late.

The rural child has to start work so early and he/she has accepted it. One urban interviewee commented, *"One wonders whether what often goes on in rural homes is not child labour disguised as household chores"* (interview with the children of urban area, 25/9/2012). Whatever the case is, in the writers' view, the conceptual complexity of equalising or at least attempting to equalise opportunities for rural and urban children remains one of the biggest challenges of our time. Perhaps there is ground for more pessimism given the collapsing of most infrastructures in rural Zimbabwe as a function of the current economic meltdown.

From the interviews, reasons given for rural children to begin work early in life range from poverty in the home to the learning of responsibilities early in life (interview with the children of rural area, 15/9/2012). Thus, early work is seen as a means to uplift the economic status of the family by helping parents in the home. This gives parents time to do other more important jobs for the benefit of the family.

J.J. Goodnow *et al.* (1984) found that some cultures require their children to do work at about 5 or 6 years for developmental reasons. Children learn not only to be responsible but also to appreciate the benefits that accrue from work. In this sense, therefore, household work at an early stage is seen by not only rural children, but also parents as character-building and skills-training.

Overall, question 1 indicates that taking rural and urban respondents together, the majority of them (40%) think that children should begin household work from 8 to 10 years, 39% think that children should begin work at 11 and above years, while 15% think that they should start between 6 and 7 years. Furthermore, 3% think that they

should begin at 5 years and below, while the remaining 3% think that there should not be any household work for children.

On the value of children's work (question 2), startling is the fact that 12% of urban children genuinely think that children's household work has no value at all. One urban child commented, *"What meaningful work can be done by children? Children should be left to play and study. Asking children to do household work often results in forced child labour or child abuse"* (interview with the children of urban area, 25/9/2012).

This observation sharply contrasts the views of rural children who all (100%) feel that children's work has value. Twenty-one percent of rural children felt that household work helps to reduce parents' workload, 13% felt that it was necessary for physical development, while 66% felt that the major value of household work was children's individual and social development. At the individual level, children learn skills such as self-care. At the social level, children learn that they are part and parcel of a family and that they have a responsibility to contribute to its well being.

On the other hand, 14% of urban children felt that the major value of household work was that of reducing parents' workload, 28% felt that it was necessary for physical development, while 46% felt that household work was important for learning individual and social responsibility. Of note here is the fact that a relatively high percentage of urban children (28% compared to 13% of rural children) think that children's work is meant to develop them physically. Interviews revealed that most of them feel that work in the home should aim to make them physically fit, just like, for example, Physical Education at school, and no more (interview with the children of urban area, 25/9/2012).

The above results indicate that both rural and urban children acknowledge the value of household work, with of course, urban children showing a less appreciation for household work. These differences between rural and urban children suggest differences in values between the two groups. Rural

communities tend to emphasise individual values. This would explain why a higher percentage of rural children (66%) felt that the major value of household work is individual and social responsibility training. Even when rural children and urban children are taken together, 56% of them acknowledge the developmental value of household work.

Question 3 required respondents to show whether children should be paid for the household work they do or not. While 75% of rural children indicate that there should not be any payment for household work, only 13% of urban children felt the same. Thus, the majority of urban children (87%) felt that in one way or the other, children should be paid for the household work they do. Further analysis of the question reveals that while no rural child feels that there should be payment for each job done, 3% of urban children feel so. Seven percent of rural children want this allowance as general payment, while 44% of urban children want this money as payment. Finally, 18% of rural children want payment for big jobs at times, while 40% of urban children want this payment.

The above results are an endorsement once again, of the differences in values between rural and urban children. Most of the urban children interviewed expressed the view that they need payment, because they are doing work that should be done by a hired/employed person. Others argued that the payment would form part of their pocket money (interview with the children of urban area, 25/9/2012).

Drawing from the research results and extrapolating from the writers' experiences and observations, while it is not a common practice to employ housemaids and to give pocket money to children in rural areas, the practice is common in urban areas. This perhaps partly explains why by far, more urban than rural children want payment for household work done. In fact, N.T. Feather (1991) found that many urban parents are eager to give their children pocket money as a sign of prestige and training in correct use of money among other reasons. On the

other hand, when rural parents give children pocket money, it is out of genuine concern for the children.

In all, taking rural and urban respondents together, 1.5% of them felt that there should be payment for each job; 25.5% felt that there should be an allowance; 29% felt that there should be payment for big jobs at times; while 44% felt that there should not be any payment for household work done by children. From this, one can justifiably conclude that there was no support for the idea of payment for household work done by children.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study indicate differences in views between rural and urban adolescents as regards the age at which children should begin household work, the value of such work, and whether children should be paid for doing such work or not. More rural adolescents think that children should begin household work at an earlier age than urban adolescents. Furthermore, more rural adolescents value children's household work than urban adolescents. The results also show that more urban adolescents, than rural adolescents, want to be paid for doing household work.

Overall, the majority of adolescents in this study (40%) felt that children should begin household work between 8 and 10 years. More support for children doing household work came from rural children. While children's household work was viewed as very valuable, there was a general feeling that children should not be paid for doing such work, with more influence coming from rural adolescents.

The results of this study tend to suggest that while there are certain advantages of growing up as a rural child, growing up as a rural child may carry with it lesser privileges when compared to the urban child. For example, urban children tend to have more study time at their disposal than the rural child who often has to battle with household chores. Given this scenario, perhaps more effort is needed to improve the capacity of rural families and communities so that they

are better able to look after their children. This is a task for everyone – the government, social workers, teachers, parents and so on – so that by and large, societies should be able to run on the values of equity.

In the light of the research results, the study recommended that: (1) while both rural and urban children should help with household chores, they should be afforded opportunities to study and to play; (2) household work should be age-appropriate; and (3) children should not be paid for doing household work since it is part of their growing up – they have to learn social responsibilities.

Bibliography

- Bachman, J.G. *et al.* (2003). "Wishing to Work: New Perspectives on How Adolescents Part-Time Work Intensity is Linked to Educational Disengagement, Substance Use, and Other Problem Behaviors" in *Instructional Journal of Behavioural Development*, 27(4), pp.301-315.
- Baron, J. (2007). *Thinking and Deciding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bowes, J.M. & A. Hayes. (1999). *Children, Families, and Communities: Contexts and Consequences*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Elischberger, H.B. & C.M. Roebbers. (2001). "Improving Young Children's Free Narratives about an Observed Event: The Effects of Non-Specific Verbal Prompts" in *International Journal of Behavioural Development*, 25(2), pp.160-166.
- Feather, N.T. (1991). "Variables Relating to the Allocation of Pocket Money to Children: Parental Reasons and Values" in *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 30, pp.221-234.
- Flanagan, C. *et al.* (1998). "Adolescents and the Social Context: Developmental Roots in Seven Countries" in M. Yates & J. Youniss [eds]. *International Perspectives on Community Service and Civic Engagement in Youth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goodnow, J.J. (1988). "Children's Household Work: Its Nature and Functions" in *Psychology Bulletin*, 103, pp.5-26.
- Goodnow, J.J. (1996). "Exploring Beliefs among Parents and Other Family Members". Paper presented at the XXVI International Congress of Psychology in Montreal, Canada.
- Goodnow, J.J. *et al.* (1984). "Mothers' Developmental Timetables in Two Cultural Groups" in *International Journal of Psychology*, 19, pp.193-205.
- Goodnow, J.J. & S. Delaney. (1989). "Children's Household Work: Task Differences, Styles of Assignment, and Links to Family Relationship" in *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 10, pp.209-225.
- Interview with the children of rural area in Mashonaland East, Zimbabwe, on September 15, 2012.
- Interview with the children of urban area in Harare, Zimbabwe, on September 25, 2012.
- Mushoriwa, T.D. (2010). *Educational Psychology: A Re-Visit*. Saarbruchen: Lambert Academia Publishing Co.
- Ormond, J.E. (2003). *Educational Psychology: Developing Learners*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Poole, D.A. & L.T. White. (1995). "Tell Me Again and Again: Stability and Change in the Repeated Testimonies of Children and Adults" in M. S. Zaragoza *et al.* [eds]. *Meaning and Testimony in the Child Witness*. London: Sage.
- Turiel, E. (1996). "Equality and Hierarchy: Conflict in Values" in E.S. Reed, E. Turiel & T. Brown [eds]. *Values and Knowledge*. New Jersey: Erlbaum.



The Children of Zimbabwe
(Source: www.google.com, 20/9/2013)

Urban children tend to have more study time at their disposal than the rural child who often has to battle with household chores. Given this scenario, perhaps more effort is needed to improve the capacity of rural families and communities so that they are better able to look after their children. This is a task for everyone – the government, social workers, teachers, parents and so on – so that by and large, societies should be able to run on the values of equity.