

Researchers

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Timeline

2019-2020

Sample Size

Approximately 2,000 households

Research Implemented by IPA

Yes

The Effects of a Parenting Program for Grandparents in El Salvador

Abstract

During the last few decades, there has been an increase in the number of children raised by their grandparents in the Northern Triangle in Central America—Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador—in response to family crises, poverty, disease epidemics, and migration. Many of these children are facing emotional and behavioral problems, complete fewer years of schooling, and have more problems related to school and learning. Researchers are working with IPA to evaluate the impacts of two interventions provided to grandparents in El Salvador—one offering parental skills training and another offering information about relevant public services—on children’s cognitive and non-cognitive development.

Policy Issue

Globally, it is common for grandparents to raise their grandchildren, often in response to family crises such as parental divorce, death, illness, abandonment, or poverty. Many of these children face emotional and behavioral problems, complete fewer years of schooling, and have more problems related to school and learning. Despite the educational challenges faced by these children, very little research has evaluated this important challenge for child development.

There are also debates on how parental practices in generational leaps are linked to early childhood development, and what the education policy implications of the emergence of households with generational leaps are. One specific question policymakers are interested in is whether it is sufficient to provide grandparents with information about access to

educational and social services, or whether more expensive and comprehensive programs that combine information with training to improve parental skills are required. This study will contribute to literature evaluating whether parenting programs for grandparents can improve their grandchildren's cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Context of the Evaluation

During the last few decades, there has been an increase in the number of children raised by their grandparents in several Latin American countries. In the Northern Triangle, this trend is particularly pronounced. Data from 2007 household surveys indicate that between a fifth and a quarter of the children aged 3-6 years old are being raised by their grandparents in the Northern Triangle.¹ There are several reasons that could explain the large number of grandparents who have become heads of household in the Northern Triangle, including family crises, migration, poverty, and disease epidemics.

Details of the Intervention

Researchers are working with the El Salvador Ministry of Education and World Vision to evaluate the impact of the *Tuchan* program, meaning “our home” in the Nahuat language native to El Salvador.

Researchers randomly assigned approximately 2,000 households with children between two and eight years old, who are raised by grandparents in the absence of at least one parent, to one of the following groups:

1. **Skills and Information Group:** These households receive training on how to stimulate children's cognitive and non-cognitive development. This training is provided by early childhood education specialists through workshops and home visits.
2. **Information-only Group:** These households receive information, through a mobile app and SMS reminders, about nearby public services for young children in their communities.
3. **Comparison Group:** These households receive neither parental skills training nor information about services.

Researchers conducted an initial survey in 2019 and will conduct the follow-up survey in 2020 to evaluate the impacts of the interventions on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, including measures such as executive function, competence in daily tasks, social relations, school performance, and behavioral outcomes.

Results and Policy Lessons

Study ongoing; results forthcoming.

Sources

¹El Salvador Multipurpose Household Survey 2007. General Directorate of Statistics, El Salvador. <http://ghdx.healthdata.org/organizations/general-administration-statistics-and-censuses-el-salvador>

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