

From Mothers to Children: The Implications of Work on Education in Senegal

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Key messages

- Women's involvement in the Senegalese labour market reduces the probability of children's academic achievements at the end of primary education;
- Children whose mothers are more experienced, with a basic level of education and in more highly skilled jobs, have a higher probability of passing their examinations at the end of their primary school education;



Source : survey +

- The size of the family increases the risks of children being affected by a learning lag;
- This study will contribute towards attaining SDGs 4,5 and 10 (Quality education, gender equality, and the reduction of inequalities);
- The study recommends that policy makers confront the challenges are faced by working mothers by providing them with the support that will allow them to better balance their work and family responsibilities.

What is the issue ?

Despite the implementation of a universal education policy in Senegal, the academic achievements of children by the end of the primary school cycle remains a major problem. Besides the acquisition of knowledge on the classical subjects that are taught in school, several other reasons related to family life were highlighted as determinants in academic achievements of learners. We pay specific interest to the impact of the mother's labour in a context whereby women are more and more involved in the labour market and are faced with serious difficulties in being able to reconcile their professional roles with their maternal obligations. Indeed, in Senegal, the employment of women, mostly in precarious and low paying jobs, prevents them from balancing their professional obligations with their maternal responsibilities, which has a negative impact on the academic achievements of their children.



Source : Care

Why are these issues important ?

Quality education remains a key priority for the Senegalese government authorities and is necessary for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, notably SDG 4. Nevertheless, this objective may be hampered by the fact that most women are employed in precarious jobs. Indeed, although women are economically active in Senegal, they normally work in subsistence farming and sideline activities in the informal sector with low value add and whose economic and financial viability is insufficient. They are mostly to be located in informal employment categories such as “Special household activities” (96.3%), “Accommodation and restaurants” (85%) and “retail trade” (71%). These activities, which require a lot of working time, are poorly remunerated with two contrasting results on the academic achievements of learners. Firstly, the activities of women in the labour market allow for income generation (a positive impact), but reduce the time that a mother spends with her children (negative impact).

Policy recommendations

- Providing education and training opportunities for mothers to improve their parenting capabilities and support the education of their children;
- Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women through policies that support the involvement of women in formal employment and provide equal opportunities to women and men in terms of education and employment;
- Implementing policies that encourage employers to propose flexible working hours that allow mothers to balance their maternal and work responsibilities;
- Increase the investments in public education in order to improve the quality of education and reduce the impact of over-crowded housing on the academic achievements of children;
- Increase access to quality and affordable baby-sitting services to allow mothers who work to fulfill their maternal obligations while they continue working;
- Revalorise the work of women in the informal sector so as to allow them to have an income that is sufficient to meet their needs and those of their children, notably those in the field of education.

In conclusion, this study highlights the important role of mothers in shaping the academic achievements of their children in Senegal. In order to attain SDG 4 and guarantee that each child has access to quality education, policy makers should confront the challenges faced by working mothers and provide them with the support that would



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