

Does Age Matter Differently for Boys and Girls? Heterogeneity in Child Labor Hours

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Abstract

This paper examines whether age affects boys' and girls' child labor hours differently in Nepal, with a particular focus on distinguishing between paid work and unpaid domestic work. While existing literature highlights gender disparities in child labor, most studies treat labor participation as a binary outcome, overlooking variations in work intensity and type. Using primary household survey data, this study addresses three key questions: the determinants of child labor participation and school enrollment, the role of age–gender interactions in shaping total hours worked, and the potential endogeneity of household wealth. Employing probit models for participation and enrollment and OLS regressions with interaction terms for hours worked, the findings reveal that household wealth significantly reduces child labor participation but does not influence labor intensity among working children. Age effects differ by gender and work type: boys' domestic work hours increase with age, while girls' work hours remain consistently high regardless of age. Parental attitudes strongly predict child labor participation and school enrollment but not hours worked. The study contributes by disaggregating child labor by gender and work type, incorporating parental attitudes, and providing quantitative evidence from Nepal. The results highlight the need for gender-sensitive policies that address both entry into and intensity of child labor.

Keywords: Child labor, Nepal, parental attitudes, paid vs unpaid work