How do household conditions affect children’s educational attainment: The case of Bangladesh?

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Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “The job of the school is to teach so well that family background is no longer an issue.” In reality, however, children’s educational outcomes are affected by family, social and economic backgrounds. In Bangladesh, as in many other developing countries, quality of education is always a subject of policy debate. But a bigger issue is whether a child will go to school to complete middle or high school education or will the child drop out before graduation.

Free tuition and transportation is usually inadequate for schools to retain children if a factor such as high poverty, low parental education, or larger family size makes the child work long hours to contribute to family income. Parents’ understanding of the importance of education is crucial. An uneducated parent may have a school going child simply because the parent understood the value of education through his or her experiences. In general, a disadvantaged child will face more challenges to fulfill her educational goal than an advantaged child.

To study how the household conditions affect a child’s school going decisions in Bangladesh, we turn to data from Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). We examine proximate factors associated with school dropouts by developing OLS and probit models to see if our models can explain the Bangladesh DHS data well. We pay special attention to any differential effects of the gender of the household head or across regions.

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