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School Enrollment Factors for Children Aged 6 to 11 in Benin

Guy Armand Onambebe^α & Odette Semevo^σ

ABSTRACT

Although Sustainable Development Goal #4 is requesting universal quality education for all countries, household characteristics do not facilitate education for all children. This study analyzes the factors that influence school enrollment of 6-11 aged in Benin through binomial logistic regression and prioritization. The results reveal that children's school enrollment is influenced by the spouse's literacy, the household's standard of living, the woman's level of education, the woman's age, the child's sex, and the type of union between the parents. Women's participation in decision-making within the household plays an important role. The ways forward are to perpetuate schooling policies targeting girls and to strengthen household's economic capacities in order to mitigate their vulnerability.

Keywords: education, children, decision-making, living standards, gender.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Benin is a country in West Africa with about 12 million inhabitants. Like most countries, Benin is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. According to the fifth Demographic and health survey data set (Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018), the gross attendance rate in primary school is 89%, with a gap between girls and boys (94% for boys and 84% for girls) and the net rate is 65%, again with a gender gap to the disadvantage of girls. Thus, it should be noted that efforts still need to be made to achieve full enrollment of children in school. Concerning decision-making within the household, the fifth Demographic and health survey data reveal that in relation with women's

health, only 11.5% of women decide alone, in 34.8% of cases, the decision is joint (both parents) and in 53.1% of cases, it is the man alone who decides on behalf of woman. Regarding essential household purchases, 8.8% of women decide alone; in 38.4% of cases, the decision is joint and in 52.1% of cases, it is the man alone. What about decision-making for child school enrollment?

Universal quality education is part of the 17th Sustainable Development Goals to be reached by 2030. This work examines the relationship between household characteristics and school enrollment of children aged 6-11 in Benin. We are interested in the age group of children likely to be enrolled in primary school. The official age of entry into primary school in Benin is 5 years. But not all 5-year-olds are likely to be enrolled in primary school, so to have statistics of children actually in the education system, we considered 6-year-olds. In addition, primary education consists of six years of study. For these reasons, we considered the 6-11 age group.

The general hypothesis underlying this study is that household characteristics influence children's school enrollment.

1.1 Literature Review

Education is a crucial element in the life of every individual in society. According to UNESCO, it is a set of means allowing the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual faculties of a human being. The right to education is unique and necessary because it empowers individuals to exercise all their other rights (civic, political, economic, social, or cultural), giving them the opportunity to live a dignified life, while ensuring a better future for all. Education is also a means of empowering children and even adolescents to become active participants in the transformation of the societies in which they live (INSAE, 2018).

Achieving the goal of education for all that most countries advocate in the context of sustainable development implies putting all children, both boys and girls, in school.

Despite the importance of education and the policies put in place by governments, we note that not all children are enrolled in school, and inequalities are observed across countries, and within each country. Several factors certainly describe this observation. There has been considerable discussion of the factors that explain children's schooling, as well as the factors that influence women's participation in household decision-making. But, to date, relatively little work has examined the influence of couples' joint participation in household decision making on children's schooling. Empirical studies that determine the factors influencing children's education have yielded multiple and diverse results depending on the context.

1.1.1 Impact of Living Standards

Studies in the West African sub-region have shown that in wealthy and female-headed households, children are more likely to attend school (Alis Bambara and Madeleine Wayack-Pambè, 2019). In Togo, for example, more than 60% of children from wealthy households are enrolled in school, while only 15% of children from poor households are schoolarised. Children from poor households are engaged in paid work to support their families (Vissého Adjiwanou, 2005). In studying the effect of household standard of living on school completion in twenty-five countries, Filmer D. and Pritchett L., (1999) found that in Benin, with data from the 1993 demographic and health survey, the completion gap in primary school is 41.1%; 39.5% and 19.3% respectively for poor, middle and wealthy households. In Burkina Faso, for example, Dramane Boly (2017) found that the standard of living is a determining factor in children's schooling. These studies, therefore show that the household's standard of living has a significant influence on children's school enrollment and completion. Okurut, F.N. and D.O. Yinusa, (2010) also found that in Botswana,

children living in female-headed households are more likely to be enrolled in school.

1.1.2 Age Range Effect and Social Network

Analyzing household characteristics, Chabi M. and Attanasso O. (2015) found that the presence of children under 6 years old in a household puts pressure on the household's resources, and therefore, influences the schooling of the household's children. This age range (6-11 years) corresponds to the official age for being in primary school. In a situation of limited resources, the presence of this age range puts pressure on the household's resources, and therefore affects the chance that all children to attend school. On the other hand, Moussa B. et al (2014) assessed the combined effect of family networks and sibling size on children's schooling and concluded that there is a positive relationship between an increased number of children and the use of family mutual aid for children's education. This is due to the fact that parents with a high number of children depends on social networks to send their childrens to school more than those with fewer children.

1.1.3 Gender and Family Relationship

Individual characteristics of children are also elements that influence their enrollment. Some authors have shown in their work that being female is negatively associated with the probability of enrollment and attainment of a high level of education. Girls are a cheaper source of labor for agricultural, household, and commercial activities, so mothers cannot do without their contribution. As a result, parents choose to keep girls at home and give priority to boys (Lokonon P., 2018). Further on, Dramane B. (2017) shows that in Burkina Faso, girls who are not related to the head of the household are less likely to attend school due to their use in domestic work. In Mali, Kuepie M. and Misangumukini N. (2012) found that permanent resource constraints have a more significant impact on girls' schooling than on boys'. Similarly, these authors find that girls' school success is sensitive to the educational capital of the adults in the household.

1.1.4 Parent's Education, Literacy and Occupation

Parental characteristics are listed among factors that affect children's school enrollment. A study conducted on dropout: differentials and factors associated with dropout in India (Gouda and Sekher, 2014) found that the dropout rate among children of illiterate parents is four times higher than among literate parents. Similarly, the likelihood of dropping out is high among children whose parents do not work. In Burkina Faso, for example, research on women's participation in household expenses and women's decision-making role in children's schooling has shown that mothers' education is a determining factor in their children's schooling (Madeleine Wayack- Pambé, 2007).

1.1.5 Decision-Making

The relationship between spouses, particularly the possibility for each of them to participate in household decisions, is an important indicator of gender relations in society and contributes to the well-being of the entire family. Thus, some gender studies have been conducted to determine the factors contributing to women's participation in household decision-making. For example, it is known that women's participation in the modern labor market or paid work, older age, urban residence, type of union, and access to the media are factors that positively influence their participation in decision-making within their households (Thionbiano, 2014; Ampale, 2015). The International Food Policy Research Institute (UNICEF 2007), reveals that if men and women had equal influence in household decision-making, the incidence of underweight children under three years of age in South Asia could be reduced by 13 percent, resulting in 13.4 million fewer malnourished children in the region. Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa, 1.7 million more children would be adequately nourished based upon gender balance in decision-making. One would expect this gender equality to be a factor in getting children into school.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Sampling

The data used are from the Benin Demographic and Health Survey conducted in 2017-2018. Our base consists of women aged 15-49, men aged 15-64, and children aged 6-11. In total, we have 13,958 children and 4,035 couples.

The dependent variable in this study is the school enrollment of children aged 6-11 at the time of the survey. It is a binary variable taking the value 1 when the child is enrolled in school and 0 otherwise.

The independent variables are: for the household (standard of living, area of residence, type of union); for the child (sex); for the mother/caregiver of the child (participation in decision making on health and household priority expenditures, education level, age, current occupation); for the father/guardian of the child (participation in decision-making on health, household priority expenditures, education level, age, current occupation) The "participation in decision-making" variable is a composite. It was designed by considering cases where the woman/man decides alone, jointly with her/his partner and does not participate in the decision on health and priority household expenses.

2.2 Data Analysis

The analysis has two components: descriptive (univariate, bivariate) and explanatory (binomial logistic regression and prioritization). The bivariate analysis measures the association between the dependent variable and the independent variables and is verified by a Chi2 test at the 5% threshold.

The explanatory component through binomial logistic regression allows us to measure the net effect of each of the independent variables on children's school enrolment. The choice of this analysis model is justified by the qualitative and dichotomous nature of the dependent variable.

As for prioritization, it allows us to see the level of contribution of each factor to the explanation of children's school enrolment. The process consists

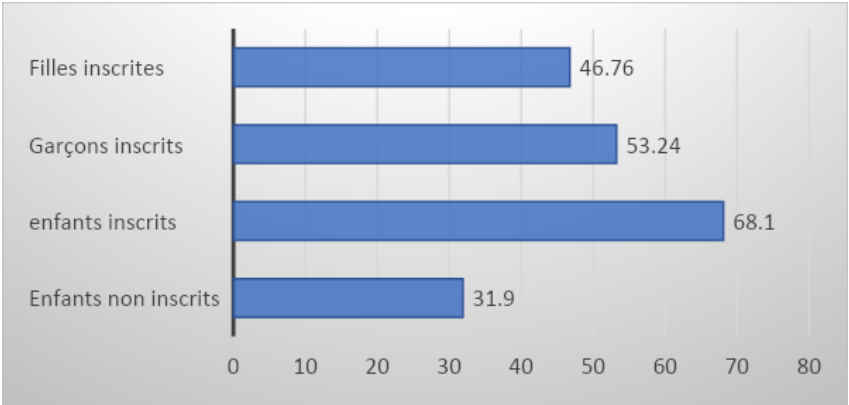
of taking the difference between the Chi-square of the final model, including all the variables, and the Chi-square obtained from the model without the variable, and relating the result to the final Chi-square to obtain the contribution of the variable in explaining the phenomenon.

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Sample Description

3.1.1 Children Characteristics

About 7 out of 10 school-age children (68.1%) are enrolled in school. More boys (53.24%) than girls (46,76%) are enrolled in school.

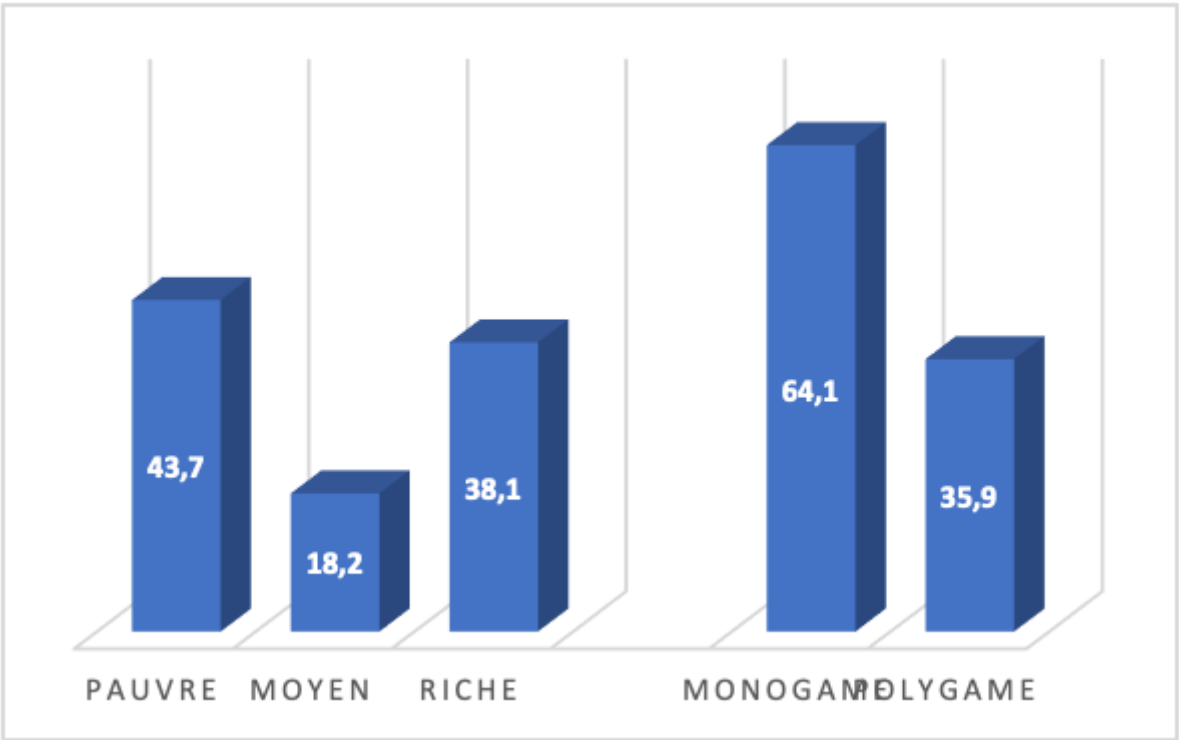


Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

Figure 1: Proportion of children enrolled or not in school by gender

3.1.2 Household Characteristics

According to this study, 43,7% of households have a poor standard of living and 38,1% have a rich standard of living. Most households are monogamous (64,1%).



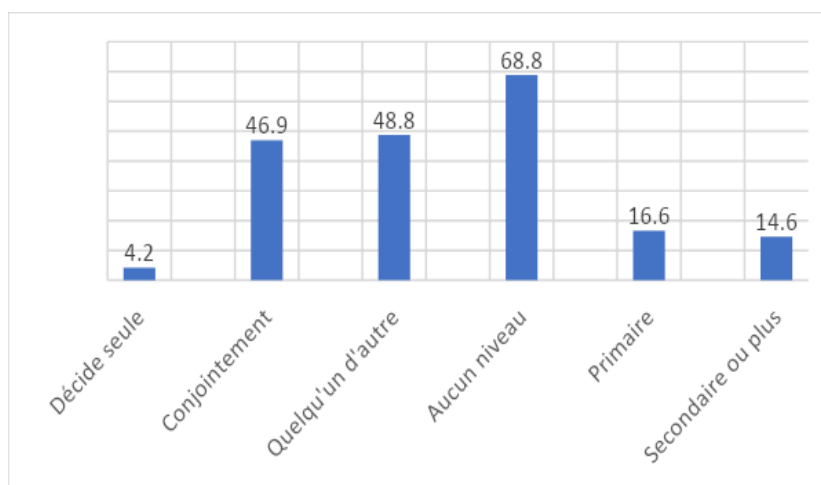
Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

Figure 2 : Distribution of households by standard of living and type of union

3.1.3 Women Characteristics

The majority of women have no education (68.8%). Respectively 16,6% and 14,6% have a

primary and secondary level or more. Very few women (4,2%) decide alone when it comes to their health care and significant household purchases.

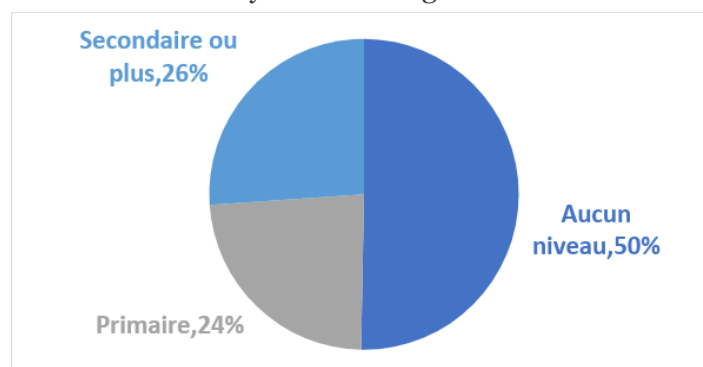


Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

Figure 3: Distribution of women according to their level of participation in decision-making and their level of education

3.1.4 Men Characteristics

One in two fathers/guardians has no education (50%). For those who are schoolarised, 24% have reached primary school and 26% secondary school or higher.



Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

Figure 4: Distribution of men by education level

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 Bivariate

The results of the bi-variate analysis showed that, with the exception of participation in decision-making from men's statements and the gender of the head of household, all variables are significantly associated with school enrollment of 6–11-year-olds at the 5% threshold.

3.2.2 Logistic Regression

3.2.2.1 Household's characteristics

The type of union that links parents influences the schooling of children aged 6–11. Children living in a polygamous household are 0.76 times less likely to be enrolled than those in a monogamous household. Household's standard of living was found to be highly significantly associated with

children's school enrollment. Thus, children living in families with a middle or wealthy standard of living are 1.86 and 3.72 times more likely to be enrolled than their counterparts living in poor households, respectively.

3.2.2.2 Children's characteristics

The results show that, at the 5% level, the gender of the child has a significant association with school enrollment. Thus, the results show that girls are 0.81 times less likely to be enrolled than boys.

3.2.2.3 Mother's Characteristics

Concerning the mother's characteristics, the results show that the woman's involvement in decision-making is significantly associated with children's school enrollment at the 1% level. Thus, children whose mothers or guardians make decisions alone or jointly are respectively 1.94 and 1.44 times more likely to be enrolled than their counterparts whose mothers or guardians are not involved in decision-making.

3.2.2.4 Parent's education and literacy

At the 1% level, maternal education is positively associated with children's school enrollment. Thus, children whose mothers or guardians have primary and secondary education or more are 1.64 and 2.68 times more likely to be enrolled than children whose mothers have no education.

3.2.2.5 Parent's Age Range

Children whose mothers or janitors are between the ages of 30-39 and 40-49 are, respectively 1.59 times and 1.83 times more likely to be enrolled in school than their counterparts whose mothers are between the ages of 15-29 at the 1% threshold.

3.2.2.6 Parent's occupation

In contrast to the previous woman's characteristics, her current occupation is not significantly associated with children's school enrollment.

3.2.2.7 Spouse/Guardian's Characteristics

When analyzing the results according to the characteristics of the spouse or guardian, the results show a negative (non-significant) association between the spouse's participation in decision-making and the children's school enrollment. Like the woman's level of education, the spouse's level of education shows a positive association with children's school enrollment at the 1% threshold.

3.2.2.8. Father/Guardian's Characteristics

Children in households where the father/guardian has a primary and secondary level or higher education are respectively 6.12 and 3.40 times more likely to be enrolled than those living in a household where the father/guardian has no education. The results show that the age of the father/guardian and his current occupation are not significantly associated with children's school enrollment.

3.2.3 Prioritization of Factors

Table 2 below shows factors that influence children's school enrollment, classified according to their importance : the spouse's level of education, the household's standard of living, the woman's level of education, the women's participation in decision-making, the woman's age, the child's sex and the type of union.

Table 2 : Hierarchy of explanatory factors

Explanatory variables	Final chi- square	Chi-square without the variable	Contribution (%)	Rank
Spouse's level of education	759,20	702,22	11,13	1 ^{ier}
Household standard of living	790,20	709,20	10,25	2 ^{ème}
Woman's level of education	759,20	772,05	2,29	3 ^{ème}
Women's participation in decision-making	790,20	773,59	2,10	4 ^{ème}
Age of the woman	759,20	775,54	1,85	5 ^{ème}
Sex of the child	759,20	785,59	0,58	6 ^{ème}
Type of union	790,20	789,19	0,12	7 ^{ème}

Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

IV. DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to analyzing the influence of household characteristics on school enrollment of 6–11-year-olds in Benin. Similar works generated the same findings focusing on the impact factors.

4.1. Spouse's Level of Education

About the characteristics of the spouse, the latter's level of education is a factor that is significantly associated with children's schooling. We can thus say that the more educated the parents are, the better they understand the importance of sending their children to school. Mabrooka Altaf, Tusawar Iftikhar Ahmad, Muhammad Azhar Bhatti, (2022) highlighted maternal education as the most influential and decisive factor in enhancing school enrollments of male children and female children in Pakistan.

4.2 Household Standard of Living and Socio-Cultural Patterns

Similar to studies carried out by Adjiwanou (2005) and Bambara and Wayack-Pambè (2019), we reached findings showing that the household's standard of living is determining children's school enrollment. Thus, children in wealthy households are more likely to be enrolled than those in poor families. These results also confirm the study by Filmer and Pritchett (1999), who found that in Benin, with data from 1993 Demographic and Health Survey, the primary school completion gap is 41.1%, 39.5% and 19.3%

for the poor, middle and rich households respectively. This could be explained by the fact that wealthy households can meet the costs of sending their children to school, which is not always the case for poor families. In the Beninese context, the low enrollment rate of girls in school could be explained by the fact that girls constitute an essential workforce for mothers. They help their mothers on the one hand to take care of their younger brothers, on the other hand, to help mothers in their activities. In a socio-cultural context, parents consider the girl as the property of another person from the moment she gets married. So sending her to school would be an additional expense for them with no benefits.

In addition, using data from the 1968–2013 October Current Population Survey to document trends in 3- and 4-year-old children's enrollment in center-based early childhood education, Katherine Magnuson and Jane Waldfogel (2016) have tried to focus on gaps in enrollment among children from low-, middle-, and high-income families. They found that income-related gaps in enrollment widened in the 1970s and 1980s but appear to have plateaued or narrowed for succeeding cohorts. These patterns are consistent with recent trends in income-related gaps in school achievement.

4.3 Woman's Level of Education

The level of education of mothers was found to be significantly associated with children's schooling.

This importance of mothers' education has been highlighted by other studies (Madeleine Wayack-Pambe, 2007; Caroline, Sascha, Leslie, & Han, 2021; Gouda and Sekher, 2014), which led to the results that the dropout rate among children of illiterate parents is four times higher than that of literate parents.

Throughout Ghana Living Standard Survey round 6 (GLSS 6) data, Abdul Malik Iddrisu, Michael Danquah and Peter Quartey (2017) demonstrated that parental education, household income and the gender of the head of the household are significant factors in households' children's schooling decisions. Educated parents are more likely to enroll their children in primary school and keep them until they complete primary education. The authors observed that educated parents do not promote a gender-biased investment in the schooling of children at the primary level. In addition, household welfare has a positive impact on children's completion of primary school.

4.4 Women's Participation in Decision-Making

Concerning factors related to parents, the results showed that women's participation in household decision-making is a factor positively associated with children's schooling. We can therefore affirm that a more egalitarian gender relations within couples that gives women the right to intervene in decision-making is, in turn, a factor that promotes children's education. Thus, women have a positive influence on children's education when they intervene in household decisions.

4.5 Age of the Woman

An advanced age of mothers is a favorable factor for the schooling of children. We can thus say that an advanced age confers more maturity, and respect to women and consequently, they can positively influence the education of their children. At slightly older generations, women become aware of the importance of sending their children to school.

4.6 Sex of the Child

The results showed that girls are more likely to be less educated than boys. Thus, the female gender is negatively associated with being in school. This reality was revealed by the DHS-V data (2017-2018). According to this survey, despite all the policies put in place by the authorities to encourage the enrollment of girls in school, there is a gap (10 percentage points) to be filled between boys' gross enrollment rate (94%) and girl's gross enrollment rate (84%). Uzma Naz, Zainab Ejaz and Naveed Khan (2019) analyzed major factors responsible for high dropouts in rural areas in Islamabad (Pakistan). Besides the distance from school to home, financial constraints is the most crucial reason for dropping out. Moreover, the education of the father, the age of the child, and the gender of the child are also highly significant variables that determine the probability of a child dropout.

4.7 Type of Union

The results of the explanatory analysis showed that the type of union in which a child lives influences their schooling to the extent that a child in a polygamous household is likely not to be enrolled in school. This could be explained by the fact that in a polygamous family there are several children, which increases the burden of schooling on parents, so they tend to enroll some children at the expense of others. This result is similar to work done by Attanasso M.O. and Chabi M. (2015), who found that the number of children under the age of 5 and the number of children in the 6-11 age group are variables that negatively affect school enrollment or level. That implies in a polygamous household, there would be many children in these age groups.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of household characteristics on the school enrollment of 6–11-year-olds. After presenting the context of the study, and the empirical work done by other researchers, we found that several factors directly influence children's school enrollment.

The data used in this study came from the fifth Benin Demographic and Health Survey (DHSB 5, 2017-2018). Our target population was women aged 15-49 and men aged 15-64 who were in a union or living with a partner at the time of the survey, as well as children aged 6-11 living in households. Both descriptive and explanatory methods of analysis were used in this study.

The descriptive analysis method allowed us to test the relationship between children's school enrollment and all the variables in the study at the bivariate level. An explanatory analysis based on binomial logistic regression allowed us to determine the factors that, in addition to the joint participation of couples in household decisions, influence children's schooling.

We found that the spouse's level of education, the household's standard of living, the woman's level of education, the women's participation in household decision-making, the woman's age, the child's sex, and the type of union are the factors that influence children's school enrollment in order of importance.

Despite the findings, this study does not claim to have covered all aspects of couples' joint participation in household decisions and all factors that might influence children's school enrollment. Thus, it should be noted that this study has some limitations. Not all variables related to household decision-making were included. It should also be noted that there is no specific question in the database on decision-making regarding children's education. However, this could more easily help to identify the parent who contributes most through their decision to the enrollment of children in the household. Nevertheless, these limitations do not alterate the results of our study. This study is very important for drawing a streamline to design better policy actions in favor of children's schooling.

Given the findings of our study, we recommend that schooling policies be perpetuated. Because today's children will be tomorrow's parents, the education of their offspring will be impacted by their literacy or education level. It's also recommended to carry out more policies to strengthen the economic capacities of households.

ANNEXES

Table 1: Distribution of children by gender and school attendance

Variable	Terms and conditions	Workforce	Percentage
Gender of children	Boy	7093	50,8
	Girl	6860	49,2
School registration	Non-registered	4453	31,9
	Registered	9500	68,1
School attendance by gender	Boys enrolled	5058	53,24
	Girls enrolled	4442	46,76

Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

Table 2: Household characteristics

Variable	Terms and conditions	Workforce	Percentage
Gender of head of household	Male	3895	96,5
	Woman	140	3,5

Type of union	Monogame	2563	64,1
	Polygamist	1435	35,9
Place of residence	Urban	1644	40,7
	Rural	2391	59,3
Household standard of living	Poor	1763	43,7
	medium	736	18,2
	rich	1536	38,1

Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

Table 3: Distribution of women by socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Variable	Terms and conditions	Workforce	Percentage
Participation in decision making	Decides alone	171	4,2
	Jointly	1893	46,9
	Other	1971	48,8
Woman's level of education	No level	2775	68,8
	Primary	669	16,6
	Secondary or higher	591	14,6
Woman's current occupation	Inactive	645	16,2
	Executive/administration	126	3,2
	Shopkeeper	1280	32,2
	Farmer	1052	26,5
	Worker/service	870	21,9
Age of the woman	15-29 years old	1942	48,1
	30-39 years old	1376	34,1
	40-49 years old	717	17,8

Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

Table 4: Distribution of women by socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Variable	Terms and conditions	Workforce	Percentage
Decision making	Decides alone	2231	55,3
	Jointly	1744	43,2
	Other	60	1,5
Spouse's level of education	No level	2029	50,3
	Primary	952	23,6
	Secondary or higher	1054	26,1
Spouse's current occupation	Inactive	45	1,1

	Executive/administrati on	478	12,1
	Shopkeeper	319	8,1
	Farmer	2071	52,7
	Worker/service	1017	25,9
Age of the spouse	15-29 years old	875	21,7
	30-39 years old	1478	36,6
	40-49 years old	1130	28
	50-64 years old	552	13,7

Source: Benin DHS 5, 2017-2018

Table 5: Net Effect of Variables on Enrollment of Children Aged 6-11

VARIABLES AND MODALITY	NET EFFECT
PARTICIPATION OF THE WOMAN IN DECISION MAKING (statement from the woman)	***
Only	1,94***
Jointly	1,44***
someone else	Ref
SPOUSE PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING (declaration from the spouse)	ns
Only	Ref
Jointly	0.84ns
someone else	1.15 ns
RESIDENCE ENVIRONMENT	***
Urban	1.20 ns
Rural	Ref
GENDER OF THE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	Ns
Male	Ref
Woman	1,66
Type of union	***
Monogame	Ref
Polygamist	0,76*
LEVEL OF LIVING	***
Poor	Ref
Medium	1,86***
Rich	3,72***
GENDER OF THE CHILD	**
Boy	Ref

Girl	0,81**
WOMAN'S LEVEL OF EDUCATION	***
Without level	Ref
Primary	1,64**
Secondary or higher	2,51***
AGE OF THE WOMAN	***
15-29 years old	Ref
30-39 years old	1,59***
40-49 years old	1,83***
CURRENT OCCUPATION OF THE WOMAN	Ns
Inactive	0,68***
Frame	1.51ns
Merchant	Ref
Farmer	0,65***
Worker	0.88ns
SPOUSE'S LEVEL OF EDUCATION	***
Without level	Ref
Primary	2,61***
Secondary or higher	3,40***
SPOUSE'S AGE	ns
15-29 years old	0.67ns
30-39 years old	Ref
40-49 years old	0.88ns
SPOUSE'S CURRENT OCCUPATION	ns
Inactive	1.18ns
Frame	1.39ns
Merchant	1.35ns
Farmer	Ref
Worker	1.44ns
***=significance at the 1% level, **=significance at the 5% threshold ns=not significant	

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

The data used for the estimates do not include confidential information about individuals or animals that may raise ethical concerns.

Consent for Publication

The authors grant his consent for publication of this paper.

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Data Availability Statement

The data used in this paper is fully available and can be accessed upon request.

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