

Schools as Community Hubs in the Outskirts of Lima, Peru

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What are the main places for interaction in a marginal neighborhood? How does the structure of relationships influence the prevention of child labor? Schools are key community hubs. Networks between parents seem to be a protective factor of school abandonment and child labor.



Figure 1. Happy Mother's Day at a school in Lima. Photo courtesy José Orihuela.

Networks of Parents to Prevent Child Labor

Social network analysis can be used in the operational definition of social regularities, behavior settings, and similar ecological concepts. In the period 2015-2016 we implemented a program for the prevention of child labor in marginal areas in the outskirts of Lima, Peru. These neighborhoods are very poor and lack urban infrastructure. In this context, we studied places in the neighborhood where it is most frequent to interact with neighbors. The study demonstrated the central role of schools in community life. It also verified the preventive value of well-articulated networks between families in the areas that surround the school.

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Highlights

Support networks between families help prevent child labor.

Network analysis can help define locations for community prevention and promotion.

Schools in the slum areas of Lima serve as a bridge to access important resources outside the district.

Action Research in Peruvian Schools

A survey was conducted with parents of three schools in the outskirts of Lima, Peru, where the "Educame Primero Perú" program for the prevention of child labor was applied. The survey included information on the personal networks of the interviewees and was complemented with participant observation throughout more than two years of application of the program.

Study Results

- Exchanging information and social support among the families of the neighborhood is a protective factor of child labor. When neighbors hold each other accountable, this prevents child labor.
- Some of the key behavioral settings for the development of relationships between parents are located at the neighborhood schools. Parents' relationships are developed at the door of the educational center, at parties organized by the school, in tutoring sessions, and in parent school sessions.
- Networks between families are less developed in the most recent human settlements, that is, with a shorter history of community development. In these newer slums, where there is an increased risk of child labor, schools often act as a bridge to labor resources and other services available outside the district.

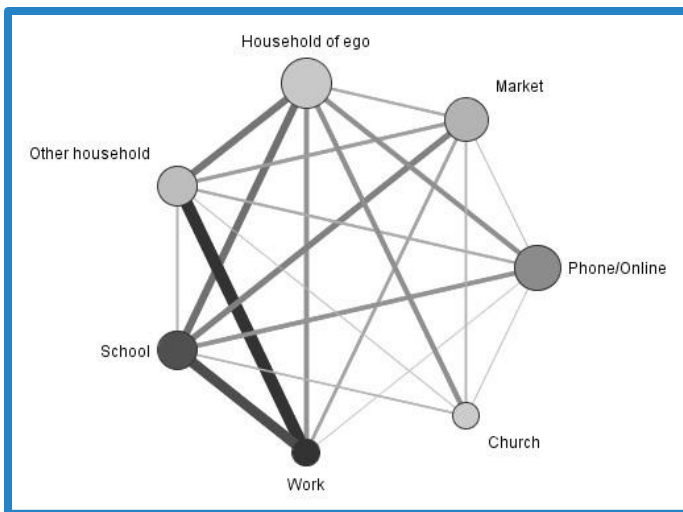


Figure 2. The key role of schools in the clustered graphs of places for interaction at the neighborhood. (Maya Jariego et al., 2018).

The research uses a novel technique for visualizing personal networks in "clustered graphs." Each interviewee reported 45 personal relationships he has in the city of Lima (either in the neighborhood or outside the neighborhood in which he resides). This provides data on more than 6,000 relationships, which can be represented in summary graphs that integrate the contacts according to the preferred place of interaction (the market, the church, the home, the workplace, etc.). As we observe in Figure 2, by way of illustration, the color gradation of each node represents the density of

personal contacts in different neighborhood scenarios, while the thickness of each link represents the density of contacts between different scenarios. The neighborhood school is one of the contexts most prone to the formation and development of relationships, and has a role of articulation with other neighborhood contexts.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Children whose parents develop and nurture relationships through the school are less likely to work for pay outside of school.

What Does This Mean For?

Research and Evaluation: Network analysis is a useful analytic technique to define concepts of ecological context (social regularities, behavior settings, etc.).

Practice: Schools are a key resource to promote community development and organize activities in the neighborhood. They are especially effective in connecting parents who live in the immediate environment.

Policy Makers: We knew that three strategies seem to be particularly effective in the prevention of child labor: (a) agreements between government, employers, and trade unions; implementation of (b) conditional cash transfers; and (c) psychoeducational programs. This study adds a new component that may be useful with strategies b and c: Networks between families help prevent child labor.

Read more: Maya Jariego, I., Holgado, D., Márquez, E. & Santolaya, F. J. (2018). The community role of schools in Jicamarca and Villa El Salvador (Peru): crosscutting behavior settings in personal networks. *Psychosocial Intervention*, 27(1), <https://doi.org/10.5093/pi2018>

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