

### **Discussion: Jacques B.O.Emina**

---

Existing literature revealed the association between children's living arrangement and their wellbeing in sub-Saharan Africa. Theoretically, children's living arrangement differences in wellbeing indicators are largely determined by the household' social, human capital and economic resources. Overall, children living away from their mothers have poor outcomes, whilst those living with two parents have better education and health outcomes. However, little is known about the influence of number of generation in the household and kin presence on children wellbeing indicators.

This study contributes to fill this gap by: 1) examining two different ways of capturing co- residential living arrangements – structural and kin presence; and 2) comparing the effects of each on children's educational attainment in a rural community in South Africa.

**Theoretical Debate or Historical Context:** The paper reviewed the conceptual background of household' structure and composition as well as its role on children's wellbeing in social sciences, particularly in the demography of family and household. Theoretically, the paper is based on two complementary approaches: (1) the structural approach, which refers to the generational contours and extend of nucleation in the household; (2) and the kin presence model.

**Data Collection and data analysis:** The study used data from the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance System (AHDSS) conducted in 21 villages, province of Mpumalanga, South Africa. Analyses are focused on 22,997 unmarried children aged 6-18 years old in 2002 and who do not have a child. Unfortunately, the independent variable (children's living arrangement does not take into account parents' survival status and/or their migration status. This may have an influence on children's education outcome. Statistical analyses include OLS and logistic regression models. However, we do not whether authors have controlled for the hierarchical nature of these data. A household may have more than one child. This will influence stability of estimates.

**Results:** Findings from the two approaches are consistent and support the positive role of living with two parents on education. Furthermore, the study revealed the advantage of living in a vertical structure compared to a lateral structure. This research showed also the complexity and selectivity of the composition approach. For instance, grandmothers exert a favorable influence particularly for boys, positive effects of siblings and step kin, the absence of any effect of maternal or paternal aunts/uncle on children's education outcome.

**Conclusion and way forward:** This paper most important contribution in the demography of household and family is its explicit focus on the difference between household structure and composition, which are often used interchangeably though the two concepts are different. However, there are some areas that need improvement. First, authors can include a section "Measurement" where they will

explain how the different concept (structure, composition, education pace) are captured in the study. Currently, they are reported in the data section, which should include only data information (data collection, sample size and procedure of selection). This study has some limitations: (1) Figure 1 and comments related to this figure need to be clearer (sum of percentage = 100) page 13; (2) information on parents' survival status and their migration status. Non-coresidence due to migration may have a different effect on children education compared to non-coresidence due to parents' death. (2) the cross-sectional approach used: we do not know whether the difference found is due to the current living arrangement regardless of approach or to the change in living arrangement (instability theory). Indeed, a child may move from biparental household to a vertical or lateral or vertical and lateral household due to parental divorce, death of one parent or migration of one parent. These last limitations could be considered as future areas of investigation.