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## What Money Can't Buy: Educational Aspirations and International Migration in Ecuador

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### Abstract

*This article studies how educational aspirations of children are shaped in Biblián, Ecuador, a traditional sending country. Data sources were a multi-level survey and semi-structured interviews that were analysed using logistic regression and thematic analysis, respectively. Several theoretical relationships are confirmed: the household socioeconomic status, caregiver's educational aspirations and age are the most important variables that predict the educational aspirations of children. Child migratory dreams and the absence of the father or the mother only predict the educational aspiration of getting a high school degree, but do not predict the aspiration of a graduate degree. Thematic analysis suggests that, besides seeing education as a means to have higher incomes, mothers perceive it as a sign of social status and assign it an intrinsic value.*

**Keywords:** Education; aspirations; expectations, migration; mixed methods.

### Introduction

The link between education and migration becomes extremely complex because of the direct and indirect relations with different analysis levels (individual, familial and structural conditions), intergenerational relationships, and cognitive dimensions. Effects of migration on educational variables are often mixed. For instance, despite evidence that shows that the financial benefits of migration might allow children to continue their education, there is also an adverse effect by reducing the motivation to educational attainment (Kandel & Kao, 2001). Such motivation is reinforced through communication. In both, migrant and non-migrant households, the parent-child relationship is the channel which serves to transmit the family cultural values and norms to children. Furthermore, the figure of parents as role models has been reported in different researches (Chiapa, Garrido & Prina, 2012; Beaman et al., 2012; Krishnan and Krutikova, 2013).

The theory of relative deprivation and the migration network theory state that interpersonal contexts contour the motivations to migrate. First, the principle of relative deprivation has been confirmed by empirical works in rural contexts (Czaika & Vothknecht, 2014; Izcara-Palacios, 2011; Kafle et al., 2020), such as Biblián. Second, the theory of migration networks provides a proper framework to understand the inter-subjective nature of the relationship between migration and society<sup>3</sup>. In consequence, the nexus between migration and education involves topics of age, gender,

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<sup>3</sup> Pedone (2005) has found that migration networks and chains explain intergenerational relationships mediated by migration in the familial sphere. This author studies the case of Ecuador and evidences a consolidated migration culture supported by the fact that



parental roles, bargaining power and 'brain gain', as Antman (2013) synthesizes. It seems that in Ecuador, familial transnationalism (Herrera, 2004), social remittances (Mata-Codesal, 2013), and stereotypes and social imaginaries in the origin country (Herrera, 2005; Pedone, 2005; Villavicencio et al., 2011) reveal a broader, and also thorough, spectrum of migration-related factors that may shape left-behind children's education in Ecuador.

Aspirations and expectations<sup>4</sup> lean on *habitus*; the experience affected by class socialisation, actions and observation differs across ethnic groups or minorities (Bohon et al., 2006). In the context of international migration, Latino parents that have suffered discrimination or lack of opportunities translate into scepticism about the value of education. The longer they are exposed to the American life, the lower their aspirations become (Goldenberg et al., 2001). In other cases, migration is widely accepted as a plausible option to have a better life. Consequently, the event of migration of a family member might affect the aspiration of children by lowering it because migration is portrayed as an effective manner to achieve economic goals (Kandel & Kao, 2001; McKenzie et al., 2013; Meza & Pederzini, 2009; McKenzie & Rapoport, 2011). The rationale might be put in this words: 'If it is better to live in New York than in Biblián and holding a degree is indifferent for an undocumented migrant, then why should one invest time in studying?'. Nonetheless, some evidence (Parella, 2007) demonstrate that children may also experience a sense of pride knowing that their parents are making a sacrifice for them, following the suggestions of Carling (2014) regarding how migrants are seen by their families. The parents' response might be even more important than the children's because of the realistic assumption that parents face less asymmetry of information and because children's answers and intentions tend to be more volatile (Alexander & Cook, 1979). Such parental aspirations, influenced by their socioeconomic status and economic situation of the neighbours, determine their investment behaviour towards their children (Mookherjee et al., 2010). A valuable insight regarding the value of education among Latino migrants is that parents do not see education just as a way to achieve economic goals, but as personal fulfilment or moral development resource (Goldenberg et al., 2001). This is especially important since the parental nurture effect is one of the primary drivers of intergenerational human capital transfer (Holmlund et al., 2011) and might not be compensated by increased income (Shea, 2000).

This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the nexus education-migration by studying the educational aspirations of children in a traditional sending country like Ecuador. Indeed, it is during 1999 - 2003 that massive outflows of working age people are recorded, predominantly to the USA, Spain and Italy. For instance, according to official statistics there was a variation of 140.1 % between the emigration rates of 1998 and 1999 and it is estimated that 685 857 Ecuadorians left the country during this period, most of them were from the Southern region of Ecuador, mainly from the Provinces of Azuay and Cañar (Ramirez & Ramirez, 2005: 70). The Ecuadorian National Institute of Statistics and Census, INEC (2019) pointed out the USA as the

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decisions on migration involve many generations and their current power relationships. Similarly, ethnographic works have pointed out how feelings, emotions and perceptions fund the sociological myth of the 'successful migrant' in the origin communities (Herrera, et al., 2018; Levitt & Schiller, 2004). In the same vein, transnational theory emerges supported by many authors such as Levitt & Schiller (2004) and Parella & Speroni (2018). Indeed, contemporary literature on migration has looked again to the household and family. However, some authors have found that these relations are permeated by tensions (Herrera, 2013) and reproduction of gender inequality (Herrera 2013; Rivas, 2011; Zapata, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Aspirations and expectations are two related but different concepts. Aspirations reflect hopes and dreams that might be detached from reality. For instance, low aspirations have always been identified as an internal constraint that impedes the individual to escape poverty, reinforcing a so-called poverty trap (Dalton et al., 2016). Expectations are more closely linked to the socioeconomic conditions. Expectations are related to the liabilities that children might face while trying to achieve a specific educational level. Contrary to aspirations, expectations should reflect real struggles and obstacles that might impede a wish to materialise.



first destination for Ecuadoreans since 1997, and that 528,486 of them left to this country by 2019. Furthermore, since many migrants go irregularly to the USA, a significant sub-record is calculated. It is important to note that being irregular means constant uncertainty, higher danger, risk of deportation, and less probability of visits to the origin country. Indeed, several cases of deportation, journeys of unaccompanied minors and smuggling and drug trafficking are usually reported in the area<sup>5</sup>.

This paper studies the case of Biblián, a town of the Province of Cañar. Biblián was chosen because of the following reason: In 2001, while the called ‘migratory stampede’, its emigration rate was 11.31 % –the third-highest rate in the country– and the poverty rate, measured by unsatisfied basic needs, rose to 67.48 % (Ramirez & Ramirez, 2005). During the last census in 2010, its population was 20,817 inhabitants and its migrant population was 1,891 and, in consequence, the proportion of migrants relative to the total population was the highest in Ecuador (INEC, 2010). Unfortunately, there is no updated statistics regarding emigration from Biblián. However, the local government (GAD Cañar, 2016) highlights remittances as financial sources and social impacts of migration in its official plan for 2015-2019.

In order to meet the research objectives, we used a quantitative strategy to identify which variables predict the educational aspiration and a qualitative research to describe how parents might influence children aspirations in international migration-related contexts.

## Methods

Biblián is a small parish located in the Ecuadorian Andean region where international migration is prevalent. We used an explanatory sequential design: the quantitative study was followed by a qualitative one purpose of which was to describe the mechanisms of influence from parents to children regarding their educational aspirations, in migrant households. In the quantitative stage, the data was collected between May and June 2015 by the VLIR-IUC Migration and Local Development Project of the University of Cuenca through a survey called Problems, Expectations and Aspirations of Children (PEACH). A randomized cluster sample was applied to select the schools and the surveys were applied in 9 educational institutions<sup>6</sup> of Biblián.

The PEACH was applied for students, caregivers and teachers and included questions related to household sociodemographic characteristics, academic performance (only for teachers), expectations, and aspirations. For the qualitative stage, a sample of seven mothers who participated in the first stage of the study was selected. The selection criterion was that the partner (husband) was still living abroad. The gathering of data, as well as the analysis and presentation of results, was done following the Ministry of Education of Ecuador and American Psychological Association requirements.

The variables collected for the quantitative stage were defined as follows:

*Educational Expectations.* Measured by the question: “Considering the following scale, where 0 represents impossibility, and 10 represents certainty, what probability do you think you have to

<sup>5</sup> Unluckily, there is no systematization of this panorama. An interesting –although rather anecdotal– work is offered by Ramirez & Lagomarsino (2014). However, many press reports (originally in Spanish) might depict this situations: *Deportation of Ecuadorian citizens from the U.S., Two Ecuadorian teenagers deported trying to reach the US, Authorities warn that ‘coyotes’ force migrants to take drugs to the US.*

<sup>6</sup> Ecuador’s general educational levels are two: General Basic Education (from 5 to 14 years-old children) and General High school (similar to US high school, from 14 to 18 years-old children), although each institution usually manage both.

reach the education level you want?" The main caregiver responded to a similar question: "Considering the following scale, where 0 represents impossibility and 10 represents certainty, what probability do you think [name of the child] has to reach the education level [name of the child] wants?"

*Educational Aspirations.* Captured by the question: "What is the highest educational level you wish to achieve?" The question includes six levels: 1= Basic education (10 years of elementary school), 2= high school diploma, 3= profession (such as carpentry, plumbing), 4= technologist (computer sciences, electrician, mechanic), 5= graduate degree and 6= postgraduate degree. Parents responded to a variation of the same question: "If there were not economic problems and the other aspects of your life would go by normally, what is the highest educational level you wish [name of the child] could complete?"

*Academic Self-efficacy.* Built using five questions from the student's questionnaire: 1) "I learn fast the content of all the subjects", 2) "I like reading", 3) "I like math", 4) "I always get good grades in math", 5) "I always get good grades in literature". All the questions have a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from "always" to "never" ( $\alpha=.736$ ).

*Academic Disengagement.* Information of the student's behaviour in the classroom provided by their teachers captured by three questions: 1) "Would you consider that [name of the child] has emotional difficulties", 2) "Would you consider that [name of the child] has focusing difficulties", and 3) "Would you consider that [name of the child] has conduct difficulties". All questions have a 4-point Likert scale that ranges from "no" to "severe difficulties" ( $\alpha=.774$ ).

*Socio-economic Status of the Household.* Index built using Principal Components Analysis. The literature about the construction of socio-economic status indices suggests a wide range of variables that might be included. For this paper, the following variables were considered: 1) whether the household has bathrooms or latrine, 2) availability of electricity service, 3) whether the household has water from pipe water inside the house, piped water outside the house, waterhole, or stream water, 4) availability of sewerage system, 5) availability of garbage collection service, 6) availability of at least one own computer, 7) whether there are books, encyclopaedias and a place for the student to study in the house, and 8) the possession of a cell phone.

*Educational Performance.* The average grade obtained by the student at the end of the year. The educational grading system in Ecuador evaluates the students over 10 points and classified such score into 4 categories: 1) grades ranging from 1.00 to 4.99 indicate failure to achieve the required knowledge, 2) grades ranging from 5.00 to 6.99 indicate proximity to reach the required knowledge, 3) grades ranging from 7.00 to 8.99 indicate that the required knowledge was achieved, and 4) grades ranging from 9.00 to 10.00 indicate full grasp of the required knowledge.

*Age.* Considering that aspirations and expectations might vary across age groups, we created an ordinal categorical variable with three levels: 1) childhood: children from 8 to 11 years old, 2) adolescence: students from 12 to 16 years old, and 3) late adolescence: students from 17 to 21 years old.

*Migratory Dream.* Measured by the question "Do you think it would be good to live and work in another country?" A similar question was asked to parents regarding their children. The responses were coded 1=Yes and 0=No.



*Caregiver involvement in educational activities.* Caregivers were asked whether or not they take their time to help their children with their homework.

*Caregiver education level.* The highest educational level they reached. Only two categories were found and coded 0=Elementary school and 1=High school. Nobody in the sample of caregivers reported getting a graduate degree.

*Siblings.* Number of children living in the household including stepbrothers and stepsisters.

*Household with migrants.* We identified as a household of migrants those that have at least one parent living abroad; we considered both biological parents and stepparents.

Regarding the data analysis, a sequential explanatory mixed methods design was used in order to estimate and understand educational aspirations and its relation to the international migration phenomenon. After obtaining descriptive statistics, we ran four logit regression model. In Model 1 and 3, the dependent binary variable indicates whether the students wish to get a graduate degree or higher, while in Model 2 and 4, the binary variable indicates whether the student wishes to get at least a high school degree. The issue of endogeneity in migration research has been assessed by using instrumental variables or panel data. Given the cross-sectional nature of the available dataset used in this paper, we rely on a second best strategy that is including several variables to control for other effects.

For the qualitative stage, in-depth interviews were analysed by the method of thematic analysis, following the strategy of finding common topics and ideas to provide insights into the role of parents on children's aspirations and how they react towards the possibility of children becoming migrants. The themes were determined by using an analysis matrix and group research workshops to guarantee credibility and dependability. Trustworthiness of the qualitative study was carried out by triangulation with theory and the quantitative stage results, which regression analysis demonstrated that the most significant variable to predict educational aspirations of children was the caregiver's aspiration. Pseudonyms were used to present the results.

## **Results**

This section provides evidence regarding the extent to which migration shapes migrant's children educational aspirations and the meanings and nuances which explain this relation in the case of Biblián, Ecuador. Correspondingly, the quantitative results, obtained from the PEACH (children, parents and teachers) are described below and followed by the qualitative data from interviews applied to some mothers, heads of migrant households.

### **Estimating educational aspirations and its relation to international migration**

The descriptive statistics (Table 1-2) state that 48.62 % of the children live with both parents, while the migration of only the mother is rare (0.52%). Whereas most of caregivers express that it might not be good for their children to live and work abroad (53.93 %), children themselves answered positively to this question (60.75 %). It was found that children and caregivers have high aspirations and expectations, regardless of their sociodemographic characteristics.

However, the results show that aspirations and expectations of caregivers and children are slightly higher in households without migrants.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of categorical variables

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	762	49.93
	Female	764	50.07
Age category	Childhood	488	31.98
	Adolescence	821	53.8
	Late Adolescence	217	14.22
Children migratory dreams	Yes	921	60.75
	No	595	39.25
Caregiver migratory dreams	Yes	287	46.47
	No	336	53.93
Child performance	9.00 to 10.00 (full grasp)	319	22.74
	7.00 to 8.99 (required)	1042	74.27
	5.00 to 6.99 (proximity)	33	2.35
	1.00 to 4.99 (failure)	9	9
	Both parents living with the child	742	48.62
Household composition	Both parents are international migrants	207	13.56
	Mother at home, father abroad	291	19.07
	Father at home, mother abroad	8	.52
	Other (widows, divorced parents, etc.)	278	18.22
	1	304	20.03
Socioeconomic Status (Quintiles)	2	308	20.29
	3	320	21.08
	4	285	18.77
Caregiver involvement in homework	5	301	19.83
	Yes	393	85.62
	No	66	14.38
Educational level of the caregiver	School	440	76.52
	High school	135	23.48
Communication *	Yes	428	88.43
	No	56	11.57

\* At least one parent maintains contact with the child

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of numerical variables

Variable	Obs.	Median	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Academic self-efficacy	1517	20	19.47	3.11	6	25
Academic Disengagement	1353	4	5.41	1.95	4	15
Age of the child	1526	13	13.14	2.82	8	21
Children aspiration	1524	5	4.80	1.15	1	6
Children expectation	1518	8	7.62	2.23	1	10
Caregiver aspiration	605	4	4.04	1.12	1	5
Caregiver expectation	626	8	7.59	2.33	0	10

Most children from Biblián declared that learning is their main motivation to study. The bivariate analysis does not find evidence of the association of this variable with the migration history of the household ( $\chi^2 = 1.78$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .78$ ). Similarly, while studying the attitude towards school with the migratory history of the household, no relation was found ( $\chi^2 = 3.35$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .5$ ). More surprisingly, there is no association between the aspiration and the migration history of the household ( $\chi^2 = 8.9$ ,



$df=5, p=.11$ ). By comparing the median values and distributions of the educational aspirations this study failed to find strong evidence that it is associated with the migration history in the household ( $z= 1.91, p=.056; \chi^2=1.11, df=1, p=.29$ ). Furthermore, the comparison controlling by age category found similar results for children ( $z= 1.67, p=.09; \chi^2 = .72, df=1, p=.39$ ), adolescents ( $z= .60, p=.54; \chi^2=.59, df=1, p=.44$ ), and late adolescents ( $z= .61, p=.54; \chi^2=. 59, df=1, p=.44$ ).

Nonetheless, this study found a significant relationship between the migration history in the household and the question of whether or not the children think it would be good to live and work in another country ( $\chi^2 =30.43, df=1, p<.01$ ). This dependence persists in all but the late adolescent's group ( $\chi^2 =2.48, df=1, p=.11$ ). Additionally, there is an association between age category and whether the children think it would be good to live and work in another country ( $\chi^2 =14.61, df=2, p<.01$ ).

The association between sex and the migratory dream is only significant among children; interestingly, girls are more prone to answer 'yes' to this question (60.4 %) than boys (47.2 %) ( $p<.01$ ). Although this association is not statistically significant for adolescents ( $p=.433$ ) and late adolescents ( $p=.476$ ).

The results of the proposed logistic regression models are presented in Table 3 in the form of odd ratios. Children who replied affirmative to the question about the migratory dream have higher probabilities of aspiring to obtain at least a graduate degree. The variable which indicates whether the child belongs to a household with migrants is significant only to predict the aspiration to get a graduate degree, but its effect disappears when the dependent variable accounts for the aspiration of getting at least a high school degree.

For Models 3 and 4 that include the full set of covariates, there was no sign of strong multicollinearity (mean Variance Inflation Factor was 1.24 for both models); good model specification (in both models the linear predicted value is significant ( $p<.01$ ) and the linear predicted value squared is not), and adequate goodness of fit (In both models, the Hosmer and Lemeshow's goodness-of-fit test yields a non-significant p-value).

For Model 1, the variables sex, educational performance, age, expectations of children, academic self-efficacy, academic disengagement, child migratory dream are significant. In Model 2, the educational performance, age, academic self-efficacy, and child migratory dream are predictors of children's aspirations. In Model 3 where a set of household variables are introduced, only the socio-economic status, the caregiver aspiration, and whether there's at least one migrant at home are significant. Regarding the initial set of variables, just age, children's expectations and children's migratory dream remain significant. After introducing the set of covariates related to household characteristics (Model 4), sex, educational performance, age category, socio-economic status and caregiver aspiration are predictors of educational aspirations.

### **Understanding the educational aspirations in migrant households**

The respondents were seven women, whose age was between 28 and 46 years old and 4 of them accomplished the primary education while the others reached the secondary level of education. All of them were married and their husbands were in the USA and have from 1 to 2 school-age children. Two main nodes were identified by the thematic analysis: value of education and parent-child transmission channel.

**Table 3.** Logistic regression results

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sex	.47 (.07)***	.90(.19)	.68(.23)	3.39 (2.08)**
Performance (group)				
Required	.44 (.10)***	.3246 (.12)***	.62 (.28)	.33(.2)*
Proximity	.24 (.11)***	.3284 (.22)	.68 (.78)	
Failure	.17 (.15)**			
Age (group)				
Adolescence	1.61 (.2730)***	2.02 (.47)***	3.38 (1.45)***	4.76 (2.70)***
Late adolescence	2.45 (.6175)***	3.91 (1.59)***	2.86 (1.72)*	4.49 (6.51)
Children Expectation	1.12 (.0384)***	1.08 (.05)	1.16 (.10)*	.90 (.13)
Academic Self-efficacy	1.08 (.0277)***	1.07 (.04)*	1.03 (.07)	.99 (.08)
Academic Disengagement	.917 (.0313)**	.93 (.04)	.91 (.09)	.84 (.10)
Child Migratory dream	1.68 (.2394)***	1.73 (.36)***	2.09 (.75)**	.87 (.51)
Siblings			1.50 (.71)	2.08 (1.22)
SES			1.31(.15)**	1.39(.21)**
Caregiver aspiration			1.84 (.25)***	1.62 (.29)***
Caregiver expectation			1.03 (.08)	.99 (.14)
Caregiver migratory dream			.90 (.32)	1.33 (.64)
Parent involvement school			2.06 (1.01)	2.72 (2.11)
Caregiver education level			1.11 (.46)	1.82 (1.09)
Household with at least one migrant			.50 (.18)*	.67 (.30)
Cons	1.10 (.77)	4.97 (4.96)	.01 (.03)**	1.04 (2.54)
pseudo R2	.09	.07	.222	.3156
Obs	1219	1212	260	256

\*\*\*p &lt; .01

\*\* p &lt; .05

\* p &lt; .1

### The Value of Education

The literature review on migrant households suggested that parents tend to assign values to education: as an instrumental means to obtain better jobs and higher income and as an intrinsic value or, in other words, being educated independently of the financial benefits it could report. The qualitative results state that the second meaning is stronger than the first one in these mothers. Being asked about a scenario where her son migrates, Sonia says: “Maybe to study... maybe... but not to work” and she continues, “for me studying is the most important thing, I want them to study, the three of them [referring to their children] to be professionals, any profession, but professionals”. Parents from Biblián seem to give education an intrinsic value, as a mother replied, “of course money is quite important, but about that... As my sister always says, dummy<sup>7</sup>, only has money and knows nothing about other things. Money is not the only important thing, as I say, it is quite important considering these days and our needs, but the most important thing is the study” (Ramona). Rocío shares a similar thought and illustrates it by the phrase “if you are not a high school graduate, you are practically nobody”.

Education has also a perceived instrumental value for parents. Juana reported that she advises her daughter to finish high school because it is important “for everything”. In the same interview, regarding the possibility of her daughter’s migration, she says that there are jobs in Biblián as well

<sup>7</sup> In Spanish the mother said *indio bruto*, which is a pejorative way of saying dummy indigenous.





and that if her child studies she will be better than her. Similarly, Rosario says: “I did not finish high school, [I have] nothing, I milk cows, sometimes enduring rain, sun, one goes. If she gets the high school diploma, she can get a job”. Another mother, Ana, shares the optimism regarding the instrumental benefits of education by saying: “I think studying is important to [achieve] a more bearable lifestyle, [...] because right now, without studies, you are worthless”.

### **Parent-child transmission channel**

According to the bibliographical review, the longer the exposure in the host country, the less optimistic migrants become, because of the hard conditions they have to endure. Consequently, in Biblián, migration is not an opportunity that parents consider for their children. This is depicted when Eloisa tells: “[my husband] is already nine years there [USA] and he also says no, this is not a place to work, if one day is possible that you would come to know the place, but not to work, only to know because he is there and he says it’s hard. Parents are also aware of the dangers involved in the illegal trip to the USA, especially for girls.

However, even in a scenario of no dangers, the interviewed caregivers are still reluctant to consider the idea of their children migrating. Juana reveals the advice given to her daughter, “the father talks to her saying ‘darling, [it is] hard here, there [in Biblián] you may go to [your] family and your family offers you a cup of coffee... at least a soup, but daughter, here [USA] if you don’t work there’s nothing”.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Clearly, both parents and children have high aspirations and expectations regardless of the migratory history of the household. However, the multivariate analysis reveals that the effect of expectations of the caregivers disappears after controlling for other variables. The influence of the significant variables after the logistic regression results is also reported in other research (Gil-Flores et al., 2011; Archer, et al., 2014). This study found strong evidence of the influence of the caregivers as providers of social-emotional influences on the educational aspirations of children of Biblián, as suggested in Expectancy-Value Theory and showed in past research (Eccle, 2009; Kirk et al., 2011). The migratory dream of children also positively predicts aspiration in three of the suggested models. The bivariate analysis showed a significant association between this variable and the migratory history in the household.

Guo et al. (2015) and Rojewski & Yang (1997) discussed the importance of socioeconomic status on aspirations and found significant associations between them. By contrast, according to Nauta et al. (1998) and Rottinghaus et al. (2002), self-efficacy is not a predictor of aspirations which fades with the inclusions of the second block of variables. In both, Model 3 and 4, the effect of expectations disappears and the caregiver aspirations remain as strongly significant.

While the results suggest that gender is relevant only in two of the four proposed models, past research has revealed that girls are more ambitious in their educational aspirations than boys (Schoon & Polek, 2011; Rotheron et al., 2011). Interestingly, the ambivalence of the results might be explained by the strong migration culture of Biblián which may have contributed to destabilise gender roles. However, it is noteworthy that the qualitative instrument was not developed to deepen into gender issues.

The dummy variable, which indicates whether the child belongs to a household of migrants is only significant to predict the aspiration to obtain at least a graduate degree. Belonging to a

household with at least one migrant parent lowers this probability, according to Model 3, but the variable is not significant in Model 4. Research on Mexican migrants revealed that having a migrant father does not affect the aspiration, but having a migrant mother does (Dreby & Stutz, 2012). In both migrant and non-migrant households, expectations of students are significant only to predict their aspiration to get a graduate or a higher degree, but not to predict their aspiration to finish high school; similar results are observed regarding academic self-efficacy. This is not surprising given the fact that several students were already in high school. Thus, finishing high school might not be a very difficult task.

The qualitative results offered a deeper understanding of the quantitative analysis concerning the relevance of the caregivers' influence, which was found significant for predicting the educational aspirations of children in Biblián. The direct contributions from the qualitative stage were the meanings of the value of education and the parent-child transmission channel. Regarding the role of parental educational aspirations from families with migrants, as in other research among Latino families (Goldenberg et al., 2001), the qualitative results suggest that mothers value education beyond its instrumental value. Mothers interviewed seem to concede value to education for its own sake. However, education might be also perceived as a sign of social and economic status by mothers of migrant households, even as a fact to disincentive their children's migration.

The parent-child transmission channel of transnational parenthood is mainly related to migration by communicating (Kandel & Kao, 2001) the difficulties that the migrant father experience in the destination country. This is not surprising since irregular migration sets a particular negative condition in the USA. This kind of social remittances (Mata-Codesal, 2013) may nuance the stereotypes and social imaginaries in the origin country (Herrera 2005; Pedone, 2005, Villavicencio, Tenorio & Orellana, 2011). Nonetheless, the results do not provide enough evidence to describe in a broad way how familial transnationalism (Herrera, 2004) is shaping the left-behind children's education in Biblián. Moreover, a further study from the children's voices is needed to give detail on the meanings of transnational parenthood and communication.

Despite the fact that the qualitative results are based on respondent mothers' perceptions and cannot predict how education and migration relate to each other, they corroborate the complexity and tensions (Antman, 2013; Herrera, 2013) that permeate this relation. For instance, in accordance to the quantitative analysis, the interviews did not indicate a clear reproduction of gender inequality as Herrera (2013) and Zapata (2016) stated. Additionally, while Kandel & Kao (2001) suggest that children's migration dream discourages their educational aspirations, the quantitative results corroborate that aspirations and expectations of caregivers and children are only slightly higher in households without migrants. The interviews analysis supported this result by stressing that money cannot buy the status education itself provides, so the children were not just another 'dummy' with money.

The role of international migration for educational aspirations of children of Biblián is influenced by several factors. This paper shows that the educational aspirations of parents are a strong predictor of their children's aspirations in both migrant and non-migrant households. Household-related variables, including their migration history, have a stronger effect than individual ones when predicting the educational aspirations of children. Aspirations and expectations of caregivers and children, are slightly higher in households without migrants. Education has a value that transcends the material benefits that it might report, but rather it has a moral value.



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