Child labour and contextual effects: an ethnic-racial differentiation for Cali, Colombia

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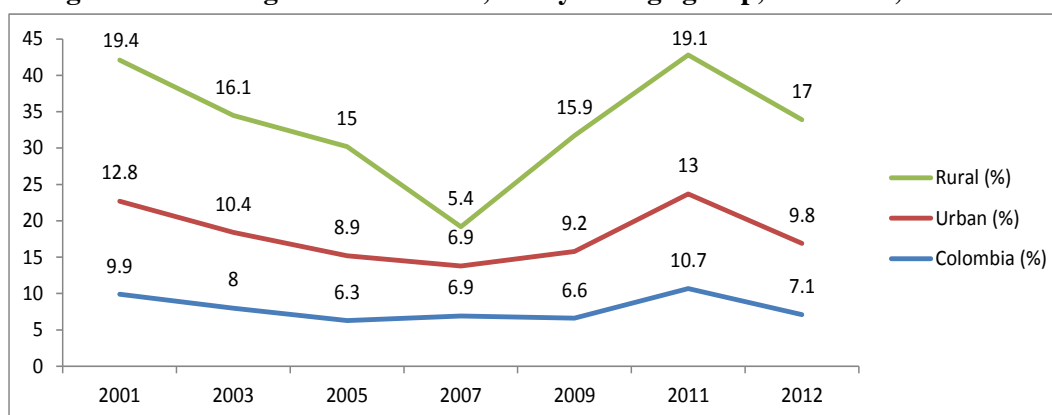lfaguado@javerianacali.edu.co

Abstract

The persistence of child labour has created several declarations of the United Nations that invite all countries of the world to the construction of public policies to eliminate this scourge. This research aims to explore individual and contextual determinants of child labour, as well as to identify differences by ethnic-racial status in Cali-Colombia. Contextual effects are measured using logistic multilevel modeling. The data are drawn from the Cali 2013 Employment and Quality of Life Survey (EQLS). This research contributes to the empirical literature on child labour to the extent that seeks to incorporate contextual factors such as the presence of sports centers, libraries, violence and the average level of education in the commune (administrative subdivisions in Cali), which have been little explored. We expect that the results of this study shed lights on new public policy strategies for the reduction of child labor in the city of Cali.

Key words: Child labour, contextual effects, ethnic-racial differences, Cali-Colombia.

Extended Abstract

The problem of child labour at world level has become much more alarming everytime. For instance, in 2012, according to the International Labour Organization-ILO- (2013) 11% of the total child population was working (168 million children). According to the ILO, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the participation of child population in the labour market is significant (8.8% in 2012). In fact, between 2000 and 2003, in countries such as Ecuador, Guatemala, Perú, Bolivia and Dominican Republic, child labour reached 13%. In reference to the *Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística-DANE* (2012), in Colombia the child labour rate decreased from 12.8% in 2001 to 9.8% in 2012, however still in higher position than the region's average (See Graph 1). In the case of the metropolitan area of the city of Cali, the child labour rate was 9.7% during 2011.

Figure 1 Percentage of child labour, 5-17 years age group, Colombia, 2001-2012

Source: DANE 2012

Research from the economic theory perspective indicates that one of the factors closely related to the child labour problem is poverty or the household's low income (Basu and Van, 1998 and Ray, 2000a and 2000b). In this vein, child labour may not be considered as a phenomenon that can be understood from a perspective of a cultural activity of some population groups without taking into account the socio-economic characteristics of the households and the territorial context.
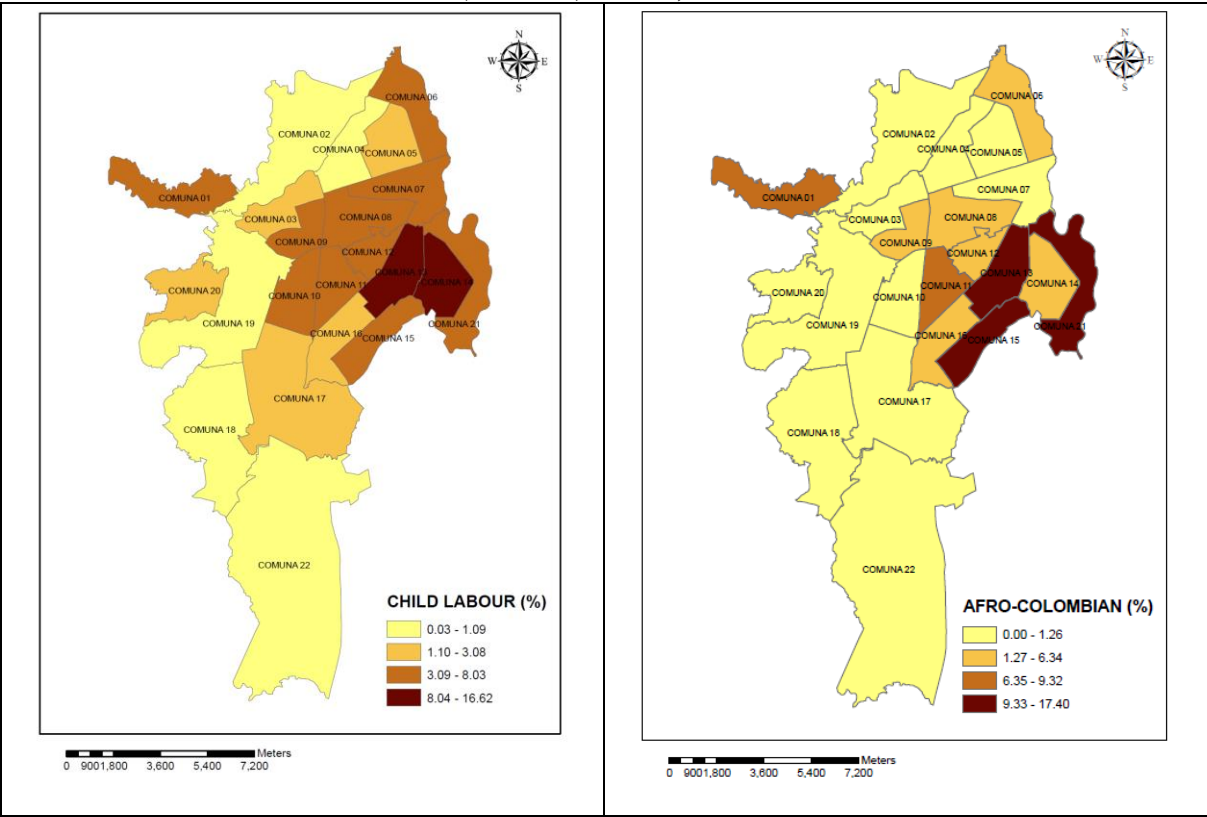
Referring to Myers (2001), it is reasonable to suppose that the subject of child labor has been approached from four major perspectives. The first one considers the child labour problem from the dynamic of the labour market; the second one, from human capital as a factor of economic development; the third one from social responsibility; and the fourth one from the childhood's perspective.

This research is focused on determining the influence of the family characteristics and the commune's context (administrative and geographical sub-division of the municipality of Cali) on child labour among 12-17 years old. Likewise, it seeks to identify whether the context's effect on child labour varies according to the ethnic-racial groups. We use data from the 2013 Cali Employment and Quality of Life Survey (EQLS). This is the first survey carried out by The Colombian Ministry of Labour for Cali and included 8,600 households nested in 22 communes in urban and rural areas. The survey has a probabilistic sampling design, stratified selection of Simple Random Sampling units at each stage.

Previous studies in Colombia on child labour have focused their attention in the household's socio-economic determining factors; however, it is important to approach the influences of other significant variables. In this context, this study aims to indicate the effect of the ethnic-racial condition and the context. The first findings show that in the city of Cali, child labour is brought together in the communes of greater afro-Colombian population (See Graph 2).

Mentioning the causality between the ethnic-racial condition and child labour or the context and child labour isn't precisely necessary (Carabalí, 2012); however, more accurate public policies that establish greater clarity in the determining factors of child labour can be implemented.

Figure 2 Distribution of Child labour (12-17 years) and Afro-Colombians by commune (Comuna) in Cali, 2013

Source: Cali 2013 Employment and Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)

The role played by context and ethnicity on child labour will be examined using logistic multilevel models. These allow us to take into account the hierarchical structure of the data and to explore variations between and within communes. When using hierarchical data, such as EQLS, individuals from the same cluster tend to be more similar to each other than individuals from different groups. Consequently, the assumption of independence of observations, on which standard statistical tests are based, is violated. Thus, if clustering is not considered, standard errors will be underestimated, confidence intervals will be too narrow and p-values will be too small, giving rise to spurious significance (Steele, 2008).

Multilevel models not only allow us to obtain statistically efficient estimations of the regression coefficients, they also enable us to investigate the extent to which differences in child labour are accounted for by contextual characteristics, such as the level of commune socioeconomic

development. Furthermore, estimating the variance at each level allows us to differentiate between the variation in child labour due to differences at the commune-level and those that are the result of differences in family characteristics.

One of the advantages of using multilevel modelling is the possibility for analysing interactions between variables at different levels. The aim is to determine whether variables at the group level may moderate lower-level relationships (Hox, 2010). In this study, interaction terms between commune-level and family-level variables will be explored. Particularly, our aim is to test whether the influence of commune socioeconomic context on child labour can varies by ethnic-racial groups.

This work contributes to the empirical literature on child labour in Colombia at the extent to introduce new determinants that may influence children in child labour. That is, we explore the effect of the closest context to which the individual (boy or girl) is exposed to. For instance, the access to libraries, sport centers and in general terms, both physical and institutional characteristics that can create space and ethnic-racial segregation, are under studied aspects of the country's empirical research. We expect that the results of this study shed lights on new public policy strategies for the reduction of child labor in the city of Cali

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