Dynamics and Consequences of Child Economic Vulnerability in the Recession: An analysis of Two waves and Two Cohorts

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Introduction

• Child poverty is not just an immediate issue of the well-being of children ... 
• It has long term effects, so implications for ... 
  – future of the economy 
  – future demand on public services 
  – important in breaking the cycle of disadvantage. 

• How has child poverty been affected by the Great Recession and what were its consequences?
Outline

1. Data and Measures
2. Economic Vulnerability dynamics
3. Consequences for children’s socio-emotional development
4. Conclusions and Implications
1a. Data and Measures

• **Growing Up in Ireland Survey (GUI)** – survey of families with children. Two waves and Two cohorts –
  – Born in 1998 (child aged 9 at first wave; 7,423 families responded in both waves)
  – Born in 2008 (child aged 9 mo. at first wave; 9,793 families responded in both waves)

• **Economic Vulnerability (EV):** people living in a HH with a disadvantaged risk profile in terms
  – low income,
  – household joblessness and
  – economic stress.

• **Identify the EV group using latent class analysis.**
1b. GUI – Timing of Fieldwork & Recession

- '98 cohort
- '08 cohort
- Unemployment
2a. Economic Vulnerability (EV) in Irish families

- Difference between the cohorts mainly due to timing of 1st wave (before vs. at start of recession).
2b. Economic Vulnerability Dynamics –
Did the same families remain EV in both waves?

- There was persistence and also movement
  - into EV (‘Recession EV’)
  - out of EV (‘Transient EV’)

- Change in the profile of the EV group – economic stress more central in recession
2c. Risk factors for Economic Vulnerability

- Parental Education: Mother lower education
- Family type: higher EV for
  - Lone parent families
  - Larger families
  - Cohabiting couples vs. married couples
- Age of mother - younger at child’s birth
- Differences by whether EV Persistent or ‘Recession’
  - Associations are strongest with Persistent EV
  - Associations somewhat weaker for ‘Recession EV’
  - Those becoming EV in recession were a broader group
3a. Consequences for Children

- Child socio-emotional development: Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman et al. 1997)
  - Designed to assess emotional health & problem behaviours among children and young people.
  - Included measures of emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems
  - Questionnaire completed by Primary Care Giver (PCG, usually the child’s mother)

- Used to identify group at risk of socio-emotional problems (top 10 per cent of cases)
Adjusted risk = from model, other characteristics controlled:

- child gender, cohort, family type,
- PCG education, PCG age at child’s birth, change in family composition (e.g. separation, additional children)

- EV has similar association with socio-emotional problems for ...
  - the two cohorts and
  - for boys and girls.
3c. Protective Factors

‘Protective’ factors for both EV and non-EV children

- Children less likely to have socio-emotional problems where ...
  - Mother in 30s at child’s birth
  - Mother not emotionally distressed (at wave 1)
  - Good relationship between parents in couple families (vs. couple with problems)

Protective factors that differ by presence/absence of EV:

- Mother education - even more important in EV families (Lower education has more negative impact in EV families.)
- Lone parent families: SDQ high whether or not family is EV
4a. Summary

- Economic Vulnerability (EV) increased for families during recession (reaching 25%)
- Risk factors for EV include low levels of education, lone parenthood, younger parents at child’s birth
  - Risk factors more strongly related to Persistent EV
  - ‘Recession EV’ group had less disadvantaged profile
- EV associated with higher risk of child socio-emotional problems
  - In lone parent families risk was high with/without EV
- Protective factors: parental education, mother in 30s at birth of child, good relationship between parents in couple family, parental emotional wellbeing,
4b. Policy Implications

• Attention to economic vulnerability of children warranted, especially persistent vulnerability
  – But even non-persistent EV linked to negative outcomes

• High risk groups identified (family type, parental education and age)

• A broader group became vulnerable in the recession
  – Need for policies to address wider issues
  – Not just income support but childcare, housing
Thank You.