

## CHILD INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD WORK IN MONGOLIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This descriptive research aims at defining the level of child involvement in household work in Mongolia, and to lesser extent, to study its differentials. The convenient sampling was adopted and 295 parents (or persons who look after the child) were selected from Grades 6-11 of secondary schools in Ulaanbaatar. Descriptive quantitative methods were used in data analysis. Among others, research finding suggests that around 80-90 percent of children do involve in any household work, and more importantly, the child involvement in household work, especially in cleaning tasks, is positively associated with the student achievement.*

**Keywords:** Child involvement, household work, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

### INTRODUCTION

The child involvement in household work is a crucial site of socialization into family roles, responsibilities, and obligations for the child development. It effects on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development (Goodnow, 1988). Children who contribute to their families' survival tend to show less antisocial behavior (Whiting and Whiting, 1975). In developed countries, children contribute around 12-20 percent of total household work (Klein et al., 2009; Blair, 1992a, 1992b; Gill, 1998).

Traditionally, in Mongolia, the child involvement in household work, including the engagement in livestock rearing used to start from early ages. Boys and girls ride horses from age of 4-5 years. However, in modern days, especially in urban areas, the number tasks performed by children has been reducing, and there is no estimation on child contribution to the total household work in Mongolia.

In Mongolia, limited research has been conducted on child involvement in household work, yet has not been published outside Mongolia. In this research, the level of child involvement in household work was studied in terms of selected household work-related activities, namely vacuuming, washing floor, washing dishes, cooking and other work than the household work. Among others, it aims at studying if the child involvement in household work is associated with poor performance in studying.

### DATA COLLECTION AND METHOD

The child involvement in household work has been studied using questionnaires, interviews, and time diaries as their data collection instruments (Coltrane, 2000), and mainly rely on information provided by parents (Klein et al., 2009). In this research, a set of questions with yes/no answers on household work-related activities was designed to study the level as well as differentials of the child involvement in household work. It was asked from parents that if their children do vacuuming, washing floor, washing dishes, cooking and other work than the household work. In our survey, we did not ask question on outside tasks, which are more likely to be performed by boys, such as water collection and preparation of fire wood and

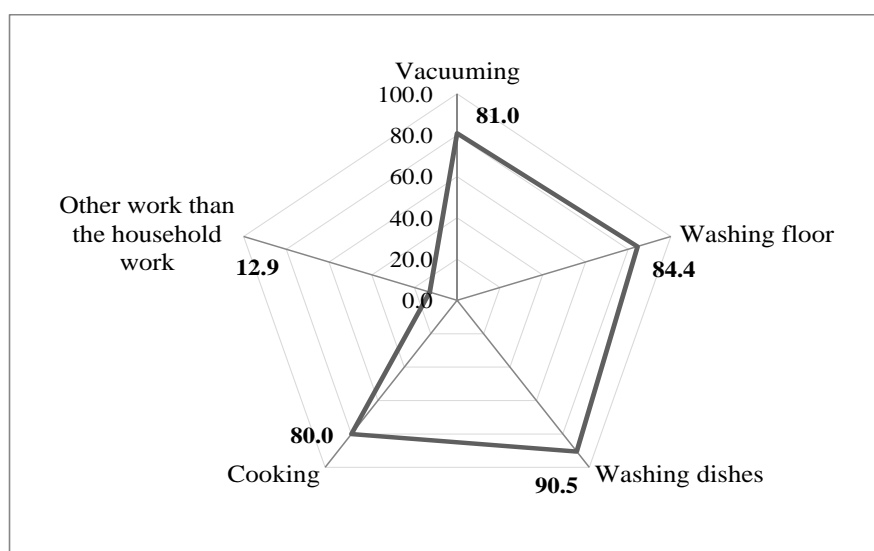
coal, from parents who live in UB ger district. Households in Ger district in UB live in ger (traditional tent) as well as in small houses which are not connected with centralized sewage system. In UB, 29.0 percent of households live in Ger district (NSO & UNFPA, 2011:236). Outside tasks are absent in UB center, where flats and houses are connected with centralized heating and sewage system. The student achievement is measured in terms of general assessment score.

Data collection was held with the help of master students recruited during the academic year 2015-16 at the Mongolian National University of Education (MNUE). In the class of research methodology, as part of training, students were asked to collect information from parents of secondary schools in UB. The convenient sampling was adopted as some master students were working as teachers at secondary schools. The judgment was made to cover both the city center and the suburb of UB. As a total, 295 questionnaires were filled in from parents whose children study in Grades 6-11. During the training, two separate teams were composed in each of three classes, and each team worked on data of single grades, to study all steps involved in conducting small scale survey. Later, the author combined all data sets into one, and conducted analysis.

Descriptive statistics were employed in data analysis. To test statistical significance for the tabulation, Chi square of independence of cross tabulation between two variables were employed. In the case of student achievement, F test, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, and t test for Equality of Means were employed. Also qualitative methods were employed to study responses to the open ended questions on other work than the household work, and for developing codes for tabulation.

### **THE LEVEL OF CHILD INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD WORK**

Children are expected to help with household tasks (Coltrane, 2000). Our survey reveals that 80- 90 percent of children who study in Grades 6-11, and aged 11-16 years, do household work (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Child involvement in household work, by type of activities, Mongolia, 2015-2016**

Children are most likely to do washing dishes (90.5%) and least likely to do cooking (80.0%). Also in our survey, 1/5 of all parents stated that their children do not engage in any household work, like cleaning and cooking, to have time to the homework (Dashtseren, 2016).

In some parts of the world, children involve in tasks, such as sibling care, running errands, fishing, weaving, and cultivating crops (Whiting and Whiting, 1975; Whiting and Edwards, 1988).

**Table 1. Children who engage in other work than the household work, by type of activities, Mongolia, 2015-2016**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Livestock rearing	4	10.5
Vegetable growing	7	18.4
Cleaning	4	10.5
Pet care	9	23.7
Sales worker	6	15.8
Waitress	7	18.4
Household business	1	2.6
Total	38	100

Our survey reveals that 12.9 percent of children in Grades 6-11 engage in other work than the household work, such as livestock rearing, vegetable growing, pet care and engage in household business. Also they work as sales workers, cleaners and as waitresses (Table 1).

### **CHILD INVOLEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD WORK BY SEX AND GRADE LEVEL**

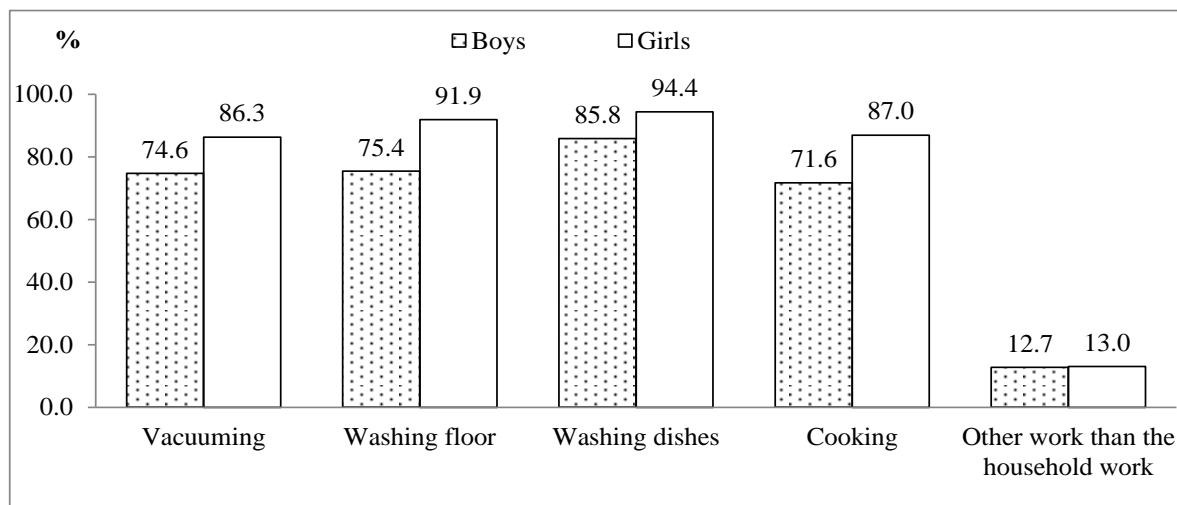
Older children as well as female children in the household tend to take on more tasks (Blair, 1992b). In Mongolia, traditionally, boys are more likely to engage in outside tasks, like going after livestock (horses, camels, sheep, goats and cattle) while girls are more likely to engage in inside tasks, like preparation of dairy products. This kind of gendered distinction in household chore responsibilities as “inside-outside” can be found elsewhere in the world (see Antill et al., 1996). In the United States, girls are more likely to do inside tasks such as cleaning while boys outside tasks such as yard work (Klein et al., 2009). This gendered distinction increases with increase in ages (Antill et al., 1996).

In modern times, in cities of Mongolia, boys’ burden of outside tasks reduced significantly. Furthermore, boys do not involve in inside tasks as girls. Girls are more likely to engage in household work than the boys, about three times (Klein et al., 2009). In Mongolia, girls are more likely to engage in all types of household activities covered in our survey (Figure 2), and chi-square tests reveal that almost all activities are significantly differed by gender<sup>1</sup>.

In UB city, boys are much less likely to wash floor (16.5 percentage points) and cook (15.4 percentage points) than girls. Among cleaning and cooking activities, the gender difference is found to be smallest for washing dishes, with 8.6 percentage points. In general, our data suggest that around 14 percent of boys do nothing, around 9 percent of boys wash dishes only, and the remaining 77 percent of boys engage in cleaning and cooking activities, the

<sup>1</sup> Chi-square tests for sex:  $\chi^2(1, 295) = 6.52, p = 0.011$  for vacuuming,  $\chi^2(1, 295) = 15.22, p = 0.000$  for washing floor,  $\chi^2(1, 295) = 6.28, p = 0.012$  for washing dishes,  $\chi^2(1, 295) = 10.72, p = 0.001$  for cooking, and  $\chi^2(1, 295) = 0.008, p = 0.927$  for other work than the household work.

inside tasks. This gives that every four boy in UB city is likely to be ‘spoilt’, not doing inside tasks while outside tasks are absent.



**Figure 2. Child involvement in household work, by type of activities and sex of the child, Mongolia, 2015-2016**

Traditionally, in Mongolia, parents tend to free boys from cleaning and cooking household chores when there were plenty of outside tasks. In modern times, this mentality is kept and parents tend to free boys from household chores. A male visitor from rural area in one family in UB center gives advise to his older brother’s wife as follows:

*Dear sister, do not make your only song to wash the floor. It is not a male job. Nowadays, no woman will be clean and neat like you. In the future, he will have conflict with his wife if he will learn to be very clean and neat. (Author’s observation)*

However, girls (12.7%) and boys (13.0%) in UB are equally likely to engage in other work than the household work.

The level of child involvement in household work and types of tasks increase with increase in ages (Whiting and Whiting, 1975; Klein et al., 2009). In our survey, in general the level of child involvement increases with increase in grade level (Table 2). These correlations are statistically significant for washing dishes ( $\rho = -0.122$ ,  $p = 0.05$ , 2-tailed) and cooking ( $\rho = -0.249$ ,  $p = 0.01$ , 2-tailed), but not statistically significant for vacuuming ( $\rho = -0.088$ ,  $p = 0.131$ , 2-tailed), washing floor ( $\rho = -0.102$ ,  $p = 0.081$ , 2-tailed) and for other work than the household work ( $\rho = 0.173$ ,  $p = 0.003$ , 2-tailed). Also our survey shows that types of activities increase with increase in grade level. More than half of children in Grade 6 was doing cooking (56.1%), and it increased to 92.6% for children in Grade 11.

However, the highest level of child involvement in household work and other work than household work is not found for highest grade level, except for cooking. The highest level of vacuuming is found for children in Grade 9 (92.7%), washing floor for children in Grade 8 (93.1%), and washing dishes for children in Grade 10 (95.9%). Also the child involvement in other work than the household work is not increasing with increase in grade level. The child involvement in other work than the household work is highest for children in Grades 7 and 8.

**Table 2. Child involvement in household work, by type of activities and child's grade level, Mongolia, 2015-2016**

	Vacuuming		Washing floor		Washing dishes		Cooking		Other work than the household work	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Grade 6	33	80.5	30	73.2	33	80.5	23	56.1	7	17.1
Grade 7	37	71.2	41	78.8	46	88.5	37	71.2	15	28.8
Grade 8	46	79.3	54	93.1	54	93.1	51	87.9	7	12.1
Grade 9	38	92.7	35	85.4	37	90.2	34	82.9	2	4.9
Grade 10	38	77.6	42	85.7	47	95.9	41	83.7	1	2.0
Grade 11	47	87.0	47	87.0	50	92.6	50	92.6	6	11.1
Total	239	81.0	249	84.4	267	90.5	236	80.0	38	12.9

When children become older they tend to avoid household tasks, and more likely to go out. Mother of a girl in Grade 11 tells the following:

*My daughter since she started to prepare for graduation exams, started to avoid coming to kitchen. She lives as if in hotel. Takes ready food, and goes out.*

It is somewhat different from expectations written by other researchers (Goodnow, 1988; Whiting and Edwards, 1988) that older children are more likely to be involved in household work than their younger siblings.

### **CHILD INVOLEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD WORK BY EMPLOYMENT OF PARENTS**

Employment of parents is important factor for children's involvement in household work. In Mongolia, employment of both parents is likely to be high as female labour force participation is relatively high. In 2017, 50.3 percent of women aged 15 years and above were employed (NSO, 2017).

In our survey, four categories of employment of parents, namely both employed, father employed, mother employed and both not employed, are defined. Here, single parent employment categories, namely father employed and mother employed, include few cases of children whose other parent was missing.

The employment of parents is more likely to require children to do domestic work (Blair, 1992a). In Mongolia, children whose both parents are not employed are least likely to do cleaning household work (vacuuming (68.4%) and washing floor (78.9%) and dishes (78.9%)) compared to those whose single and both parents are employed (Table 3). In general, there was somewhat negative association between the employment of parents and the child involvement in household cleaning work. However, these associations were not statistically significant<sup>ii</sup>.

On the other hand, there was a positive association between the employment of parents and the child involvement in cooking. If parents are employed then children are less likely to cook. The lowest child involvement in cooking is found for children whose both parents are employed (78.9%). It can be associated with that employed parents are less likely to have

<sup>ii</sup> Chi-square tests for employment of parents:  $\chi^2(1, 291) = 3.216$ ,  $p = 0.360$  for vacuuming,  $\chi^2(1, 291) = 1.943$ ,  $p = 0.584$  for washing floor,  $\chi^2(1, 291) = 4.796$ ,  $p = 0.187$  for washing dishes,  $\chi^2(1, 291) = 0.570$ ,  $p = 0.903$  for cooking, and  $\chi^2(3, 291) = 1.626$ ,  $p = 0.654$  for other work than the household work.

time to cook at home but to have money to purchase ready food. On the other hand, unemployed parents are less likely to have money to purchase ready food, and therefore, they are more likely to cook at home, and involve the child in cooking.

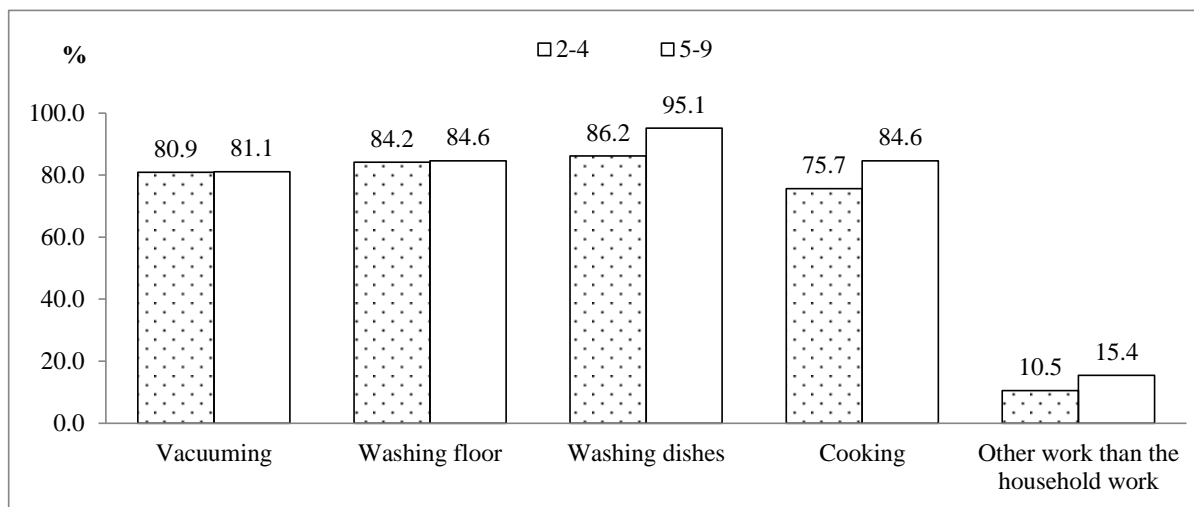
**Table 3. Child involvement in household work, by type of activities and employment of parents, Mongolia, 2015-2016**

	Vacuuming		Washing floor		Washing dishes		Cooking		Other work than the household	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Both employed	143	83.6	142	83.0	159	93.0	135	78.9	20	11.7
Father employed	38	77.6	44	89.8	43	87.8	39	79.6	6	12.2
Mother employed	43	82.7	45	86.5	46	88.5	43	82.7	8	15.4
Both not employed	13	68.4	15	78.9	15	78.9	16	84.2	4	21.1
Total	237	81.4	246	84.5	263	90.4	233	80.1	38	13.1

Similar with cooking, children of employed parents are less likely to do other work than the household work. Every five child whose parents are not employed, do other work than the household work to earn money and to contribute to the household income.

**CHILD INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD WORK BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND LOCATION**

In our survey, the average household size was 4.6 persons<sup>iii</sup>. Slightly more than half (51.5%) of households has 2-4 persons, 46.4 percent has 5-7 persons, and only 2.0 percent has 8-9 persons. Our survey suggests that children who live in larger families are more likely to involve in household work than those who live in smaller families (Figure 3).



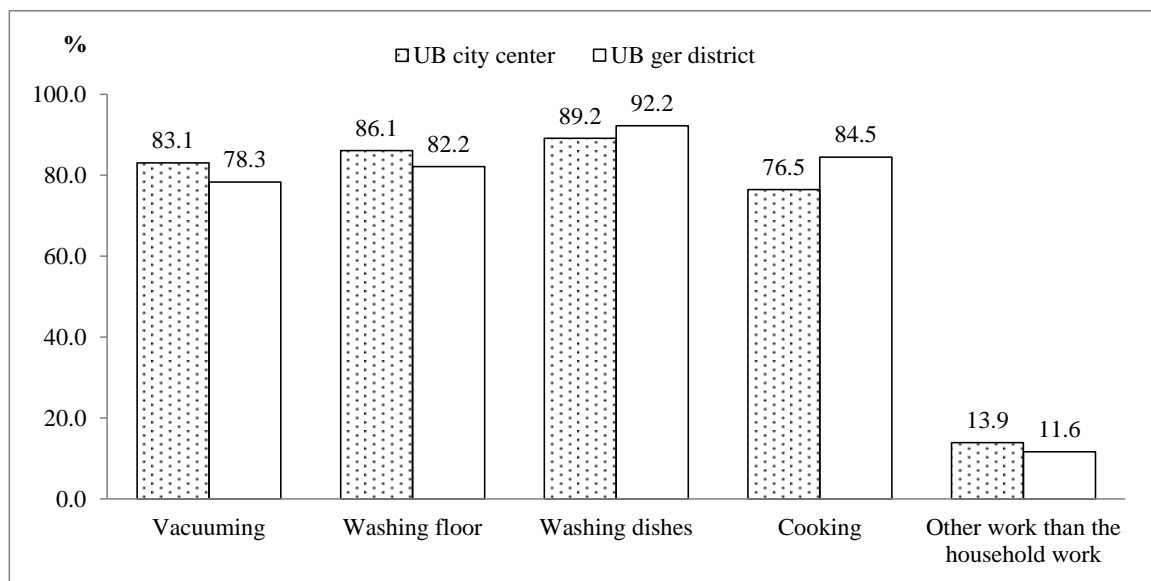
**Figure 3. Child involvement in household work, by type of activities and household size, Mongolia, 2015-2016**

Especially, they are more likely to involve in washing dishes (8.9%), cooking (8.9%) as well as in other work than the household work (4.9%). The large households are more likely to face poverty (NSO & WB, 2009), and children of larger households are more likely to involve in cooking as well as in earning money as a livelihood strategy to avoid poverty. The

<sup>iii</sup> It is greater than the average household size estimated by the 2010 population census of Mongolia, which was 3.6 persons per household (NSO & UNFPA, 2011:105).

differentials in child involvement in washing floor and dishes by household size are found to be statistically significant<sup>iv</sup>.

UB is divided into two locations: UB center and UB Ger district. Household tasks differ by location in UB. Households in Ger district need to bring water from well, dispose waste water, prepare fire wood and coal, and make fire to heat the home. Thus children in UB Ger district are likely to engage in such outside tasks while those in UB center are not. Unfortunately, these activities were not asked in our survey. We found that children in UB Ger district are more likely to cook than those in UB center, by 8.0 percentage points (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Child involvement in household work, by type of activities and location, Mongolia, 2015-2016**

On the other hand, children in UB center are more likely engage in cleaning activities (vacuuming and washing floor) as well as in other work than the household work than those in UB Ger district. However, none of differentials in the child involvement in household work by location is found to be statistically significant<sup>v</sup>.

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT BY TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD WORK

Parents believe that the child involvement in household work helps the child to grow up responsible, independent and skilled persons (Goodnow, 1988; Blair, 1992a). We found that the greater child involvement in household work is likely to be associated with the greater responsibility in studying. The student achievement of children who wash floor (mean score=2.2) and dishes (mean score=2.2) is greater than that who do not wash floor (mean score=1.9) and dishes (mean score=2.1). (See Table 4 and Figure 5.)

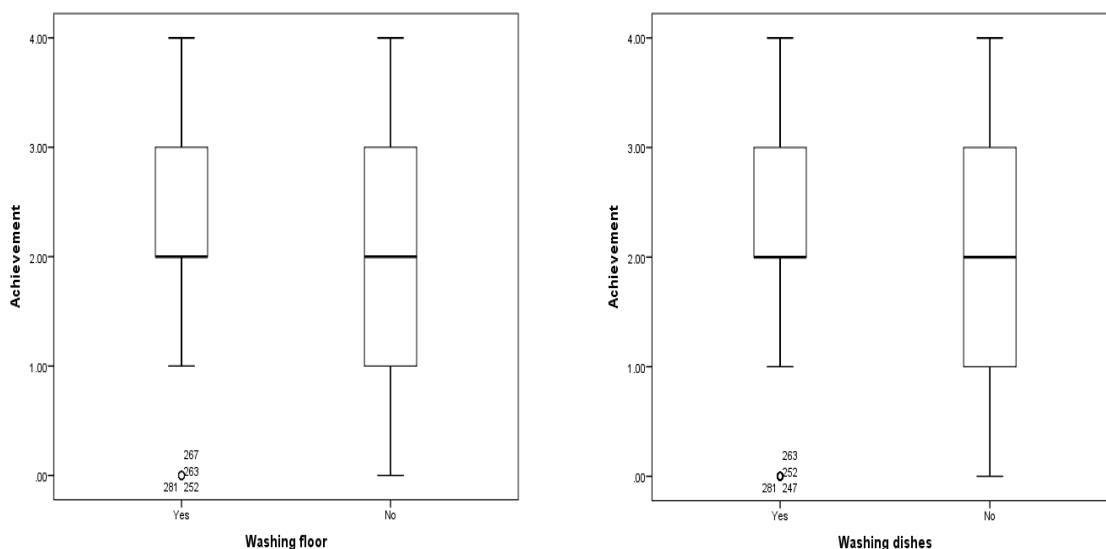
<sup>iv</sup> Chi-square tests for household size:  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 0.002, p = 0.965$  for vacuuming,  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 0.009, p = 0.924$  for washing floor,  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 6.825, p = 0.009$  for washing dishes,  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 3.695, p = 0.055$  for cooking, and  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 1.55, p = 0.213$  for other work than the household work.

<sup>v</sup> Chi-square tests for location:  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 8.690, p = 0.122$  for vacuuming,  $\chi^2 (5, 295) = 8.863, p = 0.115$  for washing floor,  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 0.808, p = 0.369$  for washing dishes,  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 2.896, p = 0.089$  for cooking, and  $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 0.321, p = 0.571$  for other work than the household work.

**Table 4. Student achievement, by type of household work**

	Vacuuming		Washing floor		Washing dishes		Cooking		Other work than the household work	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
N	205	50	220	35	235	20	204	51	34	221
Mean	2.2	2.2	2.2	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.2
Median	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Variance	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3	0.8	1.0	1.3
Std. Deviation	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.1
Minimum	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
Maximum	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Interquartile range	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

**Note:** F Levene's Test for Equality of Variances= 1.708, p= 0.192, and t=0.142, df=253, p=0.887 for vacuuming; F= 0.612, p= 0.435, and t=1.645, df=253, p=0.101 for washing floor; F= 0.019, p= 0.891, and t=0.629, df=253, p=0.530 for washing dishes; F= 2.764, p= 0.098, and t=-0.676, df=253, p=0.499 for cooking; and F= 0.567, p= 0.452, and t=0.199, df=253, p=0.843 for other work than the household work.



**Figure 5. Student achievement, by washing floor and dishes, Mongolia, 2015-2016**

Furthermore, the shape of box plot and the interquartile ranges suggest that the achievement of children who involve in household work is much better than those who do not. The interquartile range of achievement of children who wash floor and dishes is twice lower than those who do not. The 50 percent of children who wash floor and dishes have the achievement score of 2.0- 3.0 while the 50 percent of children who do not wash floor and dishes have the achievement score of 1.0-3.0. Moreover, the longer lower tail of the box plot for children who do not wash floor and dishes suggests that they are much more likely to have lower achievement score than 1.0.

On the other hand, the highest achievement was found for children who do not cook (mean score=2.3). The variation around the mean score of children who do not cook (std. deviation=0.9) is smaller than those who cook (std. deviation= 1.2). The lowest score of children who do not cook equal to 1.0 while it was zero for those who cook. Thus children who do not cook are slightly more likely to have better achievement than those who cook.



## CONCLUSION

This descriptive research, although covered small population, defined the level of child involvement in household work in Mongolia. The research covered Grades 6-11 of secondary schools in UB, which are selected conveniently. In our survey, around 80-90 percent of children do involve in any household work. It is consistent with that 1/5 of all parents stated that their children do not engage in any household work to have time to the homework (Dashtseren, 2016). Almost 1/5 of parents believe that their children are likely to perform better in schooling if they do not do any household work. In contrast to this, the achievement of children who involve in household work, especially in cleaning activities, is much better than those who do not. Thus, our research supports what was found elsewhere that the greater child involvement in household work is likely to foster the responsibility of the child in studying.

In general, the differentials in the level of child involvement in household work by sex and grade level in Mongolia are line with what were found elsewhere. Girls are more likely to engage in all types of household activities covered in our survey, and chi-square tests reveal that almost all activities significantly differed by gender. More importantly, our data suggest that around 14 percent of boys do nothing, around 9 percent of boys wash dishes only, and the remaining 77 percent of boys engage in cleaning and cooking activities, the inside tasks. This gives that every four boy in UB city is likely to be totally freed from household tasks, and 'spoilt', not doing inside tasks while outside tasks are absent. It might be because parents' mentality has not been transformed while the society is transformed from traditional to modern, given respect to boys in the absence of responsibility. Furthermore, boys are likely to show poor performance in studying than girls (Dashtseren 2016).

Also as elsewhere was found, the level of child involvement in household work is increasing with increase in grade level. However, the highest level of involvement in household work is not found for the highest grade level, except for cooking. This suggests that parents loose control over child's activity when the child reaches high grade level, say age of 15-16 years.

In our survey, the employment of parents does not require children to do all domestic tasks. It is likely to require the child to do the cleaning tasks but not always the cooking. Children of households, where both parents are employed and which live in UB center, are more likely to engage in cleaning tasks, and less likely to engage in cooking. Employed parents have money to purchase ready food. On the other hand, children of larger households and households in UB Ger district are more likely to involve in cooking. These suggest that cooking activity of children is likely to be associated with poverty of households. Also children who do not cook have slightly better achievement in studying than those who cook.

Our survey reveals that 12.9 percent of children engage in other work than the household work, such as livestock rearing, vegetable growing, pet care and engage in household business. Also they work as sales workers, cleaners and as waitresses. Similar with cooking, children of larger households and whose parents are not employed are more likely to engage in other work than the household work. Every five child whose both parents are not employed, do other work than the household work to help in household business and to contribute to the household income. Unlike cooking, children in grade 11, and who live in UB ger district are less likely to involve in other work than the household work.

Finally, the greater child involvement in household work is associated with the better performance in studying. However, boys, adolescent children and children with unemployed and/or vulnerable parents need special treatment to promote child responsibility in both household tasks and studying in Mongolia. Also our survey suggests that, out of household

chores, the child involvement in cooking, and other work than the household work are likely to be associated with poverty.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Researcher acknowledges the contribution of Master's students of MNUE of Mongolia, participated in data collection as part of research methodology training during the academic year of 2015-2016, and research was conducted with self funding of researcher.

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