
Exploring the Long-Term Effects of Child Support

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New Research On The Child Support Landscape In Wisconsin
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Exploring the long-term effects of child support.

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*Any views expressed here are ours alone and not necessarily
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Background and Research Questions

Child Support Policy

- A legal arrangement about a monetary transfer from noncustodial parents to a custodial-parent family to promote their economic well-being
- Established evidence suggests the policy's short-term positive effects on children.
- Knowledge gap: Little research explored the long-term effects of child support receipt on children.

Intergenerational Transmission of Economic Status

- Intergenerational persistence in economic outcomes
 - via human capital investment in children, endowments of earning capacity
- Growing up in a single-parent family may diminish access to parental resources & future economic outcomes.
- Child support policy may mitigate the intergenerational transmission of the economic disadvantage of children living with single mothers.

Study Aim and Research Questions

- To examine the impact of receiving formal support as a child on **economic outcomes** as young adults
- A two-study approach:
 - the Wisconsin Child Support Demonstration Evaluation (CSDE)
 - the Wisconsin Court Record Data (WCRD)
- Will adults who received child support (compared to those who did not receive it or received very little)
 - have lower, higher, or similar **earnings**;
 - be more, less, or equally likely to **be employed**?

Study 1

Data, Approach, and Findings

Study 1: Wisconsin CSDE

- A large-scale random-assignment experiment of the treatment of child support for Wisconsin Works (W-2) recipients in 1997-98.
- Random assignment
 - Mothers who received all child support paid on their behalf (**full support**)
 - Mothers who received only a part (**partial support**)

Study 1: Study Sample

- 17,923 children whose mothers were assigned to **full support** group or **partial support** group
 - Matched with Wisconsin's Unemployment Insurance (UI) records → earnings in formal jobs in Wisconsin

	Partial Support	Full Support
Child Age	6.36 (4.01)	6.39 (4.05)
Child Male	49.5%	49.8%
Child Black	54.0%	53.1%
Mother Age (<=25)	39.8%	38.4%
Mother Education (< HS)	53.3%	54.2%
Number of Children (>=3)	62.9%	62.9%

Study 1: Measures and Analytic Approach

Child support status

Full Support
vs.
Partial support

As a Child
(0 ~ 16 years old)

Ordinary Least Squares

Earnings:
Sum of 2018-2019
earnings

Employment:
Number of quarters
in 2018-2019 with
any earnings

As a Young Adult
(21 to 38 years old)

- Controlled for the group differences (that presumably occurred by chance)

Study 1: Findings

- Children in the full child support group, compared to the partial support group, had higher earnings (about \$1,000/year).
- No statistically significant differences in terms of employment.

Study 2

Data, Approach, and Findings

Study 2: Data

- WCRD consists of cases coming to family court in 21 Wisconsin counties filed for/to:
 - (a) divorce or legal separation,
 - (b) establish paternity of a minor child, or
 - (c) a child support order
- Study sample: Cases with court petition dates from 1989–1992
 - 2,242 children aged 16 or less at the petition whose mothers had sole physical custody
 - Matched with Wisconsin’s administrative record of child support receipts and UI records

Study 2: Measures

- Child support receipt up to eight years after an initial order of child support
 - Approx. 22% received no support and 6.5% received very little.
- Child support status
 - Child support group vs. no child support group (≤ 5 \$/child/month)
- Examined the same set of outcome variables

Study 2: Measures and Analytic Approach

Child support status

Some support
vs. no support

As a Child
(0 ~ 16 years old)

Propensity Score Matching
(PSM)



Earnings:
Sum of 2018-2019
earnings

Employment:
Number of quarters
in 2018-2019 with
any earnings

As a Young Adult
(27 to 46 years old)

* PSM: a method of dividing groups to approximate random assignment

Study 2: Findings

- Receiving child support was associated with
 - an increase in earnings (about \$16,900/year);
 - being more consistently employed, by 4-11 weeks, as adults.

Study 2: Sensitivity Analyses

- 1) Child support receipt threshold >> e.g., \$20/child/month
- 2) Identified and excluded out-of-state-cases ($n = 612$)

Overall, key results were consistent:

- Child support receipt was associated with an increase in adult earnings.
- Mixed findings related to employment.

Summary and Implications

Two Studies Comparison

	Study 1	Study 2
Comparison of child support receipt	Those who received full child support vs. only some	Those who received some child support vs. none
Comparability of groups	Assured by random assignment	Statistical matches
Population studied	Mothers receiving W-2	Mothers coming to family court

Summary of Findings

- Overall:
 - Child support receipt was associated with an increase in adult earnings.
 - Differences in adult earnings vary substantially across studies.
 - Mixed findings related to employment

Discussion

- Supported the prior studies about the positive effects of child support policy on children.
- Added new evidence that child support receipt may have a long-term positive effect on adult earnings and employment opportunities.
- More research is needed to examine other outcomes and populations.

Policy Implications

- Providing evidence of long-term benefits of effective child support policies
 - Child support policy mitigates the persistence of economic disadvantage associated with single parenthood.
- Securing financial resources may contribute to a child's development, which affects economic potentials as young adults.

Limitations

- Study sample was limited to children with custodial mothers & instate residents.
- Limited variable availability
- Did not incorporate non-financial contributions of non-custodial parent

THANK YOU!

Questions?

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