Parental job loss and job insecurity during the Covid-19 pandemic and children’s outcomes

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3. Abstract: The aim of this research is to study how job loss and felt job insecurity due to the Covid-19 pandemic are impacting factors that directly affect the cognitive and non-cognitive achievement of children: parental mental and physical health, income, time use, and the home-schooling environment (Ruiz-Valenzuela 2020a,b). Beyond these immediate impacts, we will study how parental job loss and insecurity affects children’s outcomes, such as test scores and educational choices, attitudes towards school and life, and risky behaviours. We will do so by analysing representative UK survey data collected before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 crisis has had an immediate impact on education through school closures and exam cancellations. Evidence shows that children in disadvantaged households are likely to suffer most (Eyles et al, 2020; Burgess and Sievertsen, 2020), both because they often lack the resources to participate in online learning and because their parents tend to feel less able to support them (Andrew et al, 2020; Cullinane and Montacute, 2020). But evidence also shows that a child’s education suffers when a parent loses their job or fears losing it. The Covid-19 pandemic is causing unprecedented job losses, with disadvantaged households hardest hit, both in terms of actual job losses and perceived job insecurity. Parental job loss and insecurity are therefore likely to exacerbate already existing inequalities, due to their potential negative effects on financial resources and parental mental health. This, in turn, can affect children’s attitudes, wellbeing, and ultimately, school performance and educational choices.

4. Data description: We will use the Understanding Society (USoc) panel dataset, a representative sample of UK households followed since 2009 and comprising approximately 100,000 individuals. Since April 2020, USoc participants have been asked to complete special Covid-19 surveys, covering areas such as employment, mental and physical health, time use and home schooling. We will also use prior and future waves of the USoc data. These include extensive data on parental employment histories, information on household income and other resources, as well as data on children and young people’s educational attainment, time use, mental health, attitudes towards life and school, plans for future education and engagement in healthy and risky behaviours. To measure impacts on schooling outcomes, we will use variables collected through USoc (on school enrolment, plans for further and higher education) and linked National Pupil Database data, available through the UK Data Service. The second dataset we plan to use is a special survey launched by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies and available during the summer of 2020, which contains questions on mental health and wellbeing, work, education and finances, among others. This survey can be linked to the UK cohort studies, such as the MCS, Next Steps, and BHPS, which allows to account for pre-Covid-19 existing inequalities and conditions, and it will complement the analysis we undertake with the USoc data.

5. JEL-Codes for the project: J63, J65, I20, I24

6. Key words: Job loss, job insecurity, child outcomes.

7. References
Andrew, Alison, Sarah Cattan, Monica Costa Dias, Christine Farquharson, Lucy Kraftman, Sonya Krutikova, Angus Phimister and Almudena Sevilla (2020) “Learning during the lockdown: real-time data on children’s experiences during home learning”. IFS Briefing Note BN288.
