論文

Exploring parental involvement in school to work transition in rural Madagascar:
Focusing on parents' expectations of education outcomes

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Abstract

This study explores the extent of parents' involvement in children's school to work transition (SWT) in rural Madagascar. As the global agenda expects education to provide skills to allow better access to decent jobs, local governments are implementing new policies in line with global trends, sometimes with little regard to context. Policymakers' perceptions of education outcomes evolved over time. They have long been intimately linked to production and immediate employment; however, recent studies argue that the link between education and employment should account for aspirations and perceptions of life and what it means to be a human being. Parents play a crucial role in influencing children's education performance and attainments. In countries such as Madagascar, where families rather than individuals are at the center of society, parents play significant roles in SWT. In this era of changes in the relationship between education and work, it is important to understand parents' involvement in children's SWT. This study examined 21 individuals from seven households in rural Madagascar to investigate parents' perspectives on education outcomes and their influence on children's SWT. The results indicated that parents expected basic skills and values as outcomes of education, particularly at lower levels. As a result, parents rarely linked education to work, particularly when they did not have resources and networks to complement their children's education in providing access to employment. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the parents did not help their children with the transition to employment. Parents' efforts to ease the SWT included helping their children work while studying or leave formal education earlier to receive informal training.

Keywords: school to work transition, rural Madagascar, parental involvement

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1. Introduction

There has been a global increase in the focus on quality education and training in relation to acquired skills, as stated in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 target 4.4 on skills for decent jobs and entrepreneurship. In contrast to its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2, SDG4 expects students to go beyond primary education and acquire skills for further education or work. However, this emphasis on education to create decent jobs is suitable for countries that have a strong linkage between education and labor market institutions (Raffe 2008), which means, it could be less relevant for many developing countries, especially when they show an increasing percentage of educated unemployment.

The debate on how schools shape African economies dates back to the independence of African countries in the 1960s. Researchers such as Balogh (1962) suggested that education should be harnessed to develop rural livelihoods, with more focus on techniques rather than general education. On the other hand, Foster (1965), later followed by proponents of human capital theory, proposed that teaching technical skills is far costlier and has a worse return than providing universal general education. Contemporary politicians were satisfied that people's right to education was at last closely linked to return on investment (Elfert 2019).

Elfert (2019) reported that around the same time, the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), the precursor of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), was well aware that the economic perspective on education was becoming mainstream, while acknowledging that "ultimately, we must be prepared to recognize that an educational system which was closely and completely geared to supplying manpower for the productive organization of society would, at the same time, be an agency of dehumanization" (p. 49). In addition, the OEEC recognized that the goal of education should be "an enriched life for the individual citizen" and the individual's personal development, making economic production a means to an end (Halsey 1961:20).

Nevertheless, the ideology was brought to newly independent African countries, and universal general education of five or six years was implemented on the basis of minimal input (cost of investment) for a maximal tangible output (return on

investment). With decades of recurrent political, economic, and social crises, countries such as Madagascar have not significantly evolved from these initial assumptions, with an emphasis on general education linked to the success of individuals, which could help alleviate poverty in general. However, with the SDGs, the government started to question the relevance of the current education system to access employment (MEN et al. 2017). In 2017, in response to the SDGs, the Malagasy Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, and the Ministry of Labor, Technical Education, and Vocational Training worked together to create the Education Sector Plan (MEN et al. 2017), which brought more focus on higher education and work. The possibility of employment after completing lower secondary education at the age of 15 was discussed among other ways to provide students the necessary skills to work or proceed to further education.

Powel and McGrath (2019) and McGrath et al. (2020) demonstrated that even with technical and vocational education, which is highly oriented toward production, students are not simply interested in immediate employability but are also concerned with other education outcomes, such as respect, active citizenship, and empowerment. They argued that work should be understood more broadly to include self-identity and self-worth, which lead to the maximization of employment potential to fulfill wider human needs. For Appadurai (2004), people have many choices, which are intrinsically linked to general norms and accepted perceptions of a good life. The freedom to have such choices is called the capacity to aspire, which is not evenly distributed in a given society. It can be argued that understanding how people aspire to education and work would lead to an understanding of the ideal link between education and employment.

Madagascar has a comparatively high attendance rate in primary school (76%) despite the cost of education, which has never been completely free. This rate decreases for lower and upper secondary school (27% and 13%, respectively). There is also a decrease in attendance with socioeconomic status and area of residence (INSTAT/UNICEF 2018). Families, particularly mothers, are known to play significant roles in children's educational achievement, owing to the amount of time they spend together (Glick et al. 2011). Parents can also influence children's

decisions regarding choice of work (Elder & Koné 2014; Elder et al. 2015; Nascimento Moreira et al. 2017). However, parents' perceptions regarding the education they provide their children in terms of future employment are unclear.

This study aims to explore the extent to which parents are involved in children's school to work transition (SWT) in rural Madagascar. The following research questions are posed:

(1) What are parents' perceptions regarding the outcomes of children's education?

(2) How do parents influence children's SWT?

1.1. The definitions of SWT

SWT is the process of moving from education and training to employment (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training n.d.). It may start as early as the end of compulsory education (Elder 2009), while some studies define SWT as starting at around the age of 15. It may also start before students leave education when they begin working while studying (Nilsson 2019). A successful SWT ends with regular and stable employment and should fit the person's desired employment path (Elder 2009). In other words, a successful SWT should lead to decent employment (Alam & de Diego 2019).

SWT is not a linear process. People can go back and forth between education and different kinds of jobs; however, UNICEF breaks the process down into two stages. The first stage is the process of preparing young people for transition to work through the access and development of skills, knowledge, competencies, attitudes, and qualifications, which are important assets to secure and retain a "productive and decent job" as well as to adapt to rapid changes in the economy. The second stage concerns the actual transition where young people access "productive and decent work" using the skills they acquired (Wilson-Clark & Saha 2019:3). Using the case of rural Madagascar, this study focuses on the first stage of SWT, where students are not yet fully in transition.

Skills are important components in the preparation for SWT and can be divided into four categories: (1) foundational skills, including numeracy and literacy, which are a prerequisite for acquiring further skills, (2) transferable skills, which allow a person to adapt to any working environment and stay employed, including problem-

solving, communication, creativity, leadership, and entrepreneurial capabilities (further categorized into cognitive, social, and emotional skills), (3) technical and vocational skills associated with one or more jobs, and (4) digital skills, which were added recently and are important in this era of increasing digital literacy (Alam & de Diego 2019; UNESCO 2012; Wilson-Clark & Saha 2019).

While these skills, particularly technical and vocational skills, are intimately linked to the objective of production and decent jobs (Alam & de Diego 2019), Powell and McGrath (2019) and McGrath et al. (2020) used Sen's (1999) human development and capability approach and argued that there is a need to shift the focus away from immediate employability and production. They highlighted the importance of contexts, particularly poverty, structures, such as class, gender, and race, and individual values and motives. They placed importance on the consideration of life and what it means to be a human being, which is important when rethinking the role of education through SWT.

1.2. Parental involvement in SWT

Several factors influence the success of SWT, including the country's institutional arrangements (Raffe 2008) and social, familial, and personal factors (Ferreira et al. 2007). This study focuses on the latter, particularly the involvement of parents in young people's transition to work.

It is well documented that parents significantly influence their children's SWT in both developed and developing countries. Vancea and Utzet (2018) found that in Spain, wealthier parents provide their children the ability to remain out of school and out of work, making their transition longer. In Japan, in addition to dropout status or education level, families' living standards, parents' employment status, and income determine young people's employment status (Shinozaki 2012). In Europe, well-educated parents provide their children information regarding labor market conditions and useful workplace skills, such as communication and negotiation, which translates into a strong correlation between parents' background and youth's success in SWT (Salas-Velasco 2007). In France, in particular, the labor relations of the father and mother help their sons and daughters, respectively, in finding a job

(Bonnal et al. 2002).

In the developing world, parents in countries such as Ethiopia believe that their duty is only to send their children to school (Tafere & Chuta 2020). It is argued that providing good-quality education, marketable skills, and employment is the responsibility of the government. As a result, hardworking young people with high educational and occupational aspirations expect the government to provide them a job, which prevents them from accessing the labor market adequately (ibid).

It is clear that parents have a supporting effect on children, which could also represent a constraining power. Defloor et al. (2015) used the equality of opportunity framework to consider being born to a mother with low education as part of "circumstances" for which youth are not responsible, and the characteristics of the individual as "efforts" for which they are at least partly responsible. The government helping those in difficult "circumstances" is how an equitable SWT is created.

Recent studies revealed that parents in Madagascar play a particular role in children's education and work. Mothers' education has a positive effect on children's academic performance, owing to the time they spend assisting them. On the other hand, fathers have the authority in the decision to enroll children in education, including continued education (Glick et al. 2011). In addition, recent data indicate that parents have a unique involvement in children's SWT compared to other developing countries. According to Elder et al. (2015), a large proportion of young men (43.4%) and women (66.6%) exclusively contribute to family work. A large number (77%) are working in family farms or establishments, following the family's expectations, especially in rural areas.

While it is argued that in Africa, parents tend to favor education for sons over daughters due to the perceived return on investment, work opportunities, and succession issues (Gérard 1999; Diaz Olvera et al. 2010), in Madagascar, girls benefit from the same treatment as boys in terms of education and succession, and sometimes they are even considered more trustworthy by their parents and grandparents (Delaunay et al. 2013). This is likely to influence parents' involvement in their children's SWT, especially in rural Madagascar where access to higher levels of education is generally limited and where boys are at a disadvantage in enrollment compared to girls (INSTAT/UNICEF 2018). Way and Rossman (1996) were one of

the first to suggest a typology of families and the corresponding effects on SWT readiness; however, such classification is missing in the African context. They argued that proactive families, characterized by democratic decision-making, positively influence SWT readiness, inactive families have a negative effect on SWT readiness, and authoritarian families do not significantly affect SWT readiness. This study explored households' decision-making as part of household characteristics.

2. Methodology

2.1. The research site

Fieldwork was conducted in a rural area of the Itasy Region, one of the 23 regions of Madagascar, which neighbors the capital city region of Analamanga, in September 2019 for a total period of four weeks. The Itasy Region is an agricultural area that mainly produces rice. Andrianampiarivo (2017) classified the characteristics of households in the rural area of the Itasy region from the poorest to the richest as follows: (1) vulnerable agriculturally diversified households, (2) skilled polyculture farmers, (3) traditional group of uneducated rice farmers, and (4) educated livestock farmers, non-agricultural independents, and workers. This classification helped in identifying the rich and poor in the sample.

2.2. Methods and participants

One *fokontany*[1] was chosen from a rural *commune*[2] of the *district*[3] of Miarinarivo, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 participants from seven purposefully selected households. Households with children who went to primary, lower secondary, or upper secondary school at the time of the study were included. Care was taken to select households with different economic activities and backgrounds and led to the differentiation between rich and poor households. From each household, at least one child and one parent were interviewed separately to investigate their views, choices, and decisions concerning education and work after collecting data on personal backgrounds, such as age, gender, education, ethnicity, and religion. Participant characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

	Household	Children	Name	Filiation	Age	Job	Education (years)
Rich	A	4	AF	Father	46	Farmer / shop	9
			AM	Mother	37	Farmer	9
			AS	Son	18	Student	11
			AD	Daughter	16	Student	12
	B	3	BF	Father	59	Head teacher / farmer	16
			BM	Mother	51	Farmer	9
			BS	Son	11	Student	5
	C	6	CF	Father	50	Farmer	12
			CM	Mother	47	Farmer / shop	5
			CD1	Daughter	15	Student	8
			CD2	Daughter	15	Student	9
Poor	D	3	DM	Mother	30	Small shop / farmer	9
			DD	Daughter	12	Student	6
	E	5	EM	Mother	38	Farmer / needlework	5
			ED	Daughter	17	Student	10
	F	9	FF	Father	48	Farmer / worker	5
			FM	Mother	45	Farmer / worker	5
			FS	Son	16	Student	5
			FD	Daughter	14	Student	5
	G	7	GM	Mother	56	Farmer / small shop	5
			GD	Daughter	17	Student	8

Note: The participants' names are a combination of the household code letter and the first letter of the filiation. A number is added where a person of the same filiation is interviewed within the same household.

Source: created by the author using interview data

2.3. Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the ethics review committee of Kyosei Studies of the Graduate School of Human Sciences at Osaka University (approval number OUKS1641). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting interviews. Participants were informed that their data would be kept secure and confidential, with no identifying details revealed.

3. Results

3.1. Household characteristics and schooling choice

As it is difficult to accurately ask about the participants' income in Madagascar, Andrianampiarivo's (2017) classification was used in this study. Rich households were defined as those with parents who had significant revenue-generating jobs, including agriculture. Although land ownership was considered, the results revealed that households such as A and B rented additional pieces of land from poorer households who owned land but did not have the financial means to work it. As such, while land had a high value, landowners were not necessarily rich in rural Madagascar. Among the participants, fathers in most poor households who could work outside of agriculture periodically worked away from the village for periods of time. However, this did not necessarily indicate having a better life than others.

3.1.1. Characteristics of rich households

Household A had six members, among which the father AF (46, finished lower secondary school), the mother AM (37, finished lower secondary school), the first son AS (18, upper secondary school 2nd year), and the first daughter AD (16, upper secondary school 3rd year) were interviewed. Both parents worked in agriculture, ran a rice mill, and owned a small grocery store in the village. The household had employees and used advanced tools, such as tractors, on their farm. The children went to private schools. When their son failed at the lower secondary national examination, to keep him motivated, the parents moved him to another school that accepted such students to move to the next class.

Household B was also a rich household. The father BF (59, finished university) was a headteacher at a strong confessional primary and lower secondary school near the village. The mother BM (51, finished lower secondary school) was a farmer. Both parents and the youngest son BS (11, 1st year of lower secondary school) were interviewed, as the elder sisters no longer lived with the family. Both parents were from a neighboring district and migrated to the Miarinarivo district 13 years before due to the father's work. All children went to their father's primary and lower secondary school and were sent to a public school when they reached upper secondary school.

Household C had eight members, among which the father CF (50, finished upper secondary school), the mother CM (47, finished primary school), and two daughters CD1 (15, lower secondary school 3rd year), and CD2 (15, lower secondary school 4th year) were interviewed. They ran a relatively large grocery store and a large rice mill. They worked in agriculture and had employees. They sent their children to private primary and lower secondary schools and a public upper secondary school.

3.1.2. Characteristics of poor households

Household D included the father DF, the mother DM (30, finished lower secondary school), and daughter DD (12, lower secondary school 1st year). The mother owned a small coffee shop in the village, while the father worked as a tractor driver far from the village. He returned home only on weekends. DD went to a private primary school, which the parents could afford because she was their only child.

Household E had seven members, among which the mother EM (38, finished primary school) and the daughter ED (17, lower secondary school 4th year) were interviewed. The father was a carpenter who worked away from the village and occasionally came home. The mother worked in agriculture and did needlework and sewing on commission. The parents tried to send their daughters to private primary and lower secondary schools. For upper secondary education, as ED is at the end of lower secondary school, she hoped to go to technical school, which the parents were dissatisfied with.

Household F had 11 members, among which the father FF (48, did not finish

primary school), the mother FM (45, did not finish primary school), son FS (16, primary school 5th year), and daughter FD (14, primary school 5th year) were interviewed. FF and FM were agricultural workers who migrated to the region with their parents since childhood. They remained in the area to work after their parents died. They lived in a house they built on a piece of land provided by their employers and worked lands they borrowed from them. They sent their older children to the nearest private school, where the principal agreed to accept them without school uniforms, which are costly for the parents. However, later on, the children were expelled from the school due to uniforms and stopped attending school. As this household did not have rice fields, they could not afford the annual amount of rice required as a complement to school fees, which is approximately 30 kg per family per year. As a result, the parents sent the younger children to a further away public school that they could afford. FS and FD studied at a public primary school in a neighboring village. They repeated the last year of primary school because they failed at the national examination.

Household G was a nine-member household. The mother GM (56, did not finish primary school) and daughter GD (17, lower secondary school 3rd year) were interviewed. The father worked as a teacher at a public primary school, while the mother worked in agriculture and sold vegetables in the market on Wednesdays (the market day in the neighboring villages). GD studied at a public primary school and then a community lower secondary school near the village.

3.2. Children's aspiration

Children's aspirations mature with age and grade. BS and DD had dreams but were not yet at the age (11 and 12 years old, respectively) and grade (1st year lower secondary) to decide their future careers. BS indicated wanting to become a teacher, which the parents considered a bad idea, while DD wanted to become an artist, which the mother supported. However, the parents believed that these dreams would eventually change. A retrospective view of other participants' plans (AS, AD, and ED) showed that such dreams change over time based on the environment and new information, of which parents are one of the main sources.

In addition, children's aspirations were influenced by the household's economic situation. For instance, siblings FS and FD (14- and 16-year-old primary school students) repeated a year twice due to failing national examinations. Richer families in such situations usually moved children to private schools to start from the 1st year of lower secondary school, allowing the children to aim for the lower secondary school national examination. FS and FD indicated fearing being "called grandma and grandpa" in their class due to their age compared to their classmates. They chose to drop out of school and had to decide the next step of their lives, finding a job. On the other hand, CD1 and CD2, both 15 years of age, could afford to change school whenever they needed to and could wait to decide their life course, including their future job, due to the continued support of their families.

3.3. Parents' perspectives on education and work

3.3.1. Poor parents and their expectations from education

Parents, particularly mothers, in poor households had little expectation from education in terms of job access. For them, education was a way to acquire fundamental skills, such as numeracy and literacy, moral and religious values, and become educated, which does not necessarily entail an ability to have a decent job. FM stated:

> We are not expecting work from their education. Many finish some level of education but cannot find a job and end up not doing the right thing... unable to work the land correctly... We will let them study and when they say, "We no longer want to study," then, we will let them work in the field with us… When they understand how it works, they will earn their own living… If it was up to me, I would say to them, "Study hard so that you can be someone, even if we know that it does not guarantee you a job. Just study and then work our fields."

Similarly, GM strived to give her children the skills required for rural areas but not provided by formal education:

> Studying does not mean you study and that is all... It might not work as you

> expect... We try to make our children work the land, not for us but for them to be able to work later. There are young people in rural areas who study a lot and do not get the decent job they expect, but at the same time, they are unable to be farmers.

DM believed that while formal education would give children the ability to read, write, and count for their everyday lives, even upper secondary education would not help someone get a job. EM thought that adding to the ability to read and write, education would help children and young people live together in society. "When you are not educated, even people around you do not give you the respect you deserve… Your education is reflected in the way you write and express yourself" (EM).

3.3.2 Rich parents and their perspectives on education and work

Parents from rich households perceived lower secondary education and beyond as having employment value. However, regardless of diplomas, they consider it more important to have networks that could allow them to help their children to get a job. Many of AM's relatives were drivers, making it easy for her son to become a driver; however, she hoped for him to become a civil servant. Her husband, AF, added that to achieve that, finishing upper secondary education was preferred and that their son could easily become a police officer, prison guard, or court employee, as their family had connections in those circles.

BF and BM did not want extensive education for their children, indicating that they did not want them to attend higher than upper secondary education. They hoped their children would get some training and become self-employed rather than working in the public or private sector. BF stated:

> My first daughter … got her baccalaureate, received some practical training, and got married… My second daughter only has a baccalaureate and I am not planning to send her to a public or private university. I will ask her to get some practical training [private, informal training] in something she thinks she could earn a living with… It would be the same for my last son [BS], but I may send him to study at the technical upper secondary school.

Similarly, BM reported, “I would prefer they work for themselves… processing tomatoes, for example, … [or] cheese, as I said earlier… I do not really like it when you work for someone else, such as being a teacher… You are not free… You do not have time for your family.”

For CM, when children are educated, it becomes easier to talk to them. “Private school fees are expensive, but we think since we are Catholic, our children should get a Catholic education… Educating young people is not easy these days…, and they should be educated spiritually.” Household C believed that education would not help in acquiring a job unless one completes upper secondary education. While their first daughter got a baccalaureate and could secure a job as a teacher, the second daughter finished only lower secondary education and went to work in the field with her father while waiting to get married. CM added, “Girls wait for marriage and boys just wait around if they do not have a baccalaureate… Parents always do what they can to educate… But in my experience, it really depends on the children.”

3.3. Parents’ flexibility to children’s choice

Parents were flexible during the lower education stage. They allowed their children choices in terms of schools and were not concerned about job prospects. However, regarding higher levels of education and jobs, parents could be divided into two categories of decision-making: flexible and authoritarian.

Flexible parents demonstrated democratic decision-making in the household. In household D, the parents prioritized DD’s choices, which may be due to her being the only child and in primary school. In household F, children were also in primary school but planning to drop out. When the older children were not eager to continue their education, the parents did not force them. When FS asked for money for a cellphone instead of education and wanted to herd cattle, the parents did not encourage him to leave school, while giving him the choice to work. They reacted similarly to FD, who quit school and was waiting to turn 18 to work as a housekeeper at the nearest urban *commune*. The only condition FM had was that the children stay close to the family if they start working.

Household B was among the rich and flexible. Although BS’s choice differed from the parents’ plans, they allow him and the older sisters to make their own

decisions. BM and BF indicated that having time for family is one of the reasons they wanted their children to be self-employed.

For household C, maintaining the status of the family was most important. CD1 wanted to go to technical school; however, the parents did not want her to continue education, arguing that it is too far and they would not be able to watch her. Further investigations revealed that the parents were afraid she would get pregnant like her older sister, which is a shame in society, particularly considering their social status. When asked about their aspirations, CD1 and CD2 did not know what kind of jobs they wanted to do in the future, while other participants of the same age had already developed some ideas.

Likewise, Household E was concerned about the status of the family. EM asserted that as a relative of the father worked with the police, they wanted ED to become a police officer to keep this status in the family. ED, on the other hand, wanted to study at a technical school to learn management. She said, "My parents want me to join the police, but I do not like violence… They just oppress the vulnerable… I have seen it with my uncle." Similarly, household D wanted their daughter to become a doctor, as the father is a teacher and they wanted to have someone more successful in the next generation. Not only the parents but also the older siblings constantly told ED what she should do with her life. As a result, ED did not seem to be able to independently choose what she wanted to do in the future, despite her age.

Household A focused on the duty to continue the family business. As a result, AS was inclined to return and run the business. Although AD demonstrated better academic performance than her older brother, she was willing to return to help with the business. The father was particularly concerned that no one would take over the family business; however, the children indicated that they understood what was at stake and were willing to come back because it was necessary.

4. Discussion

4.1. Rethinking the importance of education

Recent government policies indicate that education, even at the lower level, could

give children practical skills to secure a decent job; however, at the household level, parents believe primary and secondary education serve to develop basic skills and inculcate values. Parents strive to help their children receive an education. Unlike countries where parents consider providing jobs the responsibility of the government (Tafere & Chuta 2020), the participants in this study were willing to contribute to their children's transition to work and believe in individual and family efforts.

Madagascar did not appear to have an active expansion of secondary education; however, as the country gradually transitions to providing better access to higher education, people are likely to expect that access to secondary education and beyond will improve their financial situation and may expect more from the government to justify the costs to families. However, some families with parents who completed higher education did not appreciate the value of education beyond upper secondary school.

In agricultural areas, parents may need children to work for them. This study demonstrated that in an uncertain labor market, starting work during adolescence can be considered training to help secure a job. Such training may be the only opportunity to acquire skills for some young people, and continuing education at the expense of such an opportunity would be detrimental. In some cases, education is a symbol for being educated (Gérard 1999) and people do not necessarily think of it as a way to get a better job but rather a way to have a meaningful life in the eyes of their communities.

4.2. Prioritizing family over individuals

Across all interviews, the family was the central focus, with parents highlighting the status, duty, and proximity of the family. As such, family appeared to be more important than individuals in decision-making, which is in line with recent studies demonstrating that many young people work for their families due to obligations (Elder et al. 2015). This does not necessarily indicate that decisions were forced, particularly when parents referred to duty toward the family. However, young people appeared to rebel against their parents' decisions when family status was the reason.

For some parents, particularly mothers, the proximity of the family was the most important. They valued time spent together. Among participants in poor households,

men usually worked outside, sometimes for extended periods, while women stayed at home with the children. On the other hand, rich households could afford to remain together. While in some societies, children leave their parents' house when they become adults, children in the Malagasy society only move out after getting married. Parents can pass down their heritage equally to sons and daughters; however, among the participants, older sons seem to be prioritized. While the children remain single, family identity and family worth precede McGrath et al. (2020)'s self-identity and self-worth.

4.3. Parents' interventions

Due to the perceived value of education, parents, even in poor households, strive to provide the best education possible. Job skills are mainly gained from parents on the job in poor families and through private informal training in rich families, as work-related outcomes are rarely expected from formal education.

When parents have networks, such as relatives, in a sphere, they utilize this to obtain employment for their children in that particular sphere. Family status, duty, and cohesion drive parents' actions in their children's SWT. Even parents with a high level of education value family unity over work, which could represent what they considered a higher need for society rather than manpower requirements. Awareness of wider systemic problems, such as unemployment among school graduates, could be responsible for parents' decisions; however, this is beyond the scope of the present study.

5. Conclusions

This study explored parents' involvement in children's SWT in rural Madagascar. Expected education outcomes are defined by the local context and by individuals. The results revealed that the participants did not necessarily consider work and production, even after obtaining a high level of education. The participants believed that education helps inculcate values and provide status, which was valued by the parents; however, the lack of continuity between education and employment forced them to find alternatives to teach their children the skills required for life, including

providing education themselves and using informal training.

While parents from both poor and rich households did not value education beyond a certain level, they helped their children transition to work, which was not necessarily directly related to school. Parents with resources and networks strived to provide their children with the minimum education to secure a particular job with the help of their network. Without such networks, it was difficult for them to draw a direct link between education and work. Being self-employed after obtaining informal training was highlighted by some parents as better than working for someone else. Others were concerned with the inheritance of their family business if all their children decided to leave their villages. On the other hand, parents from poorer households trained their children to work the land while studying to allow them to fall back to agriculture if they did not succeed in education, considering this more important for future prospects than continuing education alone, given their limited resources and network.

Parents are often labeled as “circumstances” beyond young people’s control, especially in the equality of opportunity theory applied to SWT. The parents who participated in this study were part of the dynamic process that allowed young people to transition to work regardless of their socioeconomic status. As the individual is intimately linked to their family, it may be more appropriate to examine SWT with the household rather than taking the individual as a unit. Allowing the freedom (capability) of the individual may hinder the freedom of the family, which is disapproved of in rural Madagascar. Further studies are required to examine parents’ actions during the second stage of SWT when children actually transition from education to work, as well as how families cope with the tension between the labor market state, children’s aspirations, and parents’ expectations.

This study revealed some particularities of the Malagasy context in SWT, including the ability to earn a livelihood without focusing on formal education, the quasi-equal treatment of boys and girls by parents, obtaining an education to live better in society, and prioritizing family over oneself. The reasons for these trends, which may lie in the origin and structure of Malagasy families, require further investigation. Geographically, economically, and politically, Madagascar is part of sub-Saharan Africa. However, it is an isolated island whose population is said to

possess more Asian than African roots. This is especially true for the central highlands, where the Itasy region is situated. Investigating the case of Madagascar from a broader African Asian perspective could provide better insight on SWT, particularly regarding parental and familial involvement, which requires a better understanding of the structure of families and societies.

Notes

(1) *Fokontany:* The smallest administrative unit in Madagascar. It is composed of several villages and is led by an elected chief or president of the *fokontany*.
(2) *Commune*: The second bigger administrative unit in Madagascar that is composed of several *fokontany*. Decentralization policy defines a commune as rural or urban based on its characteristics.
(3) *District*: An administrative unit composed of several communes. A group of *districts* forms a region.

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