

Impacts of Child Sponsorship Communications: Findings from World Vision Programs

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Abstract

Child sponsorship programs often seek to establish a personal relationship between a sponsor and child through the exchange of letters, photos and sometimes gifts. This paper examines the impact of these activities using data from communities supported by World Vision in Georgia, Ethiopia, Peru, Senegal and Sri Lanka. Findings indicate that some types of communications were associated with higher levels of psychosocial wellbeing. While findings varied across country, survey data for sponsored and non-sponsored children provided evidence of jealousy, although on average, it was weak. Findings from interviews indicated that some non-sponsored children and families experienced jealousy more intensely.

Keywords: NGOs, World Vision, child sponsorship, psychosocial impacts, jealousy

1. Introduction

Child sponsorship has proven to be a hugely successful approach to raising funds. It has been adopted by some of the world's largest international NGOs including ActionAid, ChildFund, Compassion International, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision (WV). According to Wydick *et al.* (2013), there are over 9 million sponsored children across the globe with close to USD 4 billion provided by sponsors each year. Yet, its efficacy is contested.

Despite the popularity of child sponsorship programs and their success in raising funds, there is a paucity of rigorous research evaluating such programs. Formal evaluations of child sponsorship programs administered by international NGOs are rare (Ove 2018). In this context of limited evidence alongside fundraising success, it is not unexpected that child sponsorship is a contested and controversial approach to development programming (see Ove 2018). At its worse, critics argue that 'International child sponsorship programmes perpetuate racist and paternalistic thinking. Any benefit they have for families and communities must be weighed against the harm they do and the invidious power relations they reinforce.' (Sherman, 2021).', Even at its best, child sponsorship can lead to jealousy among non-sponsored children and their families as well as to community tensions, it can foster a sense of dependence and unmet expectations among sponsored children and such programs are also expensive to administer (New Internationalist 1989, Bornstein 2001, 2003, Rabbitts 2014). Proponents argue that child sponsorship can add to a safety net for vulnerable children in complex environments of poverty (van Eekelen 2013, Wydick et al. 2013) and that participation can increase aspirations of participating children leading to increased happiness, self-esteem, hope, and greater educational attainment (Ross et al. 2019, Glewwe et al. 2018, Wydick 2018).

Where there have been large scale evaluations, they have focused on the impacts of sponsorship programs on child well-being more broadly, not just on sponsorship communications (see Wydick *et al.* 2013, Wydick 2018). This paper considers a more specific aspect of child sponsorship, the communication between sponsor and child.

The history of child sponsorship is unclear, with a number of aid agencies claiming to have been the first to use this model for fundraising and programming (Tise 1993, Molumphy 1884, Maren 1997). As Ove (2018) notes, ‘if there is one ‘true’ origin of child sponsorship, it appears to be lost in the mists of time or to the vagaries of marketing personnel’ (p. 56). Watson’s (2014a) archival work finds the earliest record to date: in 1919, in response to the poverty experienced by children in war-torn Europe, the UK-based aid agency Save the Children Fund (SCF) established a sponsorship program.

The ‘Adaption’ scheme, whereby the individual subscriber of 2S (shillings) a week, or an equivalent monthly or yearly sum to the SCF, provides a daily meal for a specific child in the famine area, has proved immensely popular, and is fast becoming a concrete reality. The names and address of 1,000 Slovak children, of 1,500 Budapest children, and of a number of Serbian children, have been received and sent to the ‘godparents’ with all available details (extract from the ‘The 1920 Record’ in Watson 2014a, p. 25-6).

The popularity of this program was almost immediately evident with more than 70,000 children being supported by SCF sponsors by the winter of 1920-21 (Jebb 1922). Since its inception though, communications are central to the marketing of child sponsorship programs – for both WV and other child-sponsorship based NGOs. Indeed, from the inception of child sponsorship over one century ago, communication between a sponsor and child has been a fundamental characteristic (see Dunker 2005, World Vision 2006). WV’s initial growth following its establishment in the early 1950s was in large part due to its focus on children and that it ‘offered direct connection through sponsorship’ (King 2014, p. 264). Over the course of history its own child sponsorship model evolved from direct provision of material support to children, to support of orphanages, to community-based programming, WV has kept communication between sponsor and child central to its marketing activities as they understood ‘donors needed a one-to-one

connection with the ability to correspond and receive updates on “their” sponsored child’ (King 2014, p. 271). Whilst initially this communication was to bond a sponsor to the child to engender a long-term financial commitment, in time it became part of WV’s education and advocacy activities to enhance knowledge in the Global North to the reality of life in the Global South – including positive changes that were occurring (Barna Research Groupw 2004).

Different models of child sponsorship have emerged since this time. Watson (2014b) provides a typology of different types. Firstly, individual/institutional child sponsorship involves donations being directed to individual disadvantaged children, through an institutional setting such as a church, orphanage or a school. Secondly, individual or family child sponsorship includes programs where sponsor donations flow directly to a child or more usually their family rather than through an institutional structure. Thirdly, community development child sponsorship models use donated funds to support development programs in the community in which the sponsored child lives. While sponsored children might receive individual gifts, the benefits from sponsorship funding should flow to a significant proportion of children in the community (depending on the nature of the programs and their participants). Finally, in rights-based child sponsorship models, funding is used to promote the human rights of children and other community members. This can be achieved through advocacy and greater mobilisation of local resources. World Vision, the international NGO under consideration in this paper, encompasses a community development model (WVI 2015).

While the nature of child sponsorship programs differs across organisations, the same basic principles found 100 years ago remain largely constant. Regular giving linked to a specific child with basic wellbeing needs providing a relationship or link between sponsor and child. All child sponsorship programs provide an opportunity to establish a personal relationship between a

sponsor and their child. Indeed, from its inception, written communication between sponsor¹ and child was not only possible, but also expected.

We are posting to you today a further number of the cards written by the children who have been adopted. We feel that this may be very valuable in making more real the connection between the children, and those who have contributed towards their help. (Henderson 1921, p.1)

This paper presents findings from independent research commissioned by World Vision International (WVI) through a competitive tender process. The international NGO is the world's largest provider of child sponsorship. Child Sponsorship is core to its history, its current programming and its financial strength. While WV's approach to child sponsorship has evolved since its founder Bob Pierce provided direct financial support to a Korean girl named White Jade in the late 1950s to a community development model, the centrality of the relationship between sponsor and child has remained. In 2020, WV had 1,250 child sponsorship programs in 54 countries where more than 47 million children lived. The value of this programming was US\$1.5 billion. (WVI, 2020). Using the funds raised through child sponsorship, WV seeks to improve child well-being by engaging poor and vulnerable communities and working with them through partnerships over the longer term; typically 15 years. WV works with groups of communities in vulnerable regions of a country defined by an Area Development Program (ADP). Globally, WV supports more than 1,280 ADPs. Pierce and Kalaiselvi (2014), provide a thorough overview of how organisational learning has led to important changes in WV's sponsorship model through time, discussed further below.

¹ There is a religious connotation to the sponsorship with those sponsoring children referred to in the early iteration as 'god-parents' drawing on the spiritual relationship found in the Christian initiation rites of Baptism and Confirmation.

While the research project on which this paper draws examined the impacts of child sponsorship programs more broadly, this paper examines the impacts of child sponsorship communications on child well-being. Child well-being is an appropriate lens through which to assess the impact of WV's child sponsorship activities as it has self-identified the need to look for impact beyond just indicators of survival and basic needs being met to consider 'the positive domains of well-being, such as social connectedness, civil life skills, personal life skills and safety (WV 2015, p. ii).

WV's sponsorship communications come in many different forms including letters, photos, videos, gifts, and annual sponsored child updates. We focus on letters and gifts since these are the most common forms of communications. Arguably they are also the most contentious, having previously been found to be divisive among sponsored children (Plan International, 2008).

This paper focuses on the potential impacts that are understood to be important components of sponsorship itself: sponsored children developing a personal relationship with their sponsor through the exchange of letters or receipt of gifts. The main contribution of this paper is its focus on the psychosocial impacts of child sponsorship communication activities between a child and their individual sponsor and its examination of potential negative impacts of sponsorship such as jealousy amongst sponsored and non-sponsored children. As such, it provides new insights into the impact of the child sponsorship approach on both sponsored and non-sponsored children within sponsorship communities as well as their families.

2. Data and methodology

2.1 Data

The research was led by an international research team with extensive experience in child sponsorship, evaluation and international NGO programming. The research was conducted in five community development projects known as Area Development Programs (ADPs). These were located in Ethiopia, Georgia, Peru, Senegal and Sri Lanka. The five sites were purposefully chosen

to represent a wide range of contexts for child sponsorship and varied in terms of continent, being post-conflict and post-disaster, religious and ethnic composition and length of time WV had been active in the area. This paper questions how communication in different settings affect sponsored children. Due to the different country contexts in which these ADPs exists, there are also operational differences between them in terms of development activities as well as community features and circumstances. What is common though across all World Vision ADPs is the focus on communication between sponsor and sponsored child being a core characteristic of the sponsorship model.

A mixed methods approach was adopted using data from sponsored children, non-sponsored children, the households of both sponsored and non-sponsored children as well as community leaders and partner organisations.

Participant information and consent forms were translated into local languages and were read by local researchers to potential participants. The voluntary nature of participation was emphasized as well as there being no adverse or beneficial consequences to their relationship with WV for choosing whether or not to participate. If they agreed to participate, they could either provide verbal consent or sign/mark the consent form. For children, consent was gained from a parent or guardian.

All local researchers received strict instructions about the importance of maintaining confidentiality. Identifying information was not recorded on completed surveys or the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

No specific questions about sensitive issues were included in the research but local researchers were provided with training on the protocols to follow if they did arise. Additionally, local researchers were trained in WV's standard operating procedures for reporting cases of current child maltreatment/abuse. All data collection was arranged to occur at a time and place convenient to the subjects.

Quantitative data was collected using surveys. In each ADP, matched adolescent and household surveys were collected. A total of 150 pairs or 300 surveys per site were targeted. This included approximately 75 sponsored adolescents (aged 12 to 17) and 75 non-sponsored and non-registered adolescents.² The ADP staff provided a list of all children in their database and adolescents were randomly selected by the academic research team. An adult from the adolescent's household, preferably a caregiver, was also surveyed. The surveys included multiple questions to calculate various measures of psychosocial well-being that had been applied previously in developing country contexts. They included hope (from Synder *et al.* 1997), self-efficacy (from Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995), resilience (from Wagnild and Young, 1993), educational aspirations (based on desired level of education) and current life satisfaction (measured by the ladder of life, measure from one to 10 with 10 representing the best possible life). Data for sponsored children were ordinal and were analysed using Wilcoxon rank-sum tests.

Qualitative data was collected using interviews with adolescents (sponsored and non-sponsored) and adult community members with varying levels of involvement in WV programs including: faith and community leaders; partners (service providers, government or non-government personnel who had worked with WV in the ADP); and ADP staff. Over 400 interviews were conducted in total. All questions and instruments were translated into local languages and tested prior to the commence of the data collection in each location to determine their suitability. Interviews and surveys were conducted outside of school hours and working hours. The length of semi-structured interviews and surveys was limited to not put undue burden on participants.

2.2 Methodology

² A registered child/adolescent is one that has been nominated for child sponsorship but has yet to be appointed a sponsor. While children of any age can be sponsored, only those aged 12 and above were included in the sample due to the nature of the research activities.

The impact of child sponsorship itself (as distinct from participation in programs funded through sponsorship and working with community partners) was explored through two different pathways. The first pathway was the relationship between child and sponsor that develops through the sponsorship activities of exchanging letters and the receipt of gifts. A relationship with a sponsor may impact positively on a child's psychosocial well-being. The following question was therefore tested:

Does participation in sponsorship-related activities (as distinct from development programs) contribute directly to building children's self-esteem, aspirations, hope and self-efficacy, which contributes to child wellbeing?

The second pathway was through the consequences of children being sponsored or not. Envy or jealousy between children or their parents (or other community members) could impact on the effectiveness of program activities. The following question was developed and tested with respect to this issue:

Where benefits of child sponsorship are not equitably distributed, does jealousy and suspicion increase family and community tensions and undermine participation in development activities?

Given the binary and ordinal nature of the quantitative data, Wilcoxon rank-sum tests (also known as the Mann-Whitney two-sample statistic) and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to examine the relationships between sponsorship activities and psychosocial well-being (Wilcoxon 1945; Mann and Whitney 1947; Kruskal and Wallis, 1952).

3. Results

Question 1

Both WV sponsors and sponsored children are encouraged to communicate with each other via letters. As discussed, such communication dates back to the origins of child sponsorship as a fundraising and development programming model (Watson 2014). Letters are translated to and from the languages of both the sponsor and child by with the intention of developing relationships. Translation of letters are undertaken by World Vision staff. In some contexts, sponsors may further extend their connection with their sponsored child by providing both financial and non-financial gifts over and above their monthly donation. At the time the research was undertaken, different practices regarding financial gifts were undertaken. Some offices allowed small financial gifts to be provided directly to a child and their family although funds above a certain threshold were directed towards community level activities or resources. Other offices required all financial gifts to be provided at the community level while other offices didn't allow the provision of financial gifts at all. Subsequent to the research, WV implemented a global gifts policy to try and minimise jealousy and/or disappointment.³ Gifts are not always financial and can take the form of items such as stationary or school supplies. These can be provided to individual children but larger gifts can be directed to communities.

The majority of sponsored children in the five countries in the study had received at least one letter or gift over the period of their sponsorship (see Table 1), and in most countries the majority had also written to sponsors (the exception to the latter was Senegal, where only 20% had written to their sponsors⁴).

Insert Table 1

³ Specifically, gifts should be small inexpensive items that fit into an A4 envelope and do not weigh more than two kilograms. They are delivered to children. Financial gifts (known as gift notifications) to any one child should range from US\$100 to US\$200. Registered children receive only one gift notification per year; 25% of each gift under US\$200 and all amounts in excess of US\$200 are allocated towards a gift or activity that also benefits other children in the community (WVI, 2021).

⁴ There was limited evidence that this was due to the geographical dispersion of communities and thus the limited time available for World Vision staff to support letter writing activities.

To examine the benefits that accrue from sponsorship communications, statistically significant associations were examined between those activities and various measures of psychosocial well-being. As should be expected, findings varied across countries (see Table 2). There were some positive associations between ever writing and receiving letters and gifts in four of five countries, although the nature of the wellbeing outcomes varied. The receipt of letters was associated with increased resilience and educational aspirations in Ethiopia, self-efficacy and ladder of life score in Peru, resilience in Sri Lanka and hope in Georgia. Associations with the receipt of gifts were less common but were associated with hope and self-efficacy in Ethiopia and Peru, as well as resilience and ladder of life scores in Ethiopia. In all countries there was evidence of an association between *writing* letters and at least one measure of psychosocial well-being.

Insert Table 2

There are a number of potential explanations for these findings. Firstly, it is possible that even low intensity relationships with sponsors are enough to affect psychosocial measures of child well-being. Secondly, children who have contact with their sponsors may be those who are more involved in WV programming and it may be the programming that explains the positive well-being outcomes. Thirdly, children in sponsorship relationships – perhaps perceiving that they ‘should’ have benefitted, or perhaps that they may have something to lose – may be more susceptible to socially desirable responding than non-sponsored children. Fourthly, it is possible that causation runs the other way. In other words, it may be children with higher levels of psychosocial wellbeing that are more likely to write letters and develop relationships with their sponsors.⁵

The first explanation seems doubtful, particularly given the relatively low rates of letter receipt and writing for most children. While it is possible that communications with someone far

⁵ Since children do not initiate correspondence with sponsors, this question would only apply to sponsored children whose sponsors wrote to them regularly.

away could provide psychosocial benefits, it is difficult to envisage how exchanging letters or receiving gifts could overcome the core determinants of child psychological well-being in these contexts. These core determinants include poverty, low education, social exclusion, and conflict (Patel, 2007; World Health Organization and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2014).⁶ Further investigation would be required to explore the second explanation. Only sponsored children have communications while all children in a community can participate in WV's development activities. Isolating specific impacts of development programs versus communications remains a challenge. It is not possible to determine the strength of the third explanation, relating to response bias, because the anonymity of participations was emphasized.

The fourth explanation is an area requiring further research. It necessitates (at a minimum) the use of panel data and obtaining information on measures of psychosocial well-being before, as well as during, sponsorship. However, in Georgia, there were positive associations only between *writing* letters and positive psychosocial indicators (rather than receipt of letters), which opens up the possibility that it was children with higher levels of these traits who tended to write letters.

The qualitative data provide further insights into the impacts of child sponsorship communications. In Georgia, one parent described the very powerful impact communication with a sponsor can have on a child's confidence which can in turn contribute to shaping their future. A few respondents described a positive impact on self-confidence; and a sense of pleasure about having 'friends in other countries'. Some also indicated they took this relationship seriously.

In both Peru and Senegal, there was a split between interviewed children who were positive and those who were negative about the relationship with their sponsor. This was linked to the expectations that children had regarding their sponsor, which in Peru seemed associated with the term "godparent". Lack of, or diminution in, letter writing and gift notifications sometimes resulted in children's expectations not being met, causing confusion and hurt. Parents were also,

⁶ To examine whether the intensity of sponsorship activities matters, Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank tests were undertaken between the *number* of letters (written and received) and gifts and the psychosocial well-being measures. However, findings were nearly always not statistically significant and were sometimes counterintuitive.

in some cases, affected by the receipt or non-receipt of letters and gifts. A common response in Senegal was that children felt special or lucky if they received tangible gifts.

Overall, very few children reported directly on their relationship with their sponsor, and none commented on the significance of having a personal relationship with their sponsor. Whilst the majority of sponsored children had communicated with their sponsor at some point, the level of exchange was limited and no evidence was presented that sponsored children were engaged in *regular* communication with their sponsors. Most children report only receiving one or two letters in the past 12 months. Further, from the qualitative data, some children displayed disappointment in either the level of communication or the unmet expectations surrounding communication.

In summary, there is evidence of positive associations between sponsorship communication activities such as the provision of gifts and exchange of letters and the psychosocial well-being of sponsored children. However, there were different patterns of associations in different countries. In Senegal and Sri Lanka, associations did not reach standard levels of statistical significance. In Ethiopia and Peru, there were significant associations with a number of outcomes, while writing a letter (but not receiving letter or gifts) was significantly associated with several outcomes in Georgia. Evidence suggests that a strong, positive, ongoing relationship is not a sufficiently common experience for sponsored children, and therefore it is unlikely that the positive outcomes associated with participation in sponsorship communication activities are the result of a strong personal relationship with sponsors *per se*. In addition, a lack of clarity and inconsistency with respect to sponsorship communication activities can lead to disappointment among parents and children.

Such differences in patterns beg the question of whether, how and why the differences might be created. Many explanations are at least superficially plausible: there may be cultural differences which affect responses to communications; differences in interactions between communications and the programs provided; differences in implementation or management of

sponsor relationships which affect how they are perceived, and so on. This evaluation has undertaken the first step of identifying that associations differ.

Question 2

Two perceptions of inequality arising from child sponsorship were identified across most of the ADPs investigated: (i) perceptions of inequality of the benefits between sponsored and non-sponsored children; and (ii) inequality between sponsored children in what they receive from their sponsors.

In the adolescent survey, sponsored (or previously sponsored) adolescents were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: Children who do not/did not have a sponsor have been jealous of me because I have/had a sponsor. Note that the Likert scale⁷ ran from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Across the five sites there was a sense of neutrality or weak agreement that sponsored children perceived non-sponsored children as being jealous of them (Likert scores ranging between 2.7 to 3.4) – see Figure 1.⁸

Insert Figure 1

A similar sentiment was found in terms of perceptions of sponsored (or previously sponsored) children being jealous of gifts and letters received by other children. (Likert scores ranging from 2.7 to 3.4) – see Figure 2. Responses, on average, did not vary greatly across letters versus gifts and across sites.⁹ In summary, while jealousy of those with a sponsor and of children receiving letters and gifts was common in the research sites, it was not ubiquitous.

⁷ See Chakrabarty 2014 for limitations of Likert Scale. This paper also draws on qualitative to counter these limitations – see discussion that follows Figure 2.

⁸ In Sri Lanka the term "felt bad or upset" was used instead of "jealous" in the survey.

⁹ With the exception of the site in Ethiopia, only adolescents that were sponsored or had been sponsored were asked about being jealous of letters/gifts received by other children. In Ethiopia, all adolescents in the ADP were asked this question. The figures for Ethiopia in the figure above are restricted to sponsored/ever sponsored adolescents for the sake of comparison with the other sites. The average Likert

Insert Figure 2

The qualitative data also demonstrated that jealousy played out differently in different countries. In Georgia and Ethiopia, unsponsored adolescents saw the letters and gifts received by those who were sponsored and also wanted to receive these things. In Ethiopia, some parents without sponsored children viewed the selection of sponsored children as unfair. Parents of sponsored children contrasted what their children received with what others had received and felt disappointed, saying that they expected more support. In Peru and Senegal, sponsored children were mostly neutral as to whether non-sponsored children were jealous of their sponsorship status, but there was greater evidence of non-sponsored children, including siblings and classmates, being jealous of letters and gifts received by sponsored children. In Senegal, there was evidence from qualitative data of tension between those that have received benefits and those that had not and of a lack of awareness of how these benefits are distributed, further adding to levels of tension and confusion.

In Sri Lanka there was evidence of jealousy of the gifts to sponsored children by both children and parents – though this was not universal. Sponsored children who did not receive these gifts sometimes personalized this failure and assumed responsibility for the lack of relationship with their sponsor. However, Parents of sponsored children complained more than children about the perceived inequitable distribution of these benefits. Non-sponsored children and families experienced jealousy more intensely. It was clear that it could cause friction within the community and caused some children (sponsored and non-sponsored alike) to feel disappointed and confused. However, also in Sri Lanka, some sponsored children who were

responses for the entire sample of adolescents in the Ethiopia ADP were lower (2.5 for letters, 2.4 for gifts) suggesting a higher level of jealousy with respect to the receipt of letters and gifts among non-sponsored adolescents).

interviewed thought unsponsored children were not jealous or angry. They thought the unsponsored children were actually happy for the sponsored children receiving gifts, sometimes noting they would be shared, or valued WV for bringing progress and happiness to the whole community.

In summary, there were variations in the frequency of communications between sponsors and sponsored children; and that some community members (both adults and children) experienced jealousy, disappointment or confusion as a result. There was no evidence that such jealousy caused withdrawal from programs. However, participation in programs was voluntary and not all community members participated.

4. Conclusion

Establishing a connection between a sponsor and child is an objective of child sponsorship programs. This paper found that the majority of sponsored children had communicated with their sponsor at some point over the period of their sponsorship. However, the majority reported receiving only one or two letters in the past 12 months and there was no evidence of children having regular communication with their sponsor or that strong personal relationships were widely formed. That said, there is evidence that some types of sponsorship communications were associated with higher levels of certain psychosocial measures in each country.

Thus, despite communications reportedly being central to models of child sponsorship, only limited communications in the form of letters were taking place. Moreover, some parents and children were disappointed due to unmet expectations regarding the extent of communications. This is an important issue which international NGOs should follow up, particularly since there is evidence that some types of sponsorship communications were associated with higher levels of certain psychosocial measures in most countries. However, whether that is a result of the sponsorship relationship remains unclear.

Some aspects of child sponsorship communications were not viewed as equitable and could lead to jealousy within communities. There was also evidence of misunderstanding of sponsorship expectations in some countries. While the strength of evidence for this varied across sites and was stronger from the qualitative data, it did not appear to undermine participation in development activities nor lead to households withdrawing their children from sponsorship. Importantly, jealousy and disappointment were not confined to children but also affected adults. Given that jealousy is not ubiquitous within or across sites, further research should seek to identify the specific circumstances in which higher levels of jealousy prevail, the types of activities which do or don't lead to jealousy and the reasons as to why this is (or isn't) the case.

Conflict of interest

This paper presents independent findings resulting from research commissioned by World Vision International (WVI) through a competitive tender process. In response to the research findings, they implemented a global letter and gift policy to minimize jealousy and disappointment associated with sponsorship communications.

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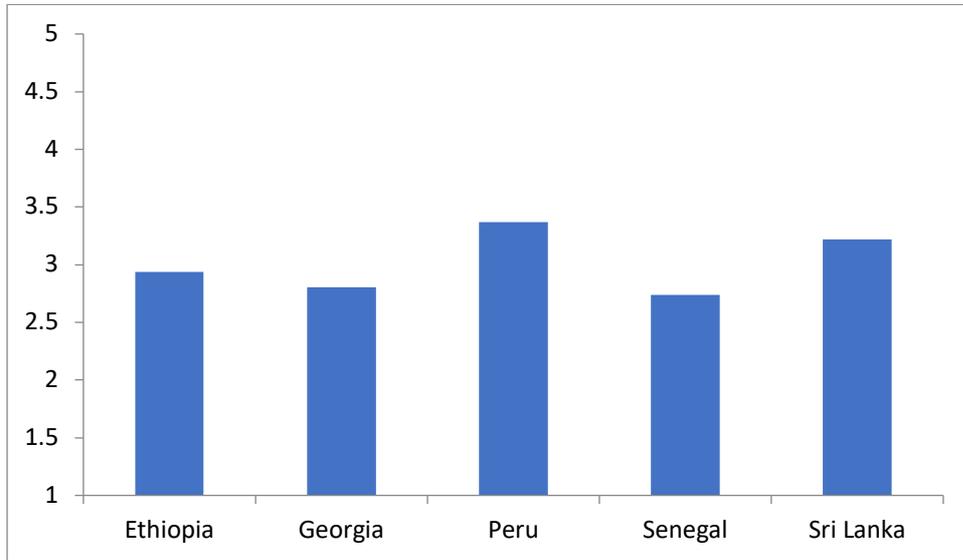
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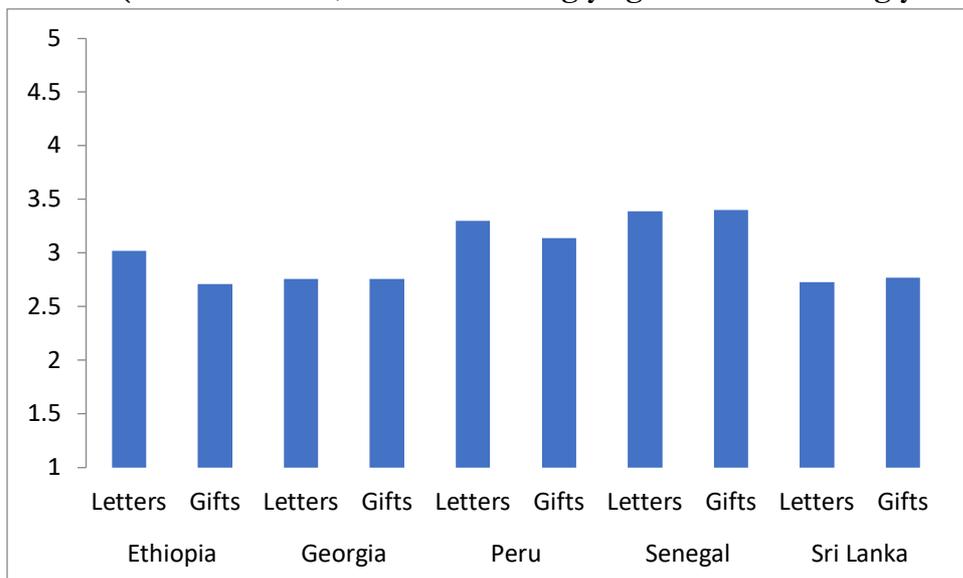
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Figure 1: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Children who do not/did not have a sponsor have been jealous of me because I have/had a sponsor. (Likert scale 1-5; where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree).



Source: the authors

Figure 2: I have felt feeling jealous of other children because of the letters/gifts that they receive. (Likert scale 1-5; where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree).



Source: the authors

Table 1: Instances of Letter writing and Gifts over Period of Sponsorship

	Received a letter (%)	Wrote a letter (%)	Received a gift (%)
Georgia	82.9	90.4	53.6
Peru	80.7	94.8	76.8
Senegal	52.0	22.0	60.0
Ethiopia	81.8	81.8	52.5
Sri Lanka	66.3	69.7	61.6

Source: the authors

Table 2: Associations with Letter writing and Gifts

	Hope	Self-Efficacy	Resilience	Educational aspirations	Ladder of life
Ethiopia	Ever received a gift (p=0.01)	Ever wrote a letter (p=0.03) Ever received a gift (p=0.08)	Ever received a letter (p=0.06) Ever received a gift (p=0.06)	Ever received a letter (p=0.03) Ever wrote a letter (p=0.04)	Ever received a gift (p<0.01)
Peru	Ever wrote a letter (p=0.04) Ever received a gift (p=0.07)	Ever received a letter (p=0.04) Ever wrote a letter (p=0.05) Received a gift (p=0.02)		Ever wrote a letter (p=0.03)	Ever received a letter (p=0.04)
Senegal					Ever wrote letter (p=0.09)
Sri Lanka			Ever received a letter (p=0.10)		
Georgia	Ever received a letter (p=0.06) Ever wrote a letter (p=0.01)	Ever wrote a letter (p<0.01)	Ever wrote a letter (p=0.01)		

Notes: Findings based on Wilcoxon rank-sum test

