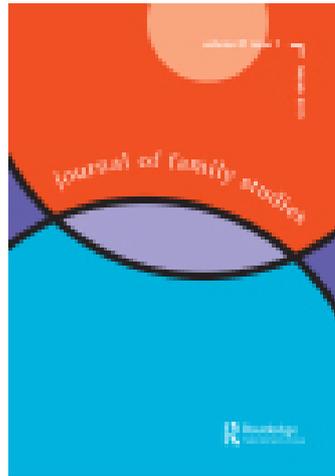


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Single mothers and child support receipt in Peru

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ABSTRACT: *Using cross-sectional data from the National Household Surveys (2004–2012), this study presents the trend in child support receipt in Peru over this period and factors associated with child support receipt. In both descriptive and multivariate logit analyses, the likelihood of receiving support among single mothers increased substantially. Some factors related to receiving support are similar to those in other countries, particularly those related to the strength of ties between the noncustodial father and the single mother and their children. But other factors differ, and the results show an important pattern in which some of those who are more disadvantaged are more likely to receive support, perhaps because they have more needs, while other areas of disadvantage are associated with a lowered likelihood of receipt. Research and policy implications are discussed.*

KEYWORDS: child support, custodial-parent families, single mothers

Latin American families have been changing during the last decades. The percentage of children born outside marriage increased from 17% in 1970 to 39% in 2000 (Castro Martín, Cortina, Martín García, & Pardo, 2011), and the proportion of households headed by women in the region increased from 19.5% in 1980s to 27.2% in the 2000s (Chioda, 2011). Among families headed by women there is a high incidence of poverty, which may result in a variety of negative outcomes for their children (Cerrutti & Binstock, 2009; García & de Oliveira, 2011; Herrera, Salinas, & Valenzuela, 2011; Riesco Lind & Alburqueque Neyra, 2007). Under similar circumstances, many developed countries have placed efforts in enforcing child support obligations to increase custodial-parent families' income.² For Latin America, there is some evidence suggesting that child support reduces poverty (Cuesta & Meyer, 2014). However, little is known about the factors associated with child support receipt in this region, where different cultural characteristics, such as gender roles, and a different institutional framework may result in different patterns from the ones already found for more developed countries.

This study contributes in addressing this gap by examining the characteristics associated with child support receipt among single mothers in Peru, who represented 21% of all families with children in 2012.³ Although there is little research, the problems single mothers face when collecting child support in this country are not new (Hernández Breña, 2011), and they have become an important policy concern in the last years. This study takes advantage of the Peruvian National Household Surveys (ENAHOs) from 2004, 2008 and 2012, which enables the identification of single-mother families, has information about child support payments and a wide variety of family characteristics, and can be used to examine trends. This paper has two specific aims: (1) To briefly describe changes in child support receipt from 2004 to 2012, and (2) to provide an exploratory analysis of the factors associated with likelihood of child support receipt among single-mother families in Peru. As custodial parents are entitled to claim child support and child support might promote child wellbeing, a better understanding of the characteristics associated with child support receipt in a different cultural and institutional context from that of developed countries, could be important.

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² Custodial parents include single parents (lone parents) and those whose are currently married or partnered if at least one of their children has a parent who is living elsewhere.

³ Authors' calculations using the National Household Survey (ENAHO) from 2012.

THE PERUVIAN CONTEXT

Socioeconomic characteristics and family structure in Peru

Peru has been experiencing a positive macroeconomic environment since the second half of the 2000s. Considering the entire period under study, the national GDP increased at annual rates of 5% or higher, resulting in a GDP per capita that increased from 6013 in 2004 to 9431 international dollars in 2012 (World Bank, 2014). The global recession did result in some slowdown: The average annual GDP per capita growth rate from 2004 to 2008 was 7.9%, while the rate for 2009 to 2012 was 5.5%. During the 2004–2012 period, the average years of education among the population over 14 years old increased from 9.4 (INEI, 2006) to 10.1 years (INEI, 2014a), and the country's poverty rate declined from 58.7 to 25.8% according to the official statistics (INEI, 2013a). Consequently, despite custodial parents in Peru are raising their children in a more disadvantaged context than their counterparts in developed countries, on average, they are experiencing improving economic conditions.

Family structure among families with children has been changing: From 2004 to 2012, the percentage of married couples decreased from 43 to 37 percent, while the percentage of cohabiting couples and single mothers have each increased around 4% points, reaching 37 and 21% respectively. The percentage of single-father families has not varied during the same period, representing only 2% of all families with children. On average, married couples and single fathers live in households with higher income per member than single mothers and cohabiting couples.⁴

The Peruvian social welfare system

In Peru, there is no governmental income support program targeted to single-parent families. Poor households with children (whether there is one parent or two in the home) may be eligible for the conditional cash transfer program (*Juntos*) if they comply with certain requirements (e.g., children

between 6 and 14 years who did not complete primary school should attend school for at least 85% of school year). This program commenced in 2005 and is mainly targeted to poor rural districts. Disadvantaged families may also receive a variety of food assistance programs, which are more widely available. There are no special provisions that connect the social welfare system and the child support system (e.g., recipients of social welfare programs are not required to participate in child support efforts, and child support income is treated like another income source within the income support programs in the social welfare system).

The Peruvian child support system

According to Peruvian law, child support obligations (*pensión de alimentos*) arise from the legal relationship between a parent and a child, regardless of whether the child's parents were married or not. Custodial and noncustodial parents are responsible for the child until she reaches 18 (older if the child is still in school or has a disability), and child support should cover what is necessary for her sustenance, housing, clothing, education, labor training, medical assistance and recreation.

The process of seeking child support may involve actors other than judges and legal personnel (what Skinner and Davidson, 2009 call a 'hybrid' system). When a custodial parent decides to use the legal system, there is no charge by the courts, with the case heard in different courts depending on whether the parent–child relationship has already been legally established. Custodial parents can also present a lawsuit without the presence of a lawyer or with legal aid lawyers. However, given the limited services provided by legal aid lawyers,⁵ custodial mothers may hire private lawyers, whose services can be very expensive, especially for low-income mothers (Hernández Breña, 2011). Legally, the amounts of child support are set according to the needs of the custodial family and the ability of the noncustodial parent

⁴ Authors' calculations using the National Household Surveys (ENAHOS) from 2004 to 2012.

⁵ There are fewer than 1000 legal aid lawyers in the whole country and, given the high demand for their services, these lawyers may provide low-quality legal assistance to custodial parents (Hernández Breña, 2011).

to pay. If the noncustodial parent cannot provide child support due to poverty, other ascendants – usually the custodial parent – should assume that responsibility according to their budget. Judges set child support obligations according to their discretion except that formally established child support payments cannot represent more than 60% of the noncustodial parent's income. If the noncustodial parent does not attend court appointments, a child support obligation may be established without his presence and he receives a notification from court.

Once a child support amount has been established, child support payments can be made directly by the noncustodial parent to the custodial parent or deducted from the noncustodial parent's wages and forwarded to the custodial parent. (However, less than half of those employed worked for a firm [INEI, 2013b], and some of those working for a firm are working informally or have contracts that do not generally allow withholding, so this collection method affects only a minority of noncustodial parents).

According to Peruvian law, noncompliance of court orders may result in another lawsuit (*Omisión a la asistencia familiar*). Since 2013, noncustodial parents who have not paid three consecutive child support payments and are reported by custodial parents are added to a public list, with picture included, of noncustodial parents with arrears, available in the Judiciary System website.⁶ Noncustodial parents owing child support payments for 3 months or more are also reported to the government entity in charge of bank and insurance supervision (*SBS*) to be included as credit risks for all public and private finance entities.

In addition to the legal system, the Peruvian government promotes private conciliation or agreement between custodial and noncustodial parents through free public conciliation centers. Conciliation can also be achieved through other institutions or organizations, such as private conciliation centers, district offices that

defend children and teenagers (*DEMUNAs*), and community authorities and organizations. *DEMUNAs* consider a variety of cases related to child support payments, noncustodial parent visits schedules, domestic violence, and others. In 2012, 47% of the cases attended by the *DEMUNAs* were related specifically to child support payments (INEI, 2014b). Many of these conciliation institutions and organizations are legally authorized to set child support monetary or in-kind payments. If payments established in these institutions are not made and the custodial parent reports this to the Judiciary System, the penalties mentioned before are applied.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature about child support receipt in Peru and other Latin American countries is very limited. Some factors are likely to be similar to those of developed countries, such as the U.S. (Cuesta & Meyer, 2012), so child support research from other countries may be relevant to the Peruvian case. Research in other countries, primarily the U.S., suggests that child support is related to noncustodial parents' ability and willingness to pay support, and the policy environment (Bartfeld & Meyer, 1994; Beller & Graham, 1996; Ha, Cancian, & Meyer, 2011; Huang, 2009; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010).

Research generally supports a strong relationship between ability to pay and child support (e.g., Bartfeld & Meyer, 2003). Unfortunately, the data source used here (and, indeed, much of the data on child support) has no information on noncustodial parents. To the extent that individuals partner with those similar to themselves, characteristics of custodial parents may act as a proxy for the noncustodial parent's characteristics. Thus, custodial parents with higher education (Beller & Graham, 1996; Cuesta & Meyer, 2012; Huang, 2009), those with more earnings or income (Bartfeld & Meyer, 1994; Ha et al., 2011), and those who are older (Ha et al., 2011; Huang, 2009), may be more likely to receive support because their former partners had more education, income, or were older.

In terms of willingness to pay, research has found that formal ties with the former partner

⁶ This list, known as *Registro de Deudores Alimentarios Morosos* (REDAM), is available at <https://casillas.pj.gob.pe/redamWeb/>

increase the likelihood of receiving child support payments. Divorced custodial mothers are more likely to receive child support than those who were never married (Ha et al., 2011; Huang, 2009). The number of children may also represent ties, and custodial mothers with more children are also more likely to receive child support (Ha et al., 2011; Huang, 2009). Custodial mothers who have had children with other fathers are less likely to receive support from a particular noncustodial father (Meyer & Cancian, 2012; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010). Willingness to pay support may also be more likely when the custodial-parent family has higher needs (Beller & Graham, 1996); although this may be important in the Peruvian context, the research in the U.S. generally has not found a strong relationship between needs and receipts (Meyer, 1999).

Finally, the policy environment has been found to be linked to child support receipt in the U.S. (Bartfeld & Meyer, 2003; Sorensen & Hill, 2004). In fact, some have argued that as policies have made the payment of child support more routine, there is less room for willingness to pay (Bartfeld & Meyer, 2003; Meyer, Ha, & Hu, 2008). One of the issues in understanding factors related to child support is that some variables may represent more than one construct. Sometimes these go in the same direction, as the number of children may reflect both the strength of ties (leading to increased willingness to pay) and the needs of the custodial-parent family (leading to increased willingness to pay). Similarly, young children may reflect higher needs due to child care costs and may also reflect a more recent relationship with stronger ties, both of which could increase support (Beller & Graham, 1988; Ha et al., 2011). Likewise, custodial parents with higher income or education may be linked to noncustodial parents with higher ability to pay (leading to more support), but under certain policy environments, they may also have the resources to be able to achieve the outcome they desire (Cuesta & Meyer, 2012). On the other hand, custodial parents with higher income may have lower needs, leading to less support. Similarly, noncustodial parents associated with those who receive welfare may be economically disadvantaged themselves (leading to less support), or custodial parents

receiving welfare may have higher needs (leading to more support) or the government may see the custodial parent's welfare receipt as a signal to increase its child support enforcement efforts to try to recoup welfare costs (leading to more support). This ambiguous prediction may be a reason why there have been mixed or inconsistent findings on the relationship between welfare and child support in the U.S. research (Bartfeld, 2003; Huang, 2009; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010; Sorensen & Hill, 2004).

One of the studies that explores factors related to child support receipt in Latin America and compares it to the U.S. is from Cuesta and Meyer (2012). This study shows that living in the U.S., compared to living in Colombia, is weakly associated with an increase in the likelihood of child support receipt once they control for custodial mother's characteristics. While many factors had similar relationships with child support receipt in both the U.S. and Colombia, some did not. In contrast to the U.S., Colombian custodial mothers from the lower income quintiles were more likely to receive child support, which according to the authors might be because some mothers receive enough child support that they do not need to pursue other sources of income or that in Colombia child support is seen as based on need.

One of the main published studies about child support receipt in Peru explores the costs associated with child support legal cases in four poor rural provinces (Hernández Breña, 2011). For the 360 custodial mothers studied, one of the most important costs associated with child support was the private lawyer costs and legal procedure costs. For many of these mothers having access to a private lawyer is seen as increasing the chances of getting a more positive verdict, but these fees represent an important share of their monthly income.⁷ Transportation costs were also very important for some of these mothers, as many of them lived far away from the city where the

⁷ The average cost of private lawyers of the cases under study was 127 *Nuevos Soles* (equivalent US\$43 from 2008), while the mother's monthly income ranged between 93 and 342 *Nuevos Soles* (equivalent to US\$32 and US\$117 from 2008) (Hernández Breña, 2011).

judiciary offices were located. Finally, the opportunity costs associated with the lawsuit and whole legal process were important, as women could be working or taking care of their children instead of spending time and resources on a lawsuit that may not benefit her.

In addition to documenting costs, Hernández Breña (2011) also examine other aspects of access to the legal system. The findings suggest that a custodial mother's lack of knowledge about child support and her native language are important restrictions in the rural areas. Many custodial mothers did not know that their children's father had the obligation to pay child support, where to go to get information or how to start a legal process. This may be associated with low education levels and the lack of information available about the topic in rural areas. Another important factor affecting women's decision to pursue a legal demand for child support is their native language. Women who are indigenous native speakers may not be able to communicate with staff from organizations that provide information about the child support system, and with their lawyers and judges from the judicial system. This may reduce the likelihood of legally demanding child support, and may also affect negatively those women who pursue it.

In addition to investigating costs and access, this study also examined outcomes. According to Peruvian law, the legal process should not take more than 25 days until the verdict is established, but for custodial mothers in this study only 5% of their cases were solved in that time. Hernández Breña (2011) also finds that although mothers were awarded support in two out of three lawsuits, the amount of child support ordered was significantly lower than requested. For the author, gender issues may be involved with these verdicts. Lawyers, attorneys and other staff from the judicial institutions are mainly male, who may have a stronger bias against single motherhood, especially if the child is a product of an extramarital relationship (Hernández Breña, 2011). Qualitative evidence for Metropolitan Lima, the Peruvian capital, also suggests that judges, lawyers and society

in general have a biased view against women demanding child support, which varies according to their socioeconomic status (Hernández Breña, 2013).

In summary, the previous literature is primarily from developed countries, although there is one published comparison of a Latin American country and the U.S. (Cuesta & Meyer, 2012), and two key smaller-scale studies from Peru (Hernández Breña, 2011, 2013). This study extends the previous research by exploring factors associated with child support receipt and the amount of child support among single mothers in Peru, using a large-scale, nationally-representative and recent data source. This study extends previous literature about the factors associated with child support receipts in developed countries, such as the U.S., by considering a different context with a distinct rule of law and culture. Peru is a country with singular characteristics, in terms of gender roles, including domestic violence concerns, and single-motherhood stigma. In addition, during the last years the country has been experiencing a positive macroeconomic environment and the government has been increasing its efforts in promoting monetary and in-kind child support payments. These characteristics may affect the behavior of custodial mothers, noncustodial fathers and all other agents of society (such as lawyers, judges, extra-judicial staff), and consequently, affect child support payments.

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

Data

This study uses a pooled dataset of the Peruvian National Household Surveys (ENAHO) from 2004, 2008, and 2012. ENAHO is an annual survey with interviews occurring throughout each year and managed by the National Institute of Statistics (INEI, 2014a). This dataset provides information on households, and within each household, one person is designated as the head, and the relationship of all household members to the head is provided. In addition, within each household, family units are defined in a similar way (i.e., one person is designated as head, and the relationship of all family members

to the head is provided). We use this information, along with each individual's marital status, to identify single-parent families.⁸

After separating households into families, ENAHO's total sample of families with children below the age of 18 for the years under analysis is 45,995. For this study, we excluded single-father families, because there are not many single fathers in the sample, and among these, very few received child support. Moreover, the factors associated with child support receipt for fathers may differ from those for mothers. Among mothers, we include only those who declared themselves as divorced, separated or single. We do not require them to be heads of household, because mothers are considered responsible for their minor children even if they are living with other relatives. Re-partnered custodial mothers would be eligible for child support, but cannot be distinguished in this sample, so they were also excluded from the sample. The final sample of single-mother families in the analysis is 8097.⁹

ENAHO has information about child support receipt in the previous year. It is also the only nationally representative Peruvian source that provides information about both child support and a wide set of characteristics of families, such as income sources, participation in assistance programs, and household members'

demographics, education and employment. For our purposes, a limitation of the dataset is that it only includes information about single-mother families, but not about the noncustodial parents. It also does not contain information on whether the parents of a child were married, cohabiting, or neither at the time of the child's birth. For this reason, the empirical specifications presented in the next subsection are restricted to the characteristics of single-mother families and their context, rather than characteristics of the couple.¹⁰

Methods

The purpose of this study is to provide an exploratory analysis of the factors associated with child support receipt among Peruvian single-mother families. Because the dependent variable (whether child support is received) is dichotomous, we estimate a series of logistic models with time and place fixed effects using maximum likelihood techniques. For this, consider a latent variable y_{ijt} that takes positive values when the single mother i from district j in year t receives child support ($y_{it} = 1$), and non-positive values when she does not ($y_{it} = 0$). This latent variable is a linear function of a set of variables presented in the following basic specification:

$$y_{ijt} = \alpha + \beta X_{ijt} + \delta z_{jt} + \gamma_t + \rho_t + \tau_m + \varepsilon_{ijt} \quad (1)$$

Where X_{ijt} is a vector containing mother and family characteristics that may reflect the non-custodial parent's ability and willingness to pay support, such as the custodial parent's education (since we have no information on the noncustodial parent, but individuals are likely to partner with people of similar educational status). This vector also includes variables related to the context, including the area of residence. These variables are described below. This basic specification also includes the average family income of district $j(z_{jt})$ to control for potential social differences across districts, a set of dummy

⁸ For our purposes, only household members were considered to create family units: Lodgers, household workers, other non-relatives and relatives living temporarily in the household are excluded from the analysis.

⁹ In an additional 621 families, the mother reports she is married or cohabiting but there is no partner in the household. We are unable to distinguish between those whose relationship has ended but have not yet changed their formal status (who are potentially eligible for child support) from those who are still in a relationship but temporarily living apart, perhaps due to employment (who are not eligible for child support). As a sensitivity analysis, all calculations and estimations in this study have also been done including these 621 mothers. Results are very similar to the base results and are available upon request. Moreover, the sample excludes 18 observations with missing information in key covariates.

¹⁰ Moreover, we are not certain if the noncustodial parent is still living; because child support is irrelevant for those whose partners are deceased, we do not include those who report themselves as widows in our analysis.

variables to control for region of residence (γ_r),¹¹ a set of year dummy variables (ρ_t), and a set of monthly dummy variables (τ_m) to control for seasonality. Finally, ε_{ijt} represents all the unmeasured characteristics and has a logistic standard distribution.

In addition to this basic specification, two additional specifications are examined. These include variables that seem to be important for the Peruvian context, but that were not available for the complete dataset. One specification includes an indicator of whether the mother's native language is indigenous. This variable is added in an additional specification, because it is not available for 2004 (only for 2008 and 2012), and its inclusion reduces considerably the sample size. The last specification includes a categorical variable indicating if a household member trusts or does not know about the judiciary system. This specification is run separately because it has a considerable amount of missing values. All logistic regressions were estimated with robust standard errors clustered by district to prevent potential heteroskedasticity issues, given that unobservable characteristics may be correlated at that level.

As a consequence of data restrictions, a limitation of these models is that they are not taking into account that child support receipt and the amount of child support received are often conditioned upon the single mother's formal or informal request for child support. In addition, as mentioned before, we are not controlling for non-custodial fathers' characteristics. Consequently, the estimates from these models may be biased.

Measures

Child support can be made through cash or in-kind contributions from the noncustodial parent to the single-mother family. They can also be defined formally (with a legal order) or informally. In this study, child support is based on a single question that includes both formal and informal monetary transfers. For the regression analysis, child support

is measured as a dichotomous variable indicating whether the family received child support in the year prior to the survey. For the descriptive results, we also considered the total amount of child support the family received in the year prior to the survey. To control for inflation, the amounts of child support received were converted to U.S. constant dollars of 2012. The first category of independent variables are those that may be related to the noncustodial parent's ability to pay. If mothers' ex-partners have characteristics that are similar to hers, then mothers who are older, have more education, are employed, and have higher adjusted family income could be more likely to receive support.¹² The second category includes variables that may be related to the noncustodial parent's willingness to pay, including those that reflect the strength of his ties with the mother and their children (her marital status, her number of children, the age of the youngest)¹³ and those that reflect her needs (whether there are other adult relatives in the household, which may mean she has lower needs, and whether she receives welfare through a conditional cash transfer or food assistance, which may reflect higher needs).¹⁴ We also include characteristics of her context and the policy context (whether she lives in a rural area, the average family income per capita in the district in

¹² The adjusted family income variable begins with the imputed household income, and then the amount of child support is subtracted to get household income without child support. This amount was divided equally among all individuals in the household, and then family income was constructed by summing across all members of the family. To account for economies of scale, this amount was then adjusted using the modified OECD equivalence scale (see <http://www.oecd.org/eco/growth/OECD-Note-EquivalenceScales.pdf>). Finally, as with child support, these amounts were converted to US constant dollars of 2012. The natural log of this final amount is used.

¹³ The age of the youngest child is assumed to be an indicator of the time since separation. Since some research (albeit from the US) shows that contact with children generally declines over time (Argys & Peters, 2001), those with more time since separation may have weaker ties.

¹⁴ Food assistance programs considered in the analysis are *Vaso de Leche*, *Comedor Popular*, *Club de Madres*, *Cocina Popular*, School Breakfast and School Lunch.

¹¹ Peru is divided in 25 administrative regions, which include several districts. Among the sample of single-mother families there are 1014 districts.

the previous year,¹⁵ and indicators for region, representing each of the 25 regions, for year and for month. Finally, in our additional specifications, we include the two variables that may be important for the Peruvian context described above, native language and trust in the Judiciary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 presents child support receipt rates and average amount of child support received in 2004, 2008 and 2012. The child support receipt rate increased markedly during this period, particularly in the first half, from 18% in 2004 to 30% in 2008 and 35% in 2012. If a child support policy change had the effect of broadening the coverage of the child support system, then it might bring in more disadvantaged families, leading to more families receiving support, but each receiving a lower average amount. However, this is not the case in Peru: Even though more families are receiving child support, average amounts among recipients have increased substantially, increasing by 68% between 2004 and 2012. The trend is clear, but the reason for it is not: Child support payments may have increased due to the positive macroeconomic environment (especially before 2009, the year in which the economy started to slow down) recent government efforts to increase child support payments, or a cultural change.

¹⁵ Average family incomes in the district in the year before the survey is taken from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2013).

TABLE 1: CS RECEIPT RATES AND AVERAGE AMOUNT OF CS RECEIVED AMONG SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILIES

	CS receipt rates (%)	Average amount of CS per child (US\$ 2012)	
		All families	Families receiving CS
2004	18.1	172	954
2008	30.1	402	1335
2012	35.1	563	1604
Total	28.6	398	1392

Percentages and amounts were calculated using the weighted sample. Total sample is 8097.

Table 2 presents the characteristics of single mothers according to whether they receive child support or not. The first panel reviews variables that may reflect the noncustodial father's ability to pay. Single mothers receiving child support are in general more educated, have higher income levels, and, as shown in the other panels, are less likely to be indigenous native speakers, and are more likely to live in urban areas and richer districts. All of these characteristics suggest a higher likelihood of receipt for more advantaged mothers, perhaps reflecting that their children's fathers are also more advantaged. However, it might instead mean that more advantaged single mothers have the resources and the ability to work the child support system. Single mothers receiving child support are less likely to be employed and have lower incomes than those who do not receive support.

The next panel shows that factors that may reflect a willingness to pay, whether this is related to strength of ties or custodial need, are also potentially important. Child support is more likely for those with more children and with younger children. However, these data do not suggest child support is more likely among single-mother families with greater needs: Those who live with others (who may have lower needs) and those receiving welfare are less likely to receive support. Finally, those receiving child support tend to trust less in the judiciary system than those who do not receive it.

Multivariate analysis

These bivariate relationships may not hold when other factors are controlled, so this section moves to a multivariate analysis and presents the results from the empirical model described in Empirical strategy section. Table 3 presents the marginal effects at the mean from the logistic regressions explaining whether single mothers receive child support. The first column presents the results from the basic specification presented in equation (1). The second column adds to this specification an indicator of whether the single mother's native language is indigenous. Finally, the third column adds information on whether a household member trusts in the Judiciary System, differentiating those who trust the Judiciary, those who do not, and those who do not know if they trust the Judiciary.

TABLE 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF SINGLE-MOTHER FAMILIES ACCORDING TO CHILD SUPPORT RECEIPT

	All	No CS	CS	Test of differences
Factors related to ability to pay				
Age (mean)	34.1	34.1	34.1	
Years of schooling (mean)	9.7	9.2	11.0	***
Level of education				
Less than high school	25%	29%	14%	***
High school	46%	46%	48%	***
More than high school	29%	26%	39%	***
Employed	77%	78%	74%	***
Hours worked (mean)	47.2	47.4	46.6	
Annual adjusted income per capita (US\$ 2012)**	3358	3299	3505	**
Factors related to willingness to pay				
No. children under 18	1.5	1.5	1.6	***
Age of the youngest child under 18	6.9	7.0	6.6	***
Other relative(s) in the household	80%	82%	74%	***
CCT or food assistance recipient	53%	58%	43%	***
Factors related to context				
Family lives in rural area	18%	22%	9%	***
Average annual family income per capita in district (US\$ 2012) in t – 1	2277	2179	2520	***
Additional factors				
Native language: Indigenous*	14%	17%	8%	***
A household member's trust in judiciary system***				
None or low	70%	68%	75%	***
Some or high	23%	24%	21%	***
Unknown	7%	8%	4%	***

Percentages were calculated using the weighted sample. Sample includes families' data from 2004, 2008, and 2012 (8097 observations). *Only available for 2008 and 2012 (5795 observations). **Excludes child support. ***Only available for 7499 observations. Differences between means and categories were tested using t-tests and corrected F-tests, respectively; ***indicates $p < 0.01$; **indicates $p < 0.5$.

In general, results from all columns are consistent. Considering factors that may be related to ability of the noncustodial father to pay, those with more education are more likely to receive support. However, those who are employed and those with higher income are less likely to receive support. This highlights the ambiguity of these constructs: Those with lower income and those who are unemployed could get support because they are seen as needing it more, rather than these variables reflecting connection to a noncustodial father who has higher resources. Moreover, those who are not working may have more time to spend in private conciliation or legal processes.

In contrast, the variables that may reflect willingness to pay are more consistently related to child

support receipt, especially those that may reflect the strength of ties. Separated or divorced (vs. never married) single mothers, those with more children under 18, and those with younger children are more likely to receive child support. This is consistent with previous literature suggesting that ties are important. The positive association between the number of children and child support receipt might also reflect that child support payments are linked to the single-mother families' needs. Similarly, perhaps the reason that those who live with other relatives (in other family units) receive less support is that they are seen as needing it less.

The variables reflecting the context show that those in rural areas and those in poorer districts are less likely to receive support, perhaps because their

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TABLE 3: LOGISTIC ESTIMATIONS OF CHILD SUPPORT RECEIPT

	Marginal effects at the means		
	1	2	3
Factors related to ability to pay			
Mother's age	-0.001 [0.011]	-0.002 [0.014]	0.002 [0.011]
Mother's education level (base = less than high school)			
High school	0.112 [0.016]***	0.121 [0.022]***	0.107 [0.016]***
More than high school	0.21 [0.022]***	0.199 [0.029]***	0.205 [0.021]***
Mother is employed	-0.038 [0.016]**	-0.044 [0.021]**	-0.048 [0.017]***
Log: Adjusted income	-0.05 [0.010]***	-0.058 [0.013]***	-0.048 [0.011]***
Factors related to the willingness to pay			
Mother is separated or divorced (base = never married)	0.065 [0.015]***	0.066 [0.019]***	0.074 [0.017]***
No. of children under 18 (base = 1)			
Two	0.037 [0.016]**	0.046 [0.020]**	0.038 [0.018]**
Three or more	0.056 [0.028]*	0.062 [0.035]*	0.059 [0.027]**
Age of the youngest child under 18	-0.004 [0.002]**	-0.005 [0.003]*	-0.006 [0.002]***
Other relatives in the household	-0.069 [0.017]***	-0.082 [0.023]***	-0.054 [0.018]***
Family receives CCT or food assistance	-0.024 [0.016]	-0.027 [0.018]	-0.014 [0.018]
Factors related to the context			
Family lives in rural area	-0.114 [0.017]***	-0.087 [0.025]***	-0.116 [0.018]***
District's log. Fam. income per capita $t - 1$	0.055 [0.022]**	0.097 [0.029]***	0.064 [0.023]***
Year (base = 2008)			
2004	-0.117 [0.018]***		-0.115 [0.018]***
2012	0.024 [0.021]	0.006 [0.022]	0.022 [0.021]
Additional factors			
Mother's native language is indigenous		-0.069 [0.024]***	
Whether a HH member trust in the judiciary system (base = none or low)			
Some or high			0.002 [0.020]
Unknown			-0.079 [0.025]***
N	8097	5795	7499
No. clusters (districts)	1014	843	1004
Prob > χ^2	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo R^2	0.0967	0.0834	0.1005

Robust and clustered standard errors by district in brackets. All regressions include regional and monthly indicators. Estimations are based on the weighted sample. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

opportunity costs of trying to gain support are high or because noncustodial fathers in these areas have less ability to pay. But this also contradicts somewhat the perspective of needs in that custodial parents in rural areas and especially those in poorer districts might be more likely to need support, but they actually are less likely to receive it.

The descriptive results showed a substantial increase in the likelihood of receiving support between 2004 and 2008, and a moderate increase from 2008 to 2012. This could be because the

economy was improving markedly, or other characteristics of single parents or the environment were changing over time. Table 3 shows that even when other characteristics (including family income) are controlled, single mothers are still considerably more likely to receive support in 2008 than in 2004, but not in 2012 compared to 2008. This might suggest that the macroeconomic environment is playing an important role in child support receipt, because the latest Peruvian economic growth started to slow down somewhat in 2009.

Finally, the supplementary models show that, as expected, mothers with indigenous languages are less likely to receive support, and including this variable does not change the other results substantially. Moreover, those who trust the judiciary are no more likely to receive support than those who do not, but those who are unsure if they trust the judiciary are less likely to receive support, perhaps because their experiences with the judiciary were ambiguous or perhaps because they are unaware of the possibility of legal assistance in procuring support.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Using cross-sectional data from the National Household Surveys for 2004, 2008 and 2012, this study expands current knowledge on the factors associated with child support receipt among Peruvian single-mother families. As custodial parents are entitled to claim child support and child support might promote child wellbeing, it seems relevant to have a better understanding of the characteristics associated with child support receipt in a different cultural and institutional context from developed countries, such as the Peruvian one.

Results from this study should be considered taking into account its limitations. Due to data availability, this study restricted its sample to single mothers who were not married or (re)partnered, assumed that all noncustodial fathers were alive, and could not distinguish the child in the family for whom the child support payment was made. In addition, the dataset does not include information on noncustodial parents. For this reason, the analysis is focused on custodial single-mother families' characteristics, excluding noncustodial fathers characteristics and their relationship with their children and single-mother families, which some previous research has found to be important (Del Boca & Ribero, 2001; Meyer & Cancian, 2012; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010). The estimates presented in this study might be biased by not accounting for these issues.

Another limitation is that the analysis is not taking into account that child support receipt is often conditioned upon the custodial mother's formal or informal request for child support. Single mothers who get child support through conciliation or a legal order might differ from those who do it through a private agreement. Due to data limitations, this

selection process cannot be taken into account in the analysis. This study uses cross-sectional data so cannot ascertain the direction of causal influence; for example, this generally ignores the possibility that some characteristics of single mothers (e.g., living with other adults) may be the result of the lack of child support payments and not a cause. Finally, this study only considers child support monetary payments. In Peru, given that not all noncustodial fathers have the economic resources to pay for monetary payments, the government and other institutions that defend children's rights promote all type of child support payments, including in-kind payments. Unfortunately, the dataset does not contain this information and focuses on monetary child support payments.

Despite its limitations, this study has important new findings. One might expect improving child support outcomes in a country with rapidly improving economic conditions, and this is confirmed by the descriptive results. Perhaps more important, this study shows an increased likelihood of receiving support, even with many factors controlled, including the single mother's own income and education level, and the income level in the district in which she lives. This important improvement seem to be influenced by the positive macroeconomic environment beyond what is controlled here. But, it may also be due to the increasing government efforts to promote child support payments or cultural changes in favor of child support payments. Additional research exploring these potential reasons could provide policy lessons for other countries.

The present study has shown that many of the factors associated with child support receipt in Peru are similar to those found in the previous research from developed countries. In particular, those with strong ties to their ex-partner or their children are more likely to pay support, suggesting that willingness to pay is important. This can be seen in the higher receipt rates for those who were married, who have more children, and who have younger children.

In contrast, this study has a more unusual pattern of results related to the level of disadvantage. In some regards, single mothers with more needs are more likely to receive support: Those with lower income and the unemployed are more likely to receive support. This could be because the Peruvian policy environment specifically considers need in

the setting of child support, or because those who are unemployed are able to spend the time necessary to procure support. Another possibility is that some of those who receive support can afford to not work. In contrast to the findings that some of those with higher needs are more likely to receive support, those with specific disadvantages, such as lower levels of education, living in rural areas and poorer districts, are less likely to receive child support payments. This might be due to a combination of factors: The lack of resources these mothers have to work with the child support system, and the lack of resources noncustodial fathers have to pay child support, as they probably confront similar disadvantages to the single-mother family. Some of the disadvantages that are linked to non-receipt seem particularly important in the Peruvian context. Having an indigenous language as one's native language seems to decrease single mothers' access to conciliation centers and courts, where the majority of staff (if not all) speak only Spanish (Hernández Breña, 2011). Evidence in the present study also suggests that single mothers who lack knowledge about the judiciary system are less likely to receive child support, which might also reflect the ignorance of many women about their children's right to receive child support (Hernández Breña, 2011). Furthermore, single mothers' child support receipt in Peru is related to the high opportunity costs of the informal or formal demand of child support. Due to the importance of single mother's labor income for the family subsistence or the autonomy that single mothers get when they participate in the labor market, women who are employed might prefer to work rather than follow the expensive, long and risky child support demand process.

The Peruvian results here have some similarities with research from Colombia (Cuesta & Meyer, 2012): Child support receipt is negatively associated with the single-mother families' income, highlighting that child support payments may be based on needs in these countries, in contrast to the U.S. Alternatively, it could be that Latin American single parents with more resources feel less economic pressure to go through the long and tedious child support demand process. In a similar way, having potential family support in the household is negatively associated with child support receipt. Single mothers living with relatives outside her family unit

may be considered to have fewer needs, and are, consequently, less likely to receive child support.

This combination of factors suggests that in Peru, the system and society works in such a way that, to receive child support, single mothers need to have sufficient advantages (i.e., resources) to access and work the system, but not so many as to give the appearance that they do not need the child support payment to care and raise their children. Policies promoting child support payments in Peru should take into account social norms behind single motherhood and child support payment, including potential gender biases against women. Significant economic growth and recent government efforts in promoting child support payments could be behind the surprising increase in child support receipt rates from 2004 to 2012. However, results from this study suggests that governmental efforts could still be needed as economic growth slows somewhat. Moreover, governmental efforts could be even more effective, as more information and advice is still needed, especially in rural areas and to those women whose native language is an indigenous one.

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