Teenage childbearing and educational attainment in South Africa


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Description:
Teenage childbearing and attainment at school in South Africa are investigated using nationally-representative data from the National Income Dynamics Study. The analysis focuses on the outcomes by 2010 of a panel of 673 childless young women aged 15–18 in 2008. Girls who had their first birth by 2010 had 4.4 times the odds of leaving school and 2.2 times the odds of failing to matriculate, controlling for other factors. Girls from the highest-income households were unlikely, and girls who were behind at school relatively likely, to give birth. More than half the new mothers enrolled in school in 2010. They were most likely to enroll if they were rural residents who resided with their own mother and she had attended secondary school. Poor educational attainment, teenage motherhood and childhood poverty are interrelated problems in South Africa: for middle-class families, avoiding early motherhood contributes to the intergenerational transmission of privilege. Dissuading girls in their mid-teens who are behind at school from becoming teenage mothers may require intervention at an earlier stage of their schooling.

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