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Teen Fertility and Gender Inequality in Education A Contextual Hypothesis

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Abstract

Previous studies in developed countries have found a micro-level association between teenage fertility and girls' educational attainment but researchers still debate the policy implications of these associations. First, are these associations causal? Second, are they substantively important enough, at the macro-level, to warrant policy attention? In other words, how much would policy efforts to reduce unintended pregnancy among teens pay off in terms of narrowing national gender gaps in educational attainment? Third, under what contexts are these payoffs likely to be important? This paper focuses on the latter two questions. We begin by proposing a contextual hypothesis to explain cross-national variation in the gender-equity payoffs from reducing unintended teen fertility. We then test this hypothesis, using DHS data from 38 countries.

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