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The impact of female employment on fertility in Dakar (Senegal) and Lomé (Togo)

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Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of female employment on fertility in two urban contexts in sub-Saharan Africa: Dakar (Senegal) and Lomé (Togo). The hypothesis that wage employment and maternal obligations are incompatible seems to be corroborated in Lomé, where women are likely to consider work as a legitimate alternative to their role as a mother or spouse. Being involved in economic activity is a real option and can therefore impact upon their reproductive life. By contrast, in Dakar working does not seem to hinder family formation. Greater involvement of women in the labour force is not the main reason for fertility decline in Dakar. These findings illustrate how important it is to consider social gender-specific roles in order to accurately determine the influence of female employment on reproductive life.

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