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No. 212, 2006

Grant, Monica and **Kelly Hallman**. "Pregnancy-related school dropout and prior school performance in South Africa," *Policy Research Division Working Paper* no. 212. New York: Population Council. ([PDF](#))

Abstract

Although considerable attention has been paid to the prevalence of adolescent childbearing in the less-developed world, few studies have focused on the educational consequences of schoolgirl pregnancy. Using data collected in 2001 in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, this paper examines the factors associated with schoolgirl pregnancy, as well as the likelihood of school dropout and subsequent re-enrollment among pregnant schoolgirls. This analysis triangulates data collected from birth histories, education histories, and data concerning pregnancy to strengthen the identification of young women who became pregnant while enrolled in school and to define discrete periods of school interruption prior to first pregnancy. We find that prior school performance—defined as instances of grade repetition or non-pregnancy-related temporary withdrawals from school—is strongly associated with a young woman's likelihood of becoming pregnant while enrolled in school, dropping out of school if she becomes pregnant, and not returning to school following a pregnancy-related dropout. Young women who are the primary caregivers to their children are also significantly more likely to have left school than are women who shared or relinquished childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, young women who lived with an adult female were significantly more likely to return to school following a pregnancy-related dropout. Given the increasing levels of female school participation in sub-Saharan Africa, our findings suggest that future studies will benefit from exploring the causal relationships between prior school experiences, adolescent reproductive behavior, and subsequent school attendance.

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