

Teenage motherhood, education, and labor market outcomes of the mother: Evidence from Brazilian data

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Received 20 November 2013; received in revised form 28 June 2015; accepted 10 May 2016

Available online 18 July 2016

Abstract

This paper studies the effects of teenage motherhood on later educational and labor market achievement of the mothers. We construct a pseudo panel from the Brazilian Household Surveys (the 1992–2004 PNADs) and from the Health Ministry data (DATASUS 1981–1992) by state of birth and cohort. We find that the effects of teenage pregnancy are much stronger for high school completion and labor market participation than for schooling or wages. A reduction in teenage pregnancy by one standard deviation explains (i) 9.2% of the increase in high school completion and (ii) 5.4% of the increase in women's labor market participation, as observed over 10 cohort years. Lifecycle results show that the gains in terms of high school education are greater for younger than for older women, suggesting that women who give birth as teenagers tend to catch up with high school education while young but not as they become older. The results on labor market participation show persistent teenage motherhood effects.

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JEL classification: O10; O54; J13; J22

Keywords: Teenage fertility; Education achievement; Female labor supply; Wages; Economic development

Resumo

Este artigo analisa os efeitos da maternidade na adolescência sobre os níveis de escolaridade e resultados no mercado de trabalho dessas mães. Foi construído um pseudo painel a partir das Pesquisas Nacionais por Amostra de Domicílios (PNADs 1992–2004) e dos dados do Ministério da Saúde (DATASUS 1981–1992) por Estado de nascimento e coorte. Os resultados indicam que os efeitos da gravidez precoce são muito mais fortes para a conclusão do ensino médio e participação no mercado de trabalho do que para anos de estudo ou salários. Um redução na gravidez na adolescência de um desvio-padrão explica (i) 9,2% do aumento na conclusão do ensino médio e (ii) 5,4% do aumento na participação feminina no mercado de trabalho, como observado ao longo de 10 anos de coortes. Resultados da análise do ciclo de vida mostram que os ganhos em termos de conclusão do ensino médio são maiores para adolescentes mais jovens do que para as mais velhas, o que sugere que as mulheres que são mães na adolescência tendem a concluir o ensino médio, quando são mais jovens, mas não quando são mais

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Peer review under responsibility of National Association of Postgraduate Centers in Economics, ANPEC.

velhas. Os resultados sobre a participação no mercado de trabalho mostram que os efeitos da maternidade na adolescência são persistentes.

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Palavras-chave: Fertilidade na adolescência; Resultados educacionais; Oferta de trabalho feminina; Salários; Desenvolvimento Econômico

1. Introduction

While fertility in Brazil has declined sharply in the past decades, teenage fertility is still considerably high. Data from the World Health Organization¹ shows that in 2008 about 16 million girls aged 15–19 gave birth; this roughly corresponds to 11% of all births worldwide. Half of the births by teenage mothers occurred in the following seven countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, and the United States.

According to the World Bank² there were 75 births per 1000 women aged 15–19 in Brazil in 2008. This figure is higher than those of similar or even less developed countries in the region, such as Argentina (56), Paraguay (71), and Peru (54). For comparison this indicator is much higher in African countries such as Niger (209) and Angola (188). Among developed countries, the United States (38) and the United Kingdom (26) have the highest results. Data from the Demographic Health Survey (DHS, 1986 and 1996) and the National Survey on Demography and Health of Women and Children (PNDS, 2006) show that Brazil has experienced increases in teenage pregnancy, as measured by the percentage of teenagers who became pregnant (13.1% in 1986, 17.9% in 1996 and 23.1% in 2006). Azevedo et al. (2012) mentions another study that uses DHS data for 59 countries from 1990 to 2002. Their results suggest that the increase in Brazilian teenage pregnancy is largely due to the increase in the proportion of sexually active teenagers.

Early evidence on the consequences of early motherhood has found a strong association between childbearing at young ages and the mother's subsequent economic and social indicators. Young mothers are less likely to complete high school, less likely to participate in the labor force, more likely to have lower earnings, and at higher risk of welfare dependency than women who did not bear children as teenagers.³

These studies have attempted to disentangle the effect of teenage childbearing per se and the effect driven by the previous socioeconomic status of the teenage mothers. They sought to eliminate the bias that arises from endogenous fertility by using methods such as family fixed effects (siblings)⁴ and instrumental variables (twins, sibling sex composition, miscarriages, sisters' fertility, and local access to reproductive health services).⁵

Geronimus and Korenman (1992) use family fixed-effect and a sample of sisters from various data sources in the US. Their results suggest that the effects of teen childbearing on measures of future socioeconomic well-being are lower or insignificant compared to those obtained by previous cross-section studies that do not account for unobserved family background. Goodman et al. (2004) found zero effects on labor supply, experience and earnings in the UK, using miscarriages as instrument. On the other hand, positive impacts were obtained by Hotz et al. (2005) using the same instrument and US data. Conversely, negative effects on completed years of schooling and future family income were found by Ribar (1999) using both family fixed effects and family fixed effects with sister's fertility as instrument, with the last being even stronger in magnitude than the OLS estimate. Fletcher and Wolfe (2009) use a sample from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) of women who became pregnant as teens. As the comparison group they consider those women who had a miscarriage, since these probably did not voluntarily terminate the pregnancy. The study also includes community fixed effects; it finds that teenage childbearing leads to large reductions in wages and income as well as to a modest reduction in the probability of completing high school.

Early childbearing is often associated with (i) financial resources (family income), (ii) the mother's time cost of childbearing and how it varies over the life cycle (this includes cross-price effects of education or direct child care costs), (iii) birth control, and (iv) infant mortality (Schultz, 1997).

¹ See: http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/documents/mpsnnotes_2_lr.pdf.

² See: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT/countries?display=default>.

³ Among the studies about overall fertility and future education and labor market achievement in Brazil, see for example Pazello and Fernandes (2005) and Rios-Neto and Wajnman (1996).

⁴ See, for example, Geronimus and Korenman (1992), Bronars and Grogger (1994), Ribar (1999).

⁵ See, for example, Hotz et al. (1997), Goodman et al. (2004), Ribar (1994, 1999) and Klepinger et al. (1999).

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