

How Do Adolescent Mothers Fare in Later Life? Experiences from Urban vs. Rural Teen Mothers in a Middle Income Country

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Extended abstract

Since the 60's and 70's early childbearing has been seen as deleterious to mother and child in developed countries. One aspect in which the literature has stressed this negative transition to adulthood for young women is that of motherhood. The link between early motherhood and future life has usually been thought of and proposed through the process of human capital formation by educational attainment of the young woman. Such a context has several assumptions: almost every woman has the chance of school attendance and if this process is interrupted it is by pregnancy and childbearing. These assumptions, which may hold true for developed societies, are not as simple in developing countries.

Evidence in Mexico (Stern, 1997) has shown that cultural norms are important in shaping the young woman's life project, and a significant proportion of young women did not continue studies because of socioeconomic factors and not because of childbearing.

Colombia is a developing, middle income country, with a great overlapping socioeconomic diversity. Therefore one would assume that early motherhood will present different occupational outcomes depending on living location and socioeconomic status of young women who have given birth before their twenties.

The Colombian personality has traits of entrepreneurship. "Making a Living" is part of everyday life, mainly in urban areas. Thus it would be expected that early childbearing would have a dampened effect on later life occupation of young mothers.

This paper sets out to explore and measure this reality by using DHS data and through field work carried out by Medical and Nursing students at Universidad de La Sabana, in the outskirts of Bogotá, Colombia.

Key Terms: Early Childbearing, Adolescent Fertility, Occupation, Urban, Rural, Middle Income Country, DHS