

The Effect of Girls' Education on Adolescent Pregnancy: Evidence from the Introduction of Universal Primary and Secondary Education in Uganda

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Abstract

Early pregnancy poses a serious medical risk and economic burden to mothers and children. This paper examines the impact of girls' primary education on the probability of giving birth before age eighteen in Uganda. We deal with the endogeneity of educational attainment by instrumenting it by the across-cohort differences in exposure to universal primary education policy and the differences in effective benefit from this policy across districts with varying levels of pre-program educational attainment. Results suggest that an additional year of schooling reduces the probability of adolescent pregnancy by 6.5 percentage points. This is shown to be primarily due to the delay in the first sexual intercourse, not an increase in contraceptive use. These results imply that promoting primary education among girls is an effective means to reduce adolescent pregnancy. More broadly, they underscore the importance of taking into account the reproductive and possible trans-generational benefits of education, in addition to economic gains, in considering the returns to education.

JEL Classification Codes: J13; J12; D10; O10

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