

The Long-Term Influence of Pregnancy Intention on Children's Educational Attainment

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Purpose of Study

- The present study examines the influence of the timing of pregnancy and pregnancy intention as reported by parents on the long-term educational attainment of their children.



Background

- One in two pregnancies are unplanned (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008).
- Public health research has shown that children born from unintended pregnancies are at an elevated risk for poor prenatal and perinatal health outcomes (Gipson et al. 2008).
- Very few studies have sought to investigate the long-term effect of intendedness for children later in life (Joyce, Kaestner, & Korenman, 2000).



Background

- Parents' education level is strongly associated with children's educational attainment (Sewell, 1968; Ermisch & Francisconi, 2001).
- Teens of young mothers experience educational setbacks compared to teens of older mothers (Brooks-Gunn & Furstenberg, Jr. 1986).



Pregnancy Intention

- Pregnancy intention is defined as either unwanted pregnancies or mistimed pregnancies (Santelli et al. 2003).
- NSFG (1973) distinguished between unwanted and mistimed pregnancies.
- PRAMS combines these two questions into one.



Research Study Questions

- This study examined if parents' pregnancy intention had long-term consequences on the educational attainment of their children after a 13-year period.
- The analysis investigated if the relationship between pregnancy intention and future educational attainment was mediated by parents' education or parents' age at child's birth.



Data

- This study used the two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) (wave 1 at 1987-1988, wave 3 at 2001-2002).
- Survey provides a broad range of information on family life, including family transitions, educational attainment, fertility, employment, expectations about family life, etc.



Data

- Primary and secondary respondents were surveyed, in addition to a randomly selected “focal” child at wave 1.
- The analysis isolates the sample of 1,243 focal children between 18 and 34 surveyed at wave 3, whose parents were interviewed at wave 1.



Wave 1 Measures - Timing

- Timing of pregnancy was based on these questions:

“(Did you) (Did your wife/partner) become pregnant with (this child/any of these children) sooner than you intended?”

“Which births occurred sooner than you intended?”

Wave 1 Measures - Intention



- Pregnancy Intention was based on these questions:

“Sometimes people have (a child/another child) after they intend not to have any (more) children. Has this ever happened to you?”

“Which births occurred after you intended not to have any more children?”

Predictor/Explanatory Variables (Wave 1)



- Parents' level of education (in years)
- Parent's age at child's birth (in years)

Outcome Variable (Wave 3)



Age-Appropriate Graduation/Degree Completion:

- High School (Yes/No)
 - for those 18 years and older
- College (Yes/No)
 - for those 23 years and older



Methods

- Longitudinal study design allowed for follow up with the same families over time
- Sample was limited to families with a focal child age 18 to 34 at wave 3.
- Descriptive statistics and multivariate logistic regression analysis



Results

Description	Result	95% CL
As Reported by Parent in Wave 1		
Child Mistimed	22.1%	19.5-24.7
Child Unintended	14.3%	12.2-16.3
Parents' Education Level	13.6 years	13.4-13.8
Parents' Age at First Birth	24.3 years old	23.9-24.6
As Reported by Focal Children in Wave 3		
Focal Children Graduated High School (n=1234)	95%	92.7-97.3
Focal Children Graduated College (n=733)	44.4%	40.0-48.8

Results – Timing and High School Graduation



- If children were mistimed, they were less likely to graduate from high school (OR = 0.5, $p < 0.05$) .
- Controlling for parent education level and number of mistimed children (AOR = 0.8, $p < 0.05$)
- Parent's age at first birth

Results – Intention and High School Graduation



- If children were unintended, they were less likely to graduate from high school (OR = 0.3, $p < 0.05$).
- These relationships remains statistically significant even when controlling for parents' educational attainment and number of unintended children.
- Parent's age at first birth

Results – Timing and College Graduation



- Mistiming reduced the likelihood that children graduated from college (OR = 0.5, $p < 0.05$).
- Relationship remains statistically significant after controlling for parents' education and age at first birth.
- Total number of mistimed children

Results – Intention and College Graduation



- If children were unintended (OR = 0.5, $p < 0.05$), they were less likely to graduate from college.
- Relationship remains statistically significant after controlling for parents' education and age at first birth.
- Total number of mistimed children



Discussion

- Timing and pregnancy intention may have long-term consequences for children's educational attainment, regardless of parents' education.
- Total number of mistimed or unintended pregnancies may add to increasing instability in the lives of children in the US.



Policy Implications

- Family planning education programs may include information about the long-term educational consequences of mistimed or unintended pregnancies for children.



Additional Information

- NSFH website
 - <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/nsfh/>
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