Adolescent fertility and social networks in rural Honduras

Background

Maternity during adolescence has been associated with a wide array of subsequent physical and mental health problems, as well as enduring socioeconomic issues (1-3). High adolescent fertility rates are a seemingly intractable problem in Latin America. Once girls become mothers, disadvantage is entrenched, and is eventually passed on to their own daughters. Within that context, Honduras has one of the highest rates of adolescent fertility (AF) in the region with 24% of girls between the ages of 15-19 either a mother or pregnant at any given time period, according to data from the 2011-2012 DHS(4).

Study Aims

1.) Determine the distribution as well as the social and demographic determinants of adolescent fertility (AF) for both girls and boys on a complete population within 176 villages in rural Honduras.

2.) Assess the spatial and social networks determinants of adolescent fertility.

3.) Assess the utility of the men’s participation intervention on an adolescent boy’s chance of becoming a father.

Data

This study uses full population census data from the western municipalities of the largely rural Copán departamento of Honduras to quantify the extent of adolescent parenthood, for both girls and boys. Data were collected as part of a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded project to understand the social network predictors of a maternal and neonatal health intervention in this area. As part of the baseline data collection, surveys were administered to all inhabitants over the age of 14 in 176 villages, with questions including comprehensive social network measures, attitudes and social norms around adolescent fertility, reproductive health history, and relevant health behaviors.

References


Innovations and policy implications

1.) Using social network analysis in conjunction with spatial and social normative measures to develop a contextual understanding of adolescent fertility in Latin America
2.) Complete data, including social network measures on an adolescent and adult population in 176 villages
3.) Comprehensive data on men’s behaviors, attitudes, and normative beliefs.
4.) Can inform the development of crucial interventions to help curb the trend of adolescent fertility in these regions.

Figure 3. Almost 1/2 of the girls in our sample population were mothers or mothers to be by the age of 18. For boys in this population, adolescent parenthood was comparatively rare.

Figure 4. Adolescent motherhood for girls shows significant geographic variability, suggesting that environmental and social normative conditions might be impacting girls’ behaviors.

Figure 5. Initial analyses show that socially connected women are similar in adolescent birth outcomes. Here pink nodes had a birth as an adolescent. Lines represent social ties. Note the clusters of pink nodes.

Figure 6. Village norms around adolescent partnership and fertility are predictive of adolescent fertility at the village level.