

Two Aspects of Fertility Behaviour in South Africa

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This paper examines the effects of individual, household and community characteristics on two aspects of fertility among South African women – the age at first conception and the number of pregnancies. We find that education has a significant effect in pushing back the age at first conception and in reducing the number of pregnancies among women. There is a thresh-hold level of education that must be attained before education starts delaying the age at first conception and the number of pregnancies for each woman. Women who are currently enrolled in school have lower number of pregnancies and White women have lower number of pregnancies and start conceiving later compared to African women. Fertility cannot be examined in isolation of child mortality because child mortality can affect a woman's demand for birth by inducing her to replace her children who die. We therefore also examine the effect of child mortality on the number of pregnancies and find that while there is a replacement factor associated with fertility decisions the effect is not very strong when we make child mortality variables endogenous.

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