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GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN



9th International German Socio-Economic Panel User Conference

Biographical consequences of teenage motherhood in Germany

There is not much research on teenage motherhood in Germany even though it is commonly held that teenage motherhood negatively impacts the mother's further life course. This contribution deals with the question of what consequences teenage motherhood has for the young mother's educational and employment career as well as for partnership stability.

The expected effect of teenage motherhood on completing education is theoretically straightforward. According to family economics, time is a straitened resource. If a young woman has to split her time between school or vocational training, on the one hand, and child rearing tasks, on the other, she is less likely to have enough time for completing her education or apprenticeship successfully or to achieve a high educational degree. In turn, the lower educational or vocational degree is likely to negatively affect her chances on the labor market.

In addition I expect early motherhood to influence partnership stability. The high risk of divorce for young couples is typically attributed to the lack of information the partners have on each other as well as on the fact that young persons might still change important personality traits that influence the "match" of the couple. Besides this, it seems likely that the demands of early parenthood force problems between the spouses, too.

However, when studying these consequences empirically one might run into problems of causation, since the educational career as well as the (expected) employment opportunities might also affect the transition to motherhood. Nevertheless, given the longitudinal design of the SOEP problems concerning the direction of causality can be solved.

To study the research questions linear and logistic regressions based on the SOEP (1984-2008) are conducted. In these analyses, I compare mothers who gave birth before age 18 to mothers who were 18 years or older at the time of their first delivery.