Reviewer’s report

Title: Is a woman's first pregnancy outcome related to her years of schooling? An assessment of women's adolescent pregnancy outcomes and subsequent educational attainment in Ghana

Version: 2 Date: 20 Feb 2017

Reviewer: Lindsay Menard-Freeman

Reviewer's report:

Comments in sequential order with specific lines notated:

Line 54: Recommend shifting language "resort to induced abortions," unless there is strong evidence to show that abortions are the absolute last choice or the last resort) of these girls.

Line 64: I imagine the article will address this, so my comment may be pre-emptive, but is there any exploration of how induced abortion was unsafe and (likely) led to maternal death. Therefore, the statistics around the highest years of schooling is only if she survives the abortion?

Line 106: Does this statement suggest that women who have terminated a pregnancy under age 20 have even higher educational attainment than woman who don't experience a pregnancy at all under age 20? It's unclear if that's the specific comparison here.

Line 113: Should it be "sexual debut" versus "sex debut"?

Line 117: Is it understood to be "risky health seeking behavior" versus a lack of SRH knowledge, services, and rights? Framing these issues in this term would suggest that the sole onus is on girls to know what to do when they're pregnant and when she doesn't calling it "risky behavior."

Line 126: question regarding "those who were not pregnant" -- does this mean those who were never pregnant?

Line 160: I would suggest clarifying this first hypothesis. Is this an accurate rephrasing? - Girls seek abortion services to continue their schooling.

Line 217: When you say, in parentheses ("and for some their only"), do you mean their only pregnancy at all? Or their only pregnancy under 20? The way the placement of the parentheses suggests the latter.

Line 221: Related to my previous question: is this looking at these categories for only first pregnancies under 20?

Line 265: Would recommend clarifying "younger ones" -- what is the age range of this group?
Line 334: The group "ever been pregnant women" is a bit awkward to read.

Line 397: Throughout the paper, this is the clearest statement of a conclusion.

Line 415: It is very likely outside the scope of this paper, but is there any correlation between the "brightest and most ambitious pupils" and wealth quintile, suggesting that those who have what is seen as the "drive" to stay in school actually also have the resources to do so, and also likely the family pressures to do so as well?

Line 418: Is it more appropriate to say "schooling [can] have a protective effect," give that for some girls school is not a safe environment?

Line 428: Is it more appropriate to say "have accessed abortion services," or some variation, rather than "used abortion"?

Line 434: This begs the same question as the one I ask on line 415. Are ambitions and aspirations understood be connected to wealth and privilege? And are the girls who survive abortion those who are likely to be able to afford somewhat safe conditions?

Line 436: It's unclear and inconsistent when "girls" and "women" are used.

Line 448: This is very dark, but is this perhaps because many girls and women don't survive unsafe abortion? Or if they survive, they experience severe morbidity?

Line 498: I would recommend leading this paragraph with Line 501 "Pregnancy at young ages..." It's a very strong statement!

And my last comments, about the abstract (after having read the article):

Abstract:

- In Conclusions: Flagging the use of "cause for concern" regarding girls' access to abortion -- Given how difficult it is to make the case for access to safe abortion generally, but especially for girls, it is advised to find another turn of phase here as to prevent inaccurate conclusions by those who wish to further restrict abortion access. It's not the fact that girls are accessing abortions, but rather that the abortions they have access to are unsafe, as this sentence reads. My concern is that this research can and may be used to further restrict girls' access to abortion, where the logic is that abortion negatively affects the educational attainment of girls (glazing over the "unsafe" bit specifically in this sentence). Could the emphasis be shifted to the safety of the services available?
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