

Factors Affecting Teenage Pregnancy in the Philippines

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Key Points

- The Philippines has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates among the ASEAN member states.
- More than 500 adolescents are becoming pregnant and giving birth every day.
- The age of consent in this deeply conservative Catholic country is just 12, one of the lowest in the world, but access to contraception is limited, and abortion is illegal
- Meeting all needs for modern contraception would reduce unintended pregnancies by 68% and result in significant declines in abortions, especially unsafe abortions.
- Comprehensive sexuality education alongside better access to services for the adolescent is the key to prevent teenage pregnancy.

Independent Variable	Regression Coefficient	T-Value	P-Value
Intercept	143.94	4.8636	4.56E-06
Female Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR)	-1.89	-4.8801	4.27E-06
Openness	0.20	3.7866	2.67E-04
GDP Per Capita	0.0017	1.6084	0.11106
Gini Index	-0.5215	-0.6825	0.49658
Political Representation	-1.6918	-6.4817	4.02E-09
Wage and Salaried Female Workers	0.8707	4.0809	9.34E-05
Poverty	1.67135	10.5789	9.63E-18
Health Expenditure	-4.6670	-1.8085	0.07371
Christian	35.1873	4.0664	9.85E-05

Background

While adolescent birth rates have declined globally, they have remained generally stagnant in Southasia with wide-ranging variations between countries. The recent World Bank data shows that the Philippines has 54 births annually per 1,000 women aged 15-19, higher than the average adolescent birth rates of 42 globally and 35 in the ASEAN region [Lao (65), Philippines (54), Thailand(45), Vietnam(30), and Malaysia(13)] Poverty has a dual function as a determinant and consequence of teenage pregnancy. Efforts that empower adolescents are crucial in reducing adverse sexual. Trade can make an essential contribution to delivering the growth necessary to end poverty, increase female labor force participation to improve their socio-economic status.

Methodology

Using the World Bank data set for five ASEAN countries over a 20-year period (1998–2018), a panel data analysis was conducted where relevant fixed effects models were estimated to determine the effects of trade on teenage pregnancy. The main variables studied were Trade Openness, Labor Force Participation Rate, GDP Per Capita, Gini index, Political Representation, Wage and salaried workers, Poverty, health Expenditure as a share of GDP, and dummy variable for Christian dominated country
1=Christian (Philippines)
0=Others [Buddhist(Thailand,Lao)
Folk(Vietnam), Muslim (Malaysia)]

Conclusion and Policy Implication

Poverty is the most significant independent variable, followed by political representation, Female Labor Force Participation Rate, Wage and Salaried Female Workers, Religion, Openness, health expenditure, GDP Per Capita, and Gini Index. More public investment is needed to mitigate teenage pregnancy, in addition to prevention. Increasing female political representation by one percentage point leads to a 1.69% decrease in adolescent fertility rate as female policymakers are focused more on improving reproductive and maternal health. Being a Christian increases teenage pregnancy probability by 35%, indicating a significant role of religion in influencing governmental policies and access to free contraception and sex education. Removing barriers that keep women and girls on the margins of economic, social, cultural, and political life must be a top priority. The Philippines must institute better health reforms to manage total fertility, alongside reforms to improve employment opportunities for young people to eliminate teenage pregnancy.

References

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