

FACTORS AFFECTING THE POPULATION FERTILITY LEVEL

Nuria Del Olmo, Carolina A. Montoro and M. Dolores López

University of Navarra

This poster discusses the factors affecting fertility levels. Many factors are involved, particularly those related to female labour participation and life-style. The project presents the findings of studies carried out on women in Navarra, firstly because the female full-time participation figures are higher than those for other Spanish regions, whilst the female unemployment rate is below the Spanish mean, and secondly because the current economic and family policies established in the region presuppose a positive impact on fertility.

1. FROM A PRO-FAMILY MODEL TO A PRO-NATALIST MODEL (Gauthier 1996)

Pro-family Model (But a non-interventionist model)

- Belief in the self-sufficiency of families and in the merit of a non-regulated market.
- Support only for families in need.
- Participation of women in the labour force is not discouraged however the provision of support for working mothers is not contemplated.

Pro-natalist Model: Navarra Government Family Support Plan –Plan de Apoyo a la Familia. Gobierno de Navarra. 2001-

- Encouragement of fertility as one of its main objectives. Intervention as a measure that may help individuals fulfil their fertility expectations.
- Family support to encourage women to have three or more children:
 - Cash benefits (Direct economic aid for the third and successive child.)
- Relatively high support models and provisions for maternity leave and child care facilities
 - Provision for public child care: more places for pre-primary school education (0 to 3 years)
 - Monthly payment for working women during the first three years of the child's life (depending on income)
 - Optional maternity leave for care of children up to the age of six.
 - Optional reduction in the working day.

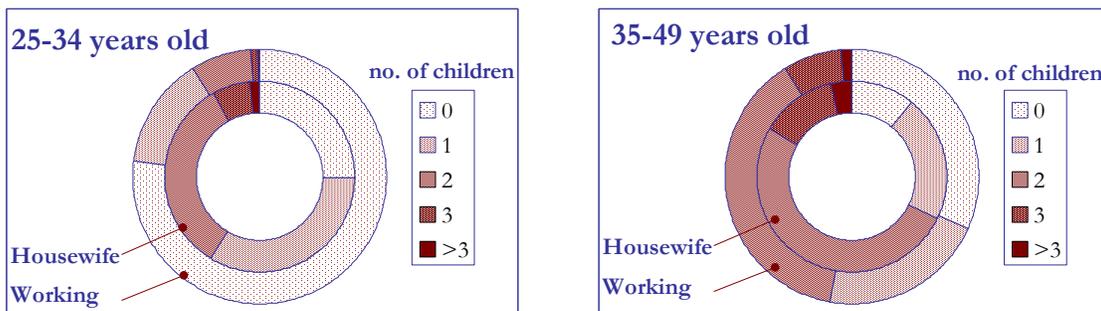
2. EVOLUTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FERTILITY AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPATION

- A gradual decline in the total fertility rate occurred between 1981 and 1991 (1.88 to 1.21 children per woman) showing a progressive but moderate increase since 1999/2000. Reaching 1.39 children per woman in 2004).

- The evolution of the female employment rate in Navarra shows a progressive increase from 1975 onwards, reaching 46.4% in 2004 for the female population (45.7% at a national level) and a prominent 72% for women aged between 25 and 54 years.

Conclusion: With these figures it can initially be presupposed that Navarra has passed the inflection point establishing a value change from negative to positive in the relationship between fertility and the female employment level in line with other North European countries.

3. FERTILITY LEVEL DEPENDING ON FEMALE LABOUR PARTICIPATION



- Nowadays no significant differences can be observed between the number of children born to working women and the number born to women who do not work.
- Most women have between one and two children.
- Nevertheless there are more mothers of large families (particularly, mothers of 4 or more children) in the housewife group.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE POPULATION FERTILITY LEVEL

4a. FEMALE EMPLOYMENT RELATED FACTORS ON THE FERTILITY LEVEL

- **Occupational stability**

-There is a different perception depending on the age and career education variables:

-Younger women are seen to delay maternity (motherhood) until they reach a situation of occupational stability.

-The meaning of occupational stability varies depending on a woman's career education.

-For women with a higher level of education it means reaching a suitable position in relation to their professional training, experience and age.

-For women with a lower level of education the concept of labour stability is strictly contract related.

-Occupational stability linked to “professional development” *versus* Occupational stability linked to a “fixed contract”

-Occupational stability delays motherhood, however it does not appear to affect the number of children planned.

“If you don’t have a stable job, because of course, you leave university, you leave a little later, you get a job and of course you’re not in the ideal job, you aim to go higher, and so to achieve this you need to work full time (...) so that, until you achieve stability, a specific post ...” (Discussion Group V).

- **The desire for career advancement**

-Only for those women with a higher career and professional education does the desire for promotion or the development of a professional career determine the decision to have more children, particularly a third child.

“It’s one of the basic reasons, that is, the problems you have until you actually get a good position at work often prevent you, make it difficult for you to have more children” (Discussion Group I).

- **The difficulties of reconciling work and family**

-This is the aspect - relating to female labour participation - that most affects the decision as to the number of children to have.

-There is a widespread perception among women that the problems of conciliation are directly proportional to the number of children.

“Our ideal number was three, but look, considering that I could hardly count on F.(husband) during the week, he comes home very late (:...) I ended up very tired (...) we didn’t have any more for selfish reasons” (E 18: employed, mother of two).

- The conciliation continues to have a feminine gender: this fact is revealed by the ascription of women to the traditional private roles. The family model remains along with the division of work within the family.

“Normally I design them (the reconciliation strategies) and he agrees, then he supports me to a greater or lesser extent, he always respects my decision, and he supports me, more or less (...) we’ve always done what I’ve considered necessary (...) in the end the results, you’re seeing that I decided it, that it’s what I needed, that is, as he’s always respected my wishes job-wise...” (E12: employed, mother of two).

“M1: My husband has looked after my son just like I have, just the same because he’s had to (...) but from what I can see, well, he gives him a cuddle, buys him sweets and little more.

M3: But I think that it’s a bit to do with what men are actually like, they’re not interested or they don’t t let... I think they don’t give much so that it doesn’t equal out, because it’s not to their advantage, well that’s how it seems to me, eh? (...) my partner has in fact looked after (my son) (...) but if you carry on taking charge of things, he doesn’t mind, does he?” (Discussion Group II).

Conclusion: The reconciliation factor is the aspect that is most highlighted by all women.

4b. LIFESTYLE RELATED FACTORS ON THE FERTILITY LEVEL

- **Time Factor**

This factor has a considerable impact on the decision regarding the number of children: the lack of time and the need for time: time to spend with the children, time to spend with one's partner, more time to be trained and time for oneself, in the strict hedonistic sense.

"I think that the pace of life, at least in my own environment, rushing about all day, that it would be impossible" (Discussion Group V).

- **Cost of children perception**

Expressed principally in cost terms of time, financial cost and emotional cost:

- The perception of the meaning of the child has changed: every child needs its own time.

"Time is very costly (...) each child needs some time, no? so having one child is not the same as having three" (Discussion Group III).

- In present-day society with high levels of consumption and quality of life expectations, the financial cost of a child is marked by some created material and immaterial needs, that are far higher than in the past.

"We have gradually created a tremendous amount of needs (...) now each child has to have his own bedroom, his PC, his bike, then..." (Discussion Group III).

- In the redefinition of the mother's role, a consequences of modernity itself, conflicts arise that increase the emotional cost of children.

"What I do have is the feeling that – with the first one – I wasn't a very good mother, for all that .. everything got on top of me (paid work, public competitive exams and maternity) and that feeling's never really gone away" (E 28: employed, mother of two).

- **Commitment factor:**

- Different types of discourses are identified depending on the socioeconomic level and professional situation variables (Inglehart, 1990).

- Discourses characteristic of a materialistic culture that link the commitment to have a child with the shortage of financial resources and / or the loss of job opportunities.

"So that you wait a little before having children, so that you get what you want, stability, well everything slows down" (Discussion Group V).

- Discourses of a post-materialistic culture that link the commitment to have a child with the limitation of time and personal space.

"Would I like to? Well, perhaps, I would like to (have more children) but I don't think I will (...) I'm just starting to feel myself again, my time, my freedom and it means having to start again... a tie...." (E12: employed, mother of two).

- **Risk factor**

-Risks increase making it more difficult to predict future situations (Beck 2001) Faced with numerous options (educational, formative, occupational options, relationships, partner, etc.); as a result, nowadays it is more difficult to educate and to protect children.

“We’ve also lost a bit of our courage (...) now you have to have everything just right, structured or you don’t dare take on that responsibility... so the children in that photo are so... that it’s never the right moment because you’ve always got some type of problem, no?” (Discussion Group I).

Conclusion: Maternity becomes more reflexive than instinctive.

4a/4b CONCLUSION: Both factors have a strong impact on fertility levels:

- Factors relating to the participation of women in the labour market, and subsequently, family, labour and equality opportunities policies. Particularly, those problems derived from conciliating family life and work.

- Factors relating to lifestyle and culture. In particular, the perception of the cost of children: the need for time and for financial resources.

5. MATERNITY: DECISION ...AND / OR PROBLEM?

- Maternity is reflexive because it becomes a decision and it can turn a problem.
- Time dimension: when do I want to have children? When should I have children?
- Timeless or biographical dimension: which leads to seeing motherhood satisfied with the arrival of the first of one’s children.
- Successive maternities can only be explained by the desire to satisfy all the needs that a child requires, including the affective – sibling needs: The second child provides the first child with a relational, emotional and affective environment that is positively valued by women.

6. CONSEQUENCES OF MODERNITY: THE ADSCRIPTION OF NEW ROLES IN THE INDIVIDUALIZATION PROCESSES

- The ascription of new roles has contradictory consequences for women:
 - The breaking away from former roles - motherhood.
 - The reconnection to new roles woman worker.
 - The reconnection to former role of motherhood but redefined under modernity conditions.

- Perhaps the difference in the fertility trends between developed countries with similar female labour participation could be primarily explained by the cultural factors that determine the redefinition of the role of motherhood.
- In this redefinition of the role of motherhood for Navarra women:
 - Women principally demand time to spend with their children.
 - Women aren't opting for a return to the traditional homemaker model, however neither does the majority opt for a motherhood that is delegated to people or institutions outside the family nucleus.

REFERENCES:

- Beck, U., 1992. *Risk Society*. Sage, London.
- Bernardi, F. & Requena, M., 2003. "La caída de la fecundidad y el déficit de natalidad en España", *Revista Española de Sociología*. 29-49.
- Bettio; F. & Plantenga, 2004. *Compare Care Regimes in Europe*. Routledge, London
- Gauthier, A.H., 1996. *The State and the Family: A Comparative Analysis of Family Policies in Industrialized countries*. Clarendon Press, Oxford
- Giddens, A., 2001/1994. "Vivir en un sociedad postradidional" in U. Beck, A. Giddens & S. Lash. (2ª Ed.2001/1994). *Modernización reflexiva. Política, tradición y estética en el orden social moderno*. Alianza Universidad, Madrid. 75-136.
- Hakim, C., 2003. *Models of the Family in Modern Societies. Ideals and realities*. Asghate, England.
- Inglehart, R., 1991. *El cambio cultural en las sociedades industriales avanzadas*. Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Madrid.
- Keilman, N., 2003. Demographic and social implications of low fertility for family structures in Europe. *Population Studies* (35). Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.
- Pinnelli, A., Hoffmann-Nowotny, H.J. & Fux, B., 2001. Fertility and new types of households and family formation in Europe. *Population Studies* (35). Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.