

# INTENDED FERTILITY AND EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS AROUND THE CHILDBIRTH: THE CASE OF ITALY

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

### **PURPOSE**

The aim of the paper is to investigate the relationship between fertility preferences, as expressed by the intention to have another child by mothers interviewed 18-21 months after the delivery, and the difficulties in reconciling work and family.

### **BACKGROUND**

In the post-transitional societies the inconsistency between intended and actual fertility has taken the form of an excess of desired fertility, that is, on average, 0.6 children per woman in the European Union countries (Goldstein et al., 2003).

In Italy the expected number of children is, on average, around 2 children (Menniti, 2002), while the total fertility rate is 1,3 children per woman in 2003.

However, much of the discussion on the inconsistency between intended and actual fertility overlooks the circumstances that intentions may change over the life course and possible inconsistencies have not necessarily to do with the invalidity of the indicator related to the intended number of children.

As stated in the rational choice theories approach (Yamaguchi and Ferguson, 1995), fertility intentions may change after each new birth and are not taken only once for the whole reproductive life (Monnier, 1987; Miller and Pasta, 1995). The number of children a person wants may be constantly under reconsideration in response to changes in economic prospects and other important factors, such as the marital relationship (Ruokolainen and Notkola, 2001) and partners' preferences combination process (Thomson, 1997; Voas, 2003).

The availability of the Italian Birth Sample Survey (IBSS) allows us to investigate the effects of working conditions on fertility intentions in a specific group of women, new mothers, who are interviewed at a particular stage of their life course, 18-21 months after their delivery, and who are asked whether their work conditions have registered any change after the arrival of their baby.

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

Our research hypothesis is that stronger the difficulties experienced on the labour market after the birth of a child, weaker the intentions to have another baby.

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## **DATA**

The analysis is based on the Italian Birth Sample Survey (IBSS) carried out in 2002 by the Italian National Statistics Office. The selected sample used in our analysis is made out of 16,789 mothers, one third of the whole sample, interviewed with a long form questionnaire. Mothers were interviewed 18-21 months after the delivery by using CATI technique. Beyond the general socio-demographic information on the newborn, and the delivery, several questions on working conditions before and after childbearing are contained in the questionnaire.

## **METHODS**

A multivariate analysis will be performed, by using logistic regression models. The dependent variable is the intention to have another child in the future. Among the explanatory variables a key relevance will be given to all the covariates related to the work conditions before and after the birth of a child, such as possible changes in the work conditions, or in the work activity.

## **EXPECTED RESULTS**

We expect to find a reduced intended fertility for those women who experienced a more troubled coming back to work, i.e., those mothers who experienced difficulties in their career or had to change their activity and to start again with a new job.

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