

How Do Individual Normative Attitudes Influence the Childbirth Between Two Waves of GGS in Germany, France and Bulgaria

Extended Abstract for EPC, Mainz 2016

Keywords: GGS, childbirth, cross-cultural and individual attitudes

Introduction

Individual attitudes towards family and gender are conveyed by structural frame conditions and media (Diabatè, Lück 2014) and are therefore defined by the society where individuals live. Cultural, economic and structural factors at the macro level interact with each other and influence individual dispositions and attitudes. Based on the 1st and 2nd wave of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) data this paper provides comparative analysis of fertility and individual attitudes towards children in Western Germany, France and Bulgaria. The aim of this study is to answer the question of how different aspects of normative family and gender attitudes influence the birth of a child and how this link differs in the above mentioned countries. What is the contribution of normative-cultural factors on the micro level to the explanation of the transition to a (another) child and what is the role of the cultural and structural social environment. It takes a cross-cultural as well as cross-national perspective to explain fertility transitions. Observing three different societies allows a broader view which enables us to better understand how culture influences fertility. Furthermore this can contribute to explain the differences in fertility behavior between these countries. Germany and France both fall under the category conservative countries (Esping-Andersen 1990), however they differ in their structural family policy, childcare facilities and fertility patterns. The involvement of Bulgaria in the analysis provides an interesting east-west comparison regarding the link between cultural attitudes and fertility.

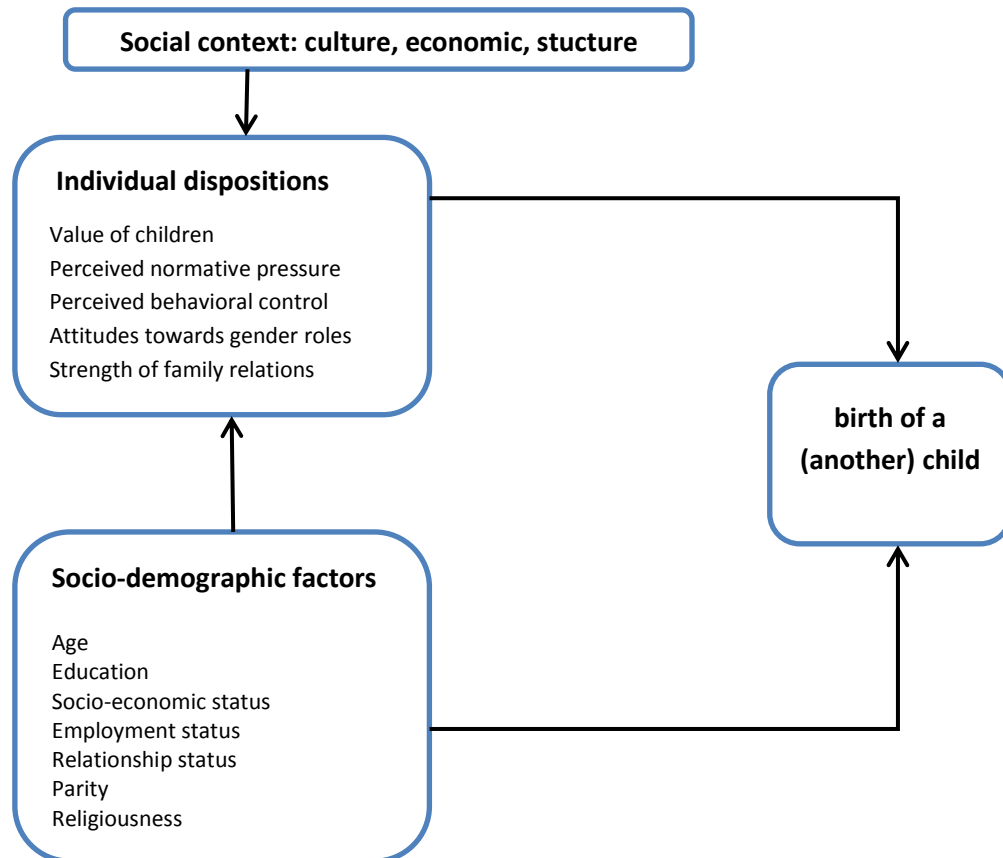
Theoretical background and state of art

The study is based on an extended version of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen 1991; Fishbein, Ajzen 2010). We also take into account the Value of Children approach (VOC) (Nauck 2007; Nauck 2014) as well as Rational-choice-Theory (for an overview Hill, Kopp 2013). These theoretical approaches are complementary and can be linked together to explain fertility transitions. The TPB (Fishbein, Ajzen 2010) suggested that fertility behavior is the result of fertility intentions which itself is the outcome of attitudes, subjective norms (perceived normative pressure) and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes reflects the one's beliefs and values about behavior whereas the subjective norms reflects the beliefs about behavior of the relevant others (f. E. parents, friends). Perceived behavioral control means "the degree to which individual actually has control over performing the behavior" (Fishbein, Ajzen 2010: 64). In this context all of these factors on the micro level reflect the economic, social and structural culture of the country, where individuals are embedded on the one hand and past individual experiences on the other hand (Fishbein, Ajzen 1975).

The influence of the attitudinal components of the TPB has been proven mostly in country studies (Barber 2001 for USA; Moors 2008 for Germany; Billari, Philipov and Testa 2009 for Bulgaria; Dommermuth, Klobas and Lappegård 2011 for Norway). Attitudes towards children and gender roles have also been studied mostly in a national context. Liefbroer 2005 analyzed perceived costs and benefits of having a child in the Netherlands. Henz 2008 focuses on perceived costs and benefits of children, gender relations and attitudes towards maternal employment in Western Germany. Holton, Fisher and Rowe 2009 addresses the issue of attitudes towards motherhood in Australia. In a comparison between Turk and Germans Naderi (2013) shows that the perceived consequences of having a child influence family extension negatively. A series of articles show the influence of the social network on fertility decisions (Bühler, Fratzczak 2007; Bernardi, Klaerner 2014; Philipov, Spéder, Billari 2006; Bühler, Philipov 2005; Balbo, Mills 2011). These effects were observed to be positively linked to level of traditionalism. Liefbroer, Billari (2009) proved the existence of social norms and sanctions in the Netherlands, a country which is highly individualistic, and highlight the importance of social norms on fertility.

Although the attitudinal components of the TPB and VOC reach a broad range of scientific audience the most of the studies do not take into account the social context. We believe that a country comparison is very important in order to understand the role of attitudinal factors for fertility decisions. Individual dispositions result from the interplay of cultural, economic and structural society contexts. Different social contexts influence individual attitudes and beliefs differently. We first focus on the distribution and appearance of individual dispositions in Bulgaria, Western Germany and France. Then we study the link between attitudinal factors and fertility transitions.

Figure 1: Theoretical model of fertility action



Source: Own design

Data and research methods

This paper focuses on individuals between the age of 18 and 45 years and analyzes a total of 9,143 men and women. The main dependent variable is the transition to a/another child. It is operationalized as the birth of a child between wave 1 and wave 2 or current pregnancy at the time of the second interview.

Table 1: Childbirths between the waves

Country	Childbirth between the Waves		Total
	no	yes	
Bulgaria	4,826	464	5,290
	91.23	8.77	100.00
Western	835	129	964
Germany	86.62	13.38	100.00
France	2,408	481	2,889
	83.35	16.65	100.00
Total	8,069	1,074	9,143
	88.25	11.75	100.00

Source: GGS, wave 1 and 2

The explaining variables are attitudes towards children, family and gender roles based on an extended version of the Theory of Planned Behavior. After descriptive analysis of the attitudinal items we ran an explorative factor analysis over the attitudinal items and estimate Cronbachs Alpha. Based on that we constructed additive indices which summarize the single attitudes into a few latent attitudinal variables. For descriptive results we built three categories for each index whereby the decisions about the definition of categories were guided by the percentage distribution of the original variables. The multivariate analysis is carried out using logistic regression. The central variable – the birth of a child - was dichotomized for logistic regressions. The explaining variables – the attitudinal indices - were left as metric variables. In addition to the overall sample with country as additional control variable, analyses are carried out for each country separately, revealing the influence of individual attitudes on fertility behavior.

Findings

The descriptive statistics give an insight into the distribution and appearance of individual dispositions and draw a detailed picture of the attitudinal profiles of Germany, France and Bulgaria. The current study provides new insights into the link between individual attitudes towards children, gender roles and family and normative pressure on the one hand and the childbirth on the other hand. Moreover it reveals cross-national differences in the relationship between attitudes and fertility behavior.

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