INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS ON FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR IN ROMANIA AND RUSSIA

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There are increasingly more studies focusing on fertility behaviour and which try to highlight the impact of various factors on the number of children a person will have, taking into consideration the size of the family the person grew up in, the relationships between kin, the birth order, gender and different experiences that a person lived during childhood, the influence of genetic factors versus the one of the social and economic environment etc.

The present paper aims at analysing the influence of socio-environmental factors on reproductive behaviour and intergenerational transmission of reproductive behaviour. To this purpose, it analyses Romania and Russia from a comparative perspective both at macro and at micro level by using data from the Generations and Gender Programme.

The analysis of the literature on the subject generated some important conclusions. Firstly, family and kinship networks have an important role for the transmission of reproductive behaviour, correlations between the fertility of parents and that of children being often reported by various authors in various periods of time. Also, intergenerational transmission of reproductive behaviour constitutes an important mechanism for maintaining fertility levels much higher than what they would have been in its absence. Secondly, the recent openness towards other disciplines allowed for deeper analyses regarding fertility behaviour by taking into account various factors, such as psychological, biological or genetic ones. Related to the last ones, Kohler et al. (1999) shows that in contexts where there is freedom of choice, genetic factors have a strong influence, while environmental ones dominate fertility behaviour in contexts with a restrained range of options.

The evolution of fertility during the last century raised many questions related to the causes for such a drastic fall of the total fertility rate as the one currently experienced by the Western world. One possible answer to these evolutions is the theory of the Second Demographic Transition, which identifies transition from the bourgeois family, altruistic, focused on children, to the post-modern couple, individualistic, lacking constraints regarding marital stability, with a professionally and socially emancipated partner/wife (Rughinis, 2002) as the main cause.

Another approach that attempts to explain the complex mechanism behind the fertility decline, focuses on the individual rather than the country, thus offering the possibility to deepen the analysis even further. On such approach is Ajzen's theory of Planned Behaviour, which takes into account the desire and readiness of a woman to have children.

In European context, a special category is represented by the Eastern European countries, which are characterized by low fertility levels, median age at first marriage and first birth around the mid-twenties, but increasing, heterogeneous views regarding gender roles, changing social

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values system and little support and small incentives for working parents to have children. Among these countries we analysed Romania and Russia, first from a macro level perspective, then at micro level.

With regard to the macro level analysis, we found that fertility and fertility models, marriage, divorce and out-of-wedlock trends partially infirm the thesis of the Second Demographic Transition. Although fertility levels plunged to 1.2 children per woman or less after the abrogation of the pronatalist policies implemented by the former regimes, it was shown that this is not necessarily the result of a change in the values system of the respective populations, since changes of such magnitude are almost impossible to imagine in such a short period of time. It is also possible that the low fertility levels are people's reaction to the new realities: women emancipation makes them divide their time between household and family on the one hand, and education and career on the other; low mortality levels weaken the desire to give birth to many children when most of them survive to maturity, the high costs of a child and their diminishing economic value make parents prefer a small number of children in which they would invest more resources.

There is also a big influence of government interference through measures aimed at improving the demographic situation. In the case of Russia, a new and so far efficient demographic policy helped the country exceed 1.5 children per woman in 2009, while in Romania the pronatalist coercive policy of the former communist regime has profound and long term implications on the structure and evolution of the population. Trends in marriage and divorce seem favourable for both countries, however, the very low and stable rate of divorces in Romania may also be due to the high costs implied by a divorce.

The fertility model of both countries is shifting towards the western European model, with the age at first marriage and birth increasing and the total number of children decreasing. Although for both countries the predominant number of children is 1-2, a more accentuated postponement was noticed in the case of Romania than for Russia.

Out-of-wedlock fertility in Romania infirm almost entirely the thesis of the Second Demographic Transition, since the phenomenon is widespread among girls from rural areas, with a low education level, thus persons who did not even adhere to modern values regarding family and children. On the contrary, in Russia the phenomenon is becoming increasingly widespread in all social strata and, although it also has a component similar to the one in Romania, it also had a large number of children born to mothers in consensual unions.

Using a sample of 2362 Romanian women and 3090 Russian women, we did a micro level analysis of the influence of socio-economic factors on fertility behaviour in the two countries. More precisely, we wanted to see to what extent do certain socio-economic factor influence the total number of children. The results are presented synthetically below:

- Both for Romania and for Russia, the most wide spread number of children is 1 or 2, with most women from urban areas having one child and most women from rural area having two children.
- A relatively low proportion of women in the two samples are employed, which we attributed to the fact that some women, especially among those living in rural areas, do unremunerated work in their own household.
- There is a direct relationship between the age of the respondent and the number of children she has, with Russian women experiencing first birth before they turn 24 to a greater extent than Romania women

- Education level has opposite effects on the number of children a woman from each country has. In the case of Romania, the more educated women have fewer children than the less educated, while in Russia less educated women have fewer children than the more educated ones. This is rather surprising, but it might be related to the bigger opportunities that higher education offers, which seem to have a greater impact in Russia than in Romania.
- A positive, though weak relationship was found between the number of children a woman has and the number of sibs she grew up with, thus the more siblings she has, the more children she is likely to have.
- Having experienced the death of a sibling seems to have a positive influence on the total number of children.
- The earlier a woman experiences her first birth, the more children she is likely to have, due to the fact that starting later leaves less time to bear children.
- Most of the women who have children are married, this constituting an important factor in the decision to have a child in such traditional societies as Romania and Russia.

In order to see what factors and to what degree might influence the decision to have a child, logistic regression models were built using the two samples, for each country a model for short term fertility intentions and one for long term ones. The results obtained suggest the following women profiles:

1. ***Romanian women who intend to have children in the future (long term)*** are from the urban area, aged up to 34 years, but more likely up to 24, with no children or one child and who believe that their relevant ones also have a positive attitude towards her having a child.
2. In addition to the profile presented above, ***Romanian women*** who are most likely to have a child in the three years following the interview (***short term***) also have more traditional/conservative values, a positive attitude towards having a child and do not consider that external factors are impeding them to have a child.
3. ***Russian women who intend to have a child in the future (long term)*** are from big cities like oblast centres, aged up to 24 years, educated or enrolled in education, with no children or one child, they have a positive attitude towards having a child and they perceive the attitude of her closed one as being positive as well.
4. In addition to the previous profile, ***Russian women*** who intend to have a child in the first three years following the survey (***short term***) also have rather traditional values, but this is not due to a significant influence of the settlement type.

To sum up, there are a series of socio-economic factors that influence both the *desired* and the *actual* number of children. Among these factors, the residence area, the age of the respondent and attitudes and values regarding birth influence both Romanian and Russian women, while in the case of the later, education level and marital status also have a significant influence both on short and on long term decisions. The desired and the actual number of children influence each other significantly, while the later is also significantly influenced by occupational status, education level, number of siblings and the experience of having one or more dead siblings, age at first birth and marital status in both countries.

In conclusion, there is a specific combination of factors for each country that explains the intentions to have children and the realisation of these intentions. The similarities and differences

emerged from similar models, shaped by different backgrounds, evolutions and deliberate actions at both macro and micro level.