

TO BE OR NOT TO BE A FATHER? THE CONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF FERTILITY INTENTIONS AMONG WELL-EDUCATED MEN IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL

Angelita Carvalho, ENCE
Paula Miranda-Ribeiro, Cedeplar, UFMG
Laura R. Wong, Cedeplar, UFMG
Andréa B. Simão, Cedeplar, UFMG

The objective of this paper is to understand how well-educated men in union construct their fertility intentions and transform them (or not) into actual behavior. We draw upon a combination of several theoretical approaches (Theory of Planned Behavior; Traits-Desires-Intentions-Behaviour, Preference Theory; a macro-micro model of fertility and its determinants; Theory of Conjunctural Action) and data from 62 in-depth interviews with 31 well-educated couples (women 35-44 years-old) with 0-2 children, carried out in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in 2013. In this case, we used only men interviews. The results suggest that partners' desires are crucial to the understanding fertility behavior, because is possible identifier many factors that influence this process, like macro and micro environment and perceived ability to become fathers.

Introduction

According to Miller *et al.* (2004), the motivations for reproduction lie in two separate structures, one male and the other female. Therefore, in order to achieve the desired family size, the motivation of both partners need to be integrated, which makes the decision making process even more complex. It is important to understand how the motivations of each partner are combined. Although women still (and always will) bear the physical costs of pregnancy and birth, men have become more interested in fertility decisions due to the role of the media and legal institutions, and also because of the mothers' demands in terms of sharing child care with the children's fathers.

There are many unanswered questions in the process of decision making regarding family size. Because men are usually left aside in fertility studies, The objective of this paper is to understand how well-educated men in union construct their reproductive intentions.

Theoretical Framework

According to Philipov (2011), fertility intentions are driven by different sets of factors and relationships. Theories that analyze fertility intentions are necessary to really know what are the factors and relationships that refer directly to the intentions and not necessarily directly to procreation. They help to understand how individuals construct their intentions and that some of these are realized while others do not.

Among the main theories is the Theory of Planned Behavior (Theory of Planned Behavior) - TCP, this was proposed by Ajzen (1991) and subsequently better reworked by Ajzen & Fishbein (2005, 2010), was born from the Theory of Action rationalized from the moment it was found that many behaviors are not fully under the control of the individual will, since they depend on external factors, which often escape personal control. According to TCP, the fertility intentions are assumed to be the motivational factors that influence behavior because they are indications of how much people are willing or planning to make a determined effort to effect behavior. These intentions are

subject to the individual's perception of the control he has about external factors and the trust of his ability to perform such action. In other words, behavioral realization depends jointly motivation (intention) and ability (behavioral control) to implement it.

Three factors make up the TCP being the first to attitude to behavior, which refers to the degree that a person is favorable or unfavorable to a conduct in question. The second predictor is called a social factor subjective standard, which relates to the perceived social pressure to perform or not the behavior. However, the antecedent of intention third is the degree of perceived behavioral control, ie the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior. Besides this, the TCP postulates the importance of beliefs in determining the intent and consequently behavior. It is these beliefs that are considered the predominant determinant of intentions and actions of a person. Three types of beliefs are distinguished: the behavioral beliefs, which are assumed to influence attitudes toward the behavior, normative beliefs, which are the determinants of subjective norm, and control beliefs that provide the basis for a sense of control behavioral. Therefore, there is that behavior is preceded by intention, which is preceded by the attitude towards behavioral beliefs, subjective norm regarding the normative beliefs and perceived behavioral control in relation to the control beliefs. These beliefs are meant to show the unique elements that motivate the individual to make a certain behavior and / or drive others to follow different paths (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Many demographers try to adapt this theory to the fertility questioning and criticizing the adjustments regarding the TCP to fertility decisions. Authors like Morgan & Bachrach (2011), question how one can use a planned behavior model when there is empirical evidence to show that fertility often was not intentional, that is that people do not have enough control over the perception of their intentions. Also criticize the fact that TCP provides that the result of fertility are determined in isolation. Which actually involves a series of complex decisions (have sex, use contraception, choose abortion) and interdependent with many behaviors of everyday life (work, partnership, marriage). In addition, it cannot model the intention children at one point in time, because the planning of fertility occurs at all times, unfolding over many years. Finally, the authors criticize the fact that the TCP be centered on the individual that is influenced by the perceived opinions of others, but the theory does not consider the material limitations and incentives for procreation.

Specifically on the issue of the changes that occur throughout the life cycle Barber (2011) states that individuals can form intentions to behave in a way, and not otherwise, but when faced with real choices and real situations, they can be guided by emotions, sexual arousal and other uncontrolled situations. That is, for the author any model that attempts to predict the behavior and complicated as the attitudes and intentions are dynamic, they change over time in response socialization forces and social experiences every day. In addition, in the case specifically of the most likely experience to produce these changes in the context of fertility include dating and sex with the opposite sex, work, education, new family arrangements and other forms of social interaction. Therefore, new experiences in all these areas occur at a particularly high rate during the transition to adulthood and as a result, and quite likely that attitudes and fertility intentions quickly change these ages.

Have Klobas (2011) draws attention to the lack of contextual factors in TCP, since the individual decision maker is part of a social group and cultural background that indirectly affects fertility decisions. Similarly, the fertility decisions are located in an institutional and economic context that affects not only the reasoning on fertility decisions and the decisions themselves, but can also set the facilitators and the actual restrictions that make it easier or more difficult action on fertility plans. Thus, the author postulates the existence of contextual restrictors and facilitators of fertility behavior, among which we can mention the reconciliation of work-family policies, family and group of friendship networks, macro and micro economic policies, etc.

Balbo & Mills (2011) add to the conceptual framework the impact of family social networks in the construction of intentions and fertility behavior. According to the authors, there are two ways of how family networks interfere with fertility decisions: first, the family can be a source of capital and therefore a source of stability, welfare and informal resources, and depending on the strength and quality of family ties, can influence the formation of intentions and to facilitate or inhibit the realization of intentions. Moreover, because the family network can be considered as a locus of social interaction, where individuals engage in communication expectations, perceive and are influenced by each other's behavior. In this case, the network not only influence the attitudes, perceived control and subjective norms, but also the decision stage of the process of fertility intentions.

Another framework that also involves the analysis of fertility intentions is the Wish Traits model and Fertility Intentions (TDIC) has been created to understand the sequence in which motivational traits are translated into desires, intentions and fertility behavior. Was proposed by Miller (1994) and Miller & Pasta (1995) and its basic idea is that the motivational forces that drive behaviors related to the fertility of individuals and couples unfold in a sequential process that begins with motivational provisions non-conscious (traits) to have or not have children. This leading to conscious desires to have children or not, which, in turn, lead to the conscious intentions to have children or not, that ultimately lead to the performance of behaviors that are fundamental to have or avoid pregnancy. Thus, motivational features can be divided into positive and negative, which leads to various desires to have a child or against which, in turn, contributes to several corresponding fertility intentions. The sequence ends with behaviors that are oriented to achieve or prevent pregnancy and fertility desires. That can be divided into fertility, number of children and the time of these births, and intentions can be divided into three corresponding components (Miller & Pasta, 1995; Miller et al 2004) and finally the behavior can be divided into two forms use or non-use of contraceptives (Miller, 2011a)..

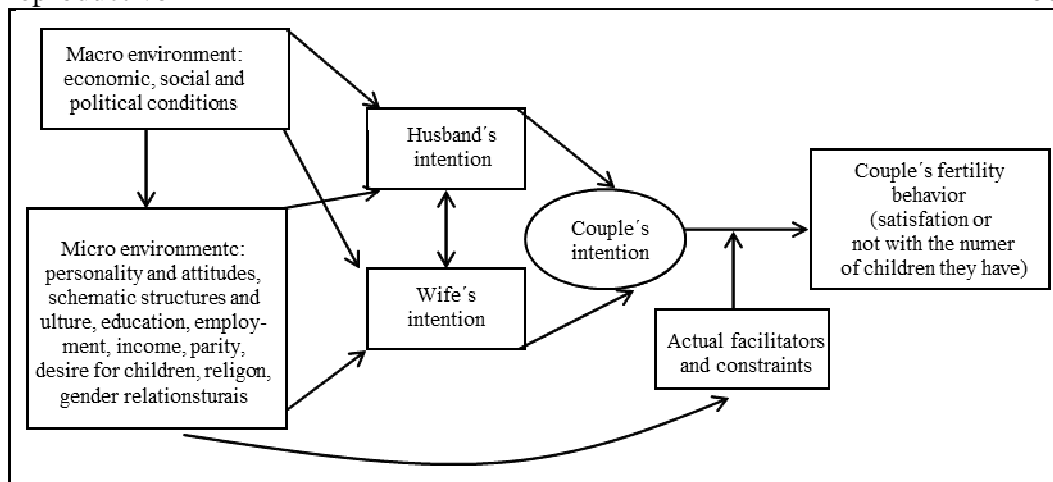
From this study, it was possible to develop a theoretical synthesis, covering the main variables that affect the reproductive process of couples, where it was noted that only a theory is not enough to understand the complexity of decision-making for children among couples. The theoretical framework of the TCP for this theory highlight variables that are taken in demographics and especially in fertility studies as influencing the decision-making for children, which highlights the importance of gender relations. Still within the micro universe, added the ideas of individual cultural and schematic structures,

highlighted by Johnson-Hanks et al. (2006) the TAC, as a possible form of influence on the intention children.

It also considered the idea advocated by Klobas (2011) that made an adaptation of TCP behavior fertility entering the macro environment, such as economic and public policy context and putting social norms, values and culture as influencers of all the background of the individual factors. The choice of this model was since he can bring a more demographic level TCP and while incorporating a large number of influencing variables of interest in the decision-making process for children. The idea of the importance social networks of individuals appointed by Balbo & Mills (2011), was also considered for the analysis because as pointed out by them, the family network can either be a source of social capital, contributing to the current capacity of realization fertility, as a behavior reference, facilitating the realization of intentions formed by the couple or inhibiting them, causing constraints before the intentions and behavior of this. Finally, model Miller et al. (2004) was also incorporated to put the fertility decisions within double context, where the desires of each partner can influence the individual intentions and the couple's behavior. And especially, to understand how the desires and intentions of men, from the gender relations experienced by the couple, influence their decision-making process for children.

From the joint of the cited models and variables above, we propose the following theoretical way: both the microenvironment and macro interfere in the construction of reproductive intentions of each spouse, as they suffer mutual influence of the intentions of each other. From the action of enablers and / or actual restrictions which are: existing gender relations between the partners, the bargaining power of each spouse, the perception of the couple on their ability to realize their reproductive intention, positive or negative influence the social network of the couple, among others, these intentions may or may not become real. All this then leads to the couple's fertility behavior, which can be both in the sense of having a satisfied or dissatisfied fertility, in this case for having fewer children than they wanted. Below you have the graphical representation of this theoretical framework and will be used in this study.

Theoretical model: construction of reproductive intentions and variables that affect reproductive behavior



Source: Based on Miller *et al.* (2004), Klobas (2011) and Balbo & Mills (2011)

Results and Discussion

As discussed by Klobas (2011) and Philipov et al. (2009), the fertility decisions can't be analyzed only by an individual vision. They are inserted in an institutional, economic and social context that affects the decisions by children; can also define real facilitators and constraints that allow or not the action on fertility plans. Between the interviews was very clear the importance of these contexts for physical and emotional security of respondents and, consequently, their plans for children. Especially for men, the economic question was often quoted as defining the time to have children and the amount of these.

"I think to identify the better current moment of life, because today for us could well raise the child, with an education that we want offer him with more sports, more languages, a good structure of life, we would have to evaluate the current situation of the economy.... But, after all, will depend on the time." Nicolas, childless, 31 years old

"I imagine the question of responsibility, everything involving have children, the world today has to be taken into account in this decision. And also the financial situation because I think today is very expensive you have a child and care, to give education and everything of the best." Humberto, childless, 41 years old

According to the theoretical framework of the Theory of Conjunctural Action (Johnson-Hanks et al., 2006), which highlights the importance of cultural and schematic structures for decision-making for children by individuals, speeches were found that well portrayed the presence these structures among respondents. In them there is a reiteration of success of a cultural scheme in this case, the family size experienced by the individual, which was legitimized and settled by the interviewees. The individuals seems became a non-controversial scheme, where the family size experienced for them are hegemonic and reference standard for them to plan their own ideal family size, ie, act as a reinforcing factor (Balbo & Mills, 2011)

"There are four brothers at home, so I always thought have of at least four." Ronaldo, 1 child, 35 v

"I thought two, maximum three children. At home we are three brothers, so ideal for me would amount two to three." Diego, 2 children, 38 years old

"As I've always been created very family, family lunches and meetings, I think it is in my education." Lucas, 3 children, 54 years old

Also regarding formation of the desire for parenthood, it can be seen that, as exposed in the theory of ACT, the schematic structures are usually learned by habitual exposure through social interactions, and are learned gradually and over time. Understanding differences are common, them there is not an explicit rule. In the speech below that opinions on when this desire is formed differ. Some respondents showed an anti-desire to live these experiences, since for them to have a child should occur in a planned time (in this case, within marriage). In this sense, they did not want children and expressed great concern to avoid children. The desire for children for most men in fact came to the marriage. There were few cases men demonstrated desire for becoming father in youth.

"From early I thought of 'I will not be a father.'" Walter, childless, 42 years old

"I wanted to study, graduate, enjoy life. These were my goals, and children for sure at this time would bother." Isaac, 2 children, 37 years old

"In fact, this idea of being a father was not born too early, although my family comes from large family. Before I got married I did not think about it, then did not have this predisposition to parenthood. She was born with the wedding, with the natural question of marriage." Henrique, 2 children, 45 years old

"I think since 18, 19, 20 I was already making planning to have children." Heitor, 1 children, 28 years old.

The Theory of Planned Behavior postulates the importance of beliefs in determining the intention for children and fertility behavior of individuals. These beliefs have the function of motivate the individual to have a certain behavior and / or to drive people to follow different paths. That is, how respondents think fatherhood would condition the desire for children. Men who had children and who still want to become a father show a positive vision and great benefits, which enhances the chances of those wishes become real.

"I think a child with love, with love it, because it is a seed for the world, is the way you stay alive, its values." Fabrício, childless, 31 years old

"I think it must be the best experience of life you have a human totally innocent, pure, he does not know anything and you teach the life for him." Daniel, childless, 43 years old

Was very clear that men formed his desire for children from the experiences that lived with his father. Is noticeable too the change of men's attitudes toward the behavior of their father, because if the relationship and the reference that had their father was negative, men show a willingness to have different experiences with their children. In all of them, respondents seem to aspire more involved in child rearing, attitudes consistent with what has been argued by Wall et al. 2004 and Giffin & Cavalcanti (1999), in which they defend the emergence of young men, much more interested in involving the development of children. The data also arouse to the analysis of Purr et al. (2008) in which men with more egalitarian gender attitudes seem to be likely to become father. Also, to realize with the above statements, a change of men in relation to the parent generation, that is, there seems to be a change in behavior between cohorts.

"I had not a good example, a nice reference, and I think not want to have children perhaps by fear of failure, I think I was afraid of failure like my father." Juliano, 1 son, 53 years old (never wanted to have children, but eventually adopted son's ex-wife for fear that this was abandoned as it was).

"I just wanted to have a child for me to compensate for the absence of my father." Felipe, 1 son, 44 years old (adopted child)

"Because I had bad father examples and I thought 'I will be a father to the opposite of this.'" Gustavo, 2 children, 53 years old (it is quite present in the lives of children, and sharing household chores).

An interesting fact was that among some men without children the desire for children was decreasing with age, where they wanted children when they were younger, and began to want fewer become father throughout their lives. The reason for this, seems not to have a simple explanation. Both Humberto as Vitor failed to justify the reason they lost the desire for children. Peter already seems to have been the awareness that the desire he felt was very influenced by the cultural norm to have children, and then he assumed his own desires is that he discovered he did not want to have children.

"I think when I was younger I had more an intention to have children and have perhaps even more children. As time passes I realize that it is decreasing the desire to have a child and also the amount is perhaps decreasing." Humberto, no kids, 41 years old

"As time went on I was losing the will to have a child, and it's hard to tell you why." Vitor, childless, 39 years old

"My desire changed a lot. To me before was a bit indifferent, I thought it would be a consequence more or less expected, later I come to feel that I really did not want to, that would be a very radical transformation, very serious and I was not willing to face." Pedro without children, 43 years old

The men also showed worrying the sex of the child to have. For some preference for sex was before becoming a father and in this cases, on general, there was a preference for boys. For another group the sex preference came with the experience of being a father and depended of the sex of the first children. Among those who have had children to experience fatherhood was very important to determine the desire for a next child. Many respondents pointed out that only want more children to give a brother to the children existing, for fear that he be alone.

"I want to have a son. If I have two can be a boy and a girl, I think even better, but the boy will be closer to me. Not that her daughter will not be, but I think he likes the same things as me, things of man himself, like football." Daniel, childless, 43 years old

"It was actually the opposite, the first daughter I did not think anything about the sex, the second already was 'let it be another girl, because we already know how it works.'" Henry, 2 children, 43 years old (has two girls)

"I want this for my son, I want him to have a little brother for him to play, so he could share ...". I do not want to have another child, I want my son to have a brother like my brother was for me." Augusto, 2 children, 40 years old

For the and, to know how men implement their reproductive desires and intention was applied an objective question identical to that applied in the DHS questionnaire for observed the average number of children desired and had by men interviewed. The average of children wanted for men was 2.3. Among those childless this average was 1.58 among those with one child the ideal number was 2.45, and among those who had two sons, the average was 2.78. That is, in all cases it was observed that the desire for children was greater than the number of children actually taken.

CONCLUSION

Given the importance that men have been given for the decision-making for children by the couple, has become increasingly important to understand how these build their desires and intentions for children. In this sense we aimed to investigate how well-educated men in union construct their fertility intentions and transform them (or not) into actual behavior.

From the results, it was possible to identify the importance of the macro environment context, that is, economic, political and social structures in which the interviewees were entered for the training process and decision making for children. Some way, the environment and the social problems they face makes people rethink their desire to become parents, influencing respondents to postpone that decision or even choose not to have children.

Realized the strong interference of the microenvironment context, represented by the schematic and cultural structures present in their life experiences, outlining the motivations and desires for children as well as the preferences by gender and number. If, on the one hand, the success of a cultural scheme influenced the desires for children of some individuals on the other, the failure of family experiences caused others to reject the experienced standards and chose to other behaviors, not wanting children, or wishing on fewer and more equitable marital relations. The relationship with the parents presented in a very intense way in the design of intentions and desires for children, as well as the perceived behavior of these men to become parents.

In examining the number of children, desired and actually taken, respondents seemed unwilling to carry out the desire. That is, the desired number of children reported for many respondents was not the one who imagine that they have. So possibly those desires referred to other points in time (when they were younger, when they had not yet become mothers and fathers, etc.), and that responded more to the pressures of social norms - and the expected behavior for the same tax - that really intimate desires to them. This results in a high fertility discrepancy. It is also possible that the desire declared by respondents is established without being taken into account all the factors that can contribute so they do not take effect.

This analysis shows the importance of also enter the men in the study of fertility decisions and also understand the motivations of these to have children. Further studies in this area are required.

References

AJZEN, I. The theory of planned behavior. **Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes**, v.50, p.179–211, 1991.

BALBO, N.; MILLS, M. The influence of the family network on the realisation of fertility intentions. **Vienna Yearbook of Population Research**, v. 9, p. 179-206, 2011.

BARBER, J. S. The Theory of Planned Behaviour: considering drives, proximity and dynamics. **Vienna Yearbook of Population Research**, v.9, p. 31-35, 2011.

FISHBEIN, M.; AJZEN, I. **Predicting and changing behavior**: The reasoned action approach. New York: Psychology Press, 2010. 538 p.

GIFFIN, K.; CAVALCANTI, C. Homens e reprodução. **Estudos Feministas**, v. 7, n. 1 e 2, p. 53-71, 1999.

JOHNSON-HANKS, J.; MORGAN; S. P.; BACHRACH, C.; KOHLER, H. P. The American Family in a Theory of Conjunctural Action. **Working paper**. Berkeley, CA: Department of Demography, University of California-Berkeley; 2006.

KLOBAS, J. The Theory of Planned Behaviour as a model of reasoning about fertility decisions. **Vienna Yearbook of Population Research**, v.9, p. 47-54, 2011.

MILLER, W.B. Childbearing motivations, desires, and intentions: a theoretical framework. **Genetic, Social, and General Psychological Monographs**, v.120, n.2, p. 223-258, 1994.

_____.; PASTA, D. J. Behavioral intentions: Which ones predict fertility behavior in married couples? **Journal of Applied Social Psychology**, v. 25, p.530–555, 1995.

_____, SEVERY, A.; PASTA; D.J. A framework for modeling fertility motivation in the dyad. **Population Studies**, v.58, n. 2, p. 193-205, 2004.

_____. Comparing the TPB and the T-D-I-B framework. **Vienna Yearbook of Population Research**, v. 9, p. 19-29, 2011a.

MORGAM, S; BACHRACH, C. A. Is the Theory of Planned Behaviour an appropriate model for human fertility? **Vienna Yearbook of**

PHILIPPOV, D., O. THÉVENON, J. KLOBAS, L. BERNARDI AND A.C. LIEFBROER. Reproductive decision-making in a macro-micro perspective (REPRO): a state of the art review. **A working paper of the European Commission within the Seventh Framework Programme under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities theme**, 2009.

PHILIPPOV. D. Theories on fertility intentions: a demographer's perspective. **Vienna Yearbook of Population Research**, v. 9, p. 37-45, 2011.

PUUR, A., OLÁH, L.SZ.; TAZI-PREVE, M.I.; DORBRITZ, J. Men's childbearing desires and views of the male role in Europe at the dawn of the 21st century. **Demographic Research**, v. 19, n. 56, p. 1883-1912, 2008.

WALL, K.; ABOIN, S.; CUNHA, V. A Introdução. In: WALL, K.; ABOIN, S.; CUNHA, V. **Vida Familiar no Masculino: Negociando Velhas e Novas Masculinidades**. Lisboa: Ministério da Educação, 2010. p. 11-33.