Abstract

Public policies have an important role in stimulating the birth. Due to society modernisation, Europeans are increasingly less interested in having children. Therefore, decisions on fertility must allow cross-fertility with labour market participation and not addressing them separately (Francesconi, 2002; Del Boca 2002; Apps and Rees, 2004; Laroque and Salanie, 2005). Researches on women labour participation, mostly empirical studies, emphasize the negative effect of fertility rates in diminishing the labour supply. Thus, a study with married couples from Bucharest County, Romania was conducted. The main objective was to assess the reproductive behaviour for the married couples. The methodology consists on a Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews questionnaire, developed by authors. The sample size was of 201 respondents aged 25-39 years. Data was processed on unweight database, using SPSS 19.0. The case-study results show that in the decision to have a child, wage and the overall income are the most important determinants.

Keywords: Family policies; labour market participation; reproductive behaviour; childcare;

1. Introduction

In recent decades the fertility rate decreased, and these phenomena at EU Member State level is undeniable. The continuous demographic decline induces simultaneous effects at micro, macro and mezo-economic, thus last years were marked by diversification of family policy measures. For most of the family policies, objectives are mainly the increase of the fertility rate, reconciliation of work and family life, and fighting against child poverty. The final result consists in solutions that could help individuals, but also the economies to counteract or anticipate adverse effects of this phenomenon.

Currently parents or potential parents face difficult challenges when deciding to have a child because they have to balance their work life with their family life. These are the results either of the lack of early childhood education services, or of other forms of support. On the other hand, national policies that encourage fertility pay attention to the development and diversification of early childhood education services and also to those that could facilitate parents’ participation on the labour market, even if in reality these goals are more or less achieved.

According to the OECD report "The future of the family to 2030 - A scoping Report" in the next three decades there will be no changes in family structure, but in the working arrangements for parents. The same report shows that the pressure of meeting family responsibilities is a crucial factor that will shape the future of the family as
dependents (children, sick, elderly) benefit mostly of the non-formal support received within the family. More and more parents will opt mainly for professional tasks at home (teleworking) as a concrete way to balance between the professional and family duties. The report's findings are confirmed by studies conducted at European level which recognize that many parents are under a significant pressure generated by the conflict between work and family life (EUROSTAT, 2009).

Downward trend recorded in the fertility rates propelled the concept of balance between work and family life, a concept that has stimulated the emergence of so-called “family friendly policies”. Not only government policies of various countries of the world have contributed to the concept, but also economic agents, since we cannot speak of balance between family and professional duties, as long as the concept is not recognized and implemented at the organizational level (Higgins and Duxbury, 2005; Howard, D’Onofrio and Boles, 2004).

1. Romanian families, fertility rates and labour market participation

The decreasing of the fertility rate in Western societies happened in two stages: the first stage – through increase in the age at first marriage and the extension of celibacy, and the second stage by controlling the legitimate fertility. In Romania, the two phases were merged, the first being less defined, the second having instead a crucial role because the reducing of the fertility rate was due mainly to decrease in the number of children of a married couple and not by reducing or delaying marriages (Ghebrea, 2000). In this context, the dynamics of marriages (the first sequence of family cycle) had a direct influence on the number of children. If for the fertility rate the change was radical, the influence on marriages had a different evolution, some traditional behaviours being particularly entrenched. Gradually, the fertility rate curve was defined by the early fertility pattern, presently, the highest values being recorded for the group aged 25-29 years, thus achieving an intermediate phase in the fertility model at late ages specific to Western populations.

In 1990, Romania was the third European country after precocity age criterion at first birth (being surpassed only Bulgaria - 22.15 years and the Czech Republic - 22.46 years). Romania passed first among European countries in 2003 based on the same criterion (tied with Bulgaria), with a mean age for the mother at birth of the first child of 24.2 years old. From 1990 to 2011 the evolution of the fertility rate for the group aged 20-24 years had a pronounced downward trend in Romania. Instead, in the period 2000-2011, there was an increase in the fertility rate for the group aged 30-34 years (Source: INS, Romania, 2012, Tempo Online, Time Series, Natural movement of population).

Considering the employment indices in 2009, Romania ranked 19th in the EU 27 member states regarding the employment rate of mothers - children under 15 years old. In the top there was also an ex-communist country, Slovenia. An analysis by age of the youngest child indicates a rate of 59.9% of Romanian employed mothers who had children between 3 and 5 years old (this value positions Romania on the 14th place in the hierarchy of EU27 in 2009) and 55.6% for mothers who had children in care under 3 years old (value that Romania ranks the 20th positions in the hierarchy EU27 for the same year).

The employment for women and man vary differently according to whether they have children or not. The employment rate for women aged between 25 to 54 decreases as the number of children increases, while for men in this age group the pattern is almost the opposite.

In Romania, women with one child are more often in employment, and the employment rate only starts to drop for women with a second child. This pattern is similar to that observed at EU level where the employment rate for women decreases as the number of children increases. For men, the EU pattern is confirmed also in Romania (Source: Eurostat, 2011).
2. Reproductive behaviors: case study in Bucharest

The main purpose of the exploratory study was to assess the reproductive behaviour for the married couples from Bucharest County, Romania.

2.1. Methodology

To achieve the objective of the study, two indicators were used for measuring the intention to have children: the intention to have children in the next 2 years, and the intention to have children (for those respondents who have declared that do not want to have children in the next 2 years).

As a research method, the authors opted for a survey based on a questionnaire applied using CATI technique (Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews), in the context of reduced financial and time resources. Also, the research instrument included other indicators, referring to the number and age of children already in the family, assessment of the family policy developed by the Romanian state in order to stimulate birth and socio-demographic variables. Thus, 201 telephone interviews were conducted, with married persons aged between 25 and 39 years, residing in Bucharest. The interviews were conducted during 15-16 October 2012. Data processing was performed using the "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - SPSS 19" and the analysis and interpretation of the unweight data were used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of cases in each age group</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-29 years old</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34 years old</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39 years old</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total questionnaires</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Results

The survey sample was composed of 68.7% families with children, but also families not having children at the time of the survey: 31.3%. Among families without children, 11.1% said they did not want children in the next two years. Only 19.5% of families with more than one child in the family wanted another child in the next two years (Pilot survey Bucharest, INCSMPS, 2012, N: 201).

Most families (73%) who did not plan to have children in the next two years do not intend to change their reproductive behaviour or in a more distant future time either, as presented in the figure below (Pilot survey Bucharest, INCSMPS, 2012, N: 89).

The motivation of those who do not want/no longer want children relates mainly to the current economic context, 50.8% of those who said they no longer wanted children adhering to the statement "It is difficult to support a child in the current economic context". This motivation is more common in the case of families with low net income. 23.1% felt that they already have the desired number of children in their family, and 15.4% invoked health problems. Since the survey sample is formed by couples aged 39 or less, at the 15.4% claiming health problems we can also add the 7.7% response rate recorded for the category "age does not allow us to have a/another child", obtaining a cumulative percentage of 23.1% (families with fertility problems). When asked to what extent families in Romania are encouraged to have children by the Romanian government through the promoted family policy, only
7% of respondents said that this happens to a very large or to a large extent (Figure 3, Pilot survey Bucharest, INCSMPS, 2012, N: 201).

4. Summary

Results of the case study show that in the decision to have a child, wage and the overall income are the most important determinants. Decisions on fertility must allow cross-fertility with labour market participation and not addressing them separately (Francesconi, 2002; Del Boca, 2002; Apps and Rees, 2004; Laroque and Salanie, 2005). Since in Romania researches concerning the reproductive behaviour are still in development we consider that the research adds a useful knowledge for policy makers in the provision of family policies and in improving the labour market participation for those that decide to have a child.

5. Acknowledgements

This article is the result of the project Impact of Families Policies and Labour Market Characteristics from Romania on Families’ Decision to Have Children (Romanian founded grant No. PN 09-420207).

References


