

## **The effect of work-related attitudes and expectations on fertility intentions and subsequent childbearing**

Anneli Miettinen, Lassi Lainiala, Anna Rotkirch

Population Research Institute, Väestöliitto, Helsinki Finland

There is already a substantial body of empirical research assessing the importance of fertility desires and intentions in determining the subsequent behavior. Recently, given the discrepancy between persisting low levels of fertility and much high fertility intentions among individuals, research is increasingly geared towards factors that could explain why some intentions are realized while others are not.

Here, we investigate the link between intentions and realized fertility by focusing on how employment and career related activities, expectations and attitudes interfere with an individual's fertility decisions and modify corresponding behavior. Presumably, being a parent and participation in education or in employment is likely to create role conflict which may constraint fertility, among women in particular. However, the mechanisms how these conflicting desires evolve into reproductive choices remain understudied.

Our study draws on the framework provided by the theory of planned behavior (TPB, Ajzen 2002; Ajzen & Fishbein 2005) and studies of Barber (2001) and Philipov (2009). The TPB posits that socioeconomic and cultural background conditions are reflected in fertility decisions via attitudes and norms as well as beliefs of personal control over individual's behavior. According to this view, attitudes towards childbearing and children predict fertility intentions, which then predict (fertility) behavior. Barber (2001) expanded this to include the impact of attitudes and intentions related to competing behaviors, such as educational attainment and employment, and proposed that attitudes towards competing behaviors may affect the fertility intentions–behaviors -link via all three dimensions—fertility attitudes, intentions, and perceived (or actual) behavioral control—which define fertility behavior. Philipov (2009) further examined also the impact of competing intentions as well as corresponding behavior on fertility intentions and subsequent births.

We expect that positive attitudes towards work and career will negatively affect fertility intentions and, independently, their realization, the impact being stronger for women than for men. We examine if attitudes influence intentions and behavior once we control for background factors. We also expect that the impact both supportive and conflicting attitudes will be stronger for childless persons than (one-child) parents.

We use data from a survey conducted in 2008 among 25-44-year-old Finnish men and women with 0 or 1 child, linked with register data on births during 2008-2011 (by Population Register Centre) which allows us to investigate short-term realization of fertility plans. We apply logistic regression to analyze how attitudes and expectations towards employment/career are associated with parity-specific fertility intentions (differentiating between general fertility desires, and short-term intentions) and subsequent childbearing.