

**BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK
DOCTORAL SCHOOL FOR SOCIOLOGY**

DOCTORAL THESIS

The summary of the doctoral thesis

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2019

**UNIVERSITATEA BABEȘ-BOLYAI
CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTATEA DE SOCIOLOGIE ȘI ASISTENȚĂ SOCIALĂ
ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ DE SOCIOLOGIE**

**PLANNED PREGNANCIES AND
REALIZED BIRTHS AMONG THE
ETHNIC HUNGARIAN WOMEN IN
BIHOR COUNTY**

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Planned pregnancies and actual births among the ethnic Hungarian women from Bihor county

Keywords: fertility, fertility gap, demographic behaviour, family planning

The PhD thesis is divided in eight chapters, on the one hand according to the requirements of the formal rules, and on the other hand according to the main purposes and objectives of the research.

The main purpose of the research was the study of the discrepancy between the number of desired children want and the number of realistically born children in Bihor county among the ethnic Hungarian women in the age group between 40 and 44 years.

The first part of the thesis consists presents classical and modern explanatory, classical and modern paradigms in the field of demography, as well as socio-economic and sociological explanatory theories on fertility, as well as the main results of previous research on this topic.

The issue of fertility dynamics is presented in an international, global, European and regional context. The research was conducted using quantitative means of investigation.

The methodological chapter presents the research approach, specifying the objectives, the questions and the assumptions of the research, the sample and the conduct of the research.

The chapter on the presentation of the results contains an assessment of the main characteristics of the urban / rural residential environment and other factors having an effect on the family and fertility structure of women as well as the effect of the various conditions and circumstances that have competed or to meet the target of the number of children you want at the age of 18.

The hierarchy and the influence of these factors were analyzed in a separate chapter, by constructing an explanatory model created using the logistic regression method.

The final chapter of the paper contains a summary of the results of the research, with the most important conclusions in the order of presentation of the hypotheses, as well as the suggestions regarding the fertility-increasing policies that could be adopted in the future in view of increasing the birth rate and the demographic recovery. In conclusion, the innovative elements presented by the work, as well as the formulation of its limits, are presented.

The actuality of the topic

In the case of the European countries we could notice a major decrease of the population in the last decades, as well as a change in age groups, resulting in the decrease of the active

population compared to the elderly, inactive population. Vasile Ghețău (2014) notes that in the case of Romania, the unpredictable volume of external migration will amplify the deterioration of the general demographic, and also points out that the situation created in Romania is actually the cumulative result of the main demographic factors: fertility, mortality and migration in recent decades. The demographic aging index has increased, this having special implications with consequences under the increasing pressure that will push on the shoulders of the middle generation, forced to support both the generation of children and those of inactivity.

At the same time, the author mentions that the rate of population decline and aging can not be stopped, but he believes there are various ways of diminishing this process. For this reason, it claims that research is needed to find out exactly the causes that lead to a decrease in fertility in the idea of finding solutions for recovery.

The indicator level required for population reproduction, the total fertility rate of 2.1, is not reached in any EU country, while in 37 countries the value of this indicator is above 4, with the world average of 2.47. The country with the highest value in the European Union is Ireland with a value of 2, while Romania is at a significant distance from this value at 1.53. (World Population Prospects, 2015).

The situation of the Hungarian population in Transylvania presents a similar picture. According to the latest research, this value is 1.3 (Speder 2009). This value seems to adjust to the general trends of the Romanian population.

The studies unanimously conclude that the decision about family planning, the number of children a woman or a family decides to have is the product of many factors, among which we have to mention besides the value structures and factors of nature such as the cost of raising children and the economic situation of the family, as well as contextual factors such as marital status, public health problems as well as certain particularities that are increasingly important, such as the degree of compatibility of women's professional ambitions with the possibility of child care.

Methodological framework

The present research has started from the above mentioned premises and in this regard it has focused on the study of the demographic behaviour of women at the end of the fertile period.

The representative sample of the female population of Hungarian nationality in Bihor county comprised 456 persons aged between 40-44.

The study is primarily practical. The focus is on collecting and analyzing empirical data. The information and data gathered through research seeks to contribute to solving practical problems.

5.1. Research Questions:

Starting from these theoretical premises the author of the thesis formulated two questions. The first refers to the degree of discrepancy that occurs in the issue studied in the case of the collectivity of women in Bihor county, respectively, the ratio of this discrepancy to the values calculated at country level, respectively the neighboring countries.

The second question concerns the value framework, the way in which the traditional values towards the family and the children persist, or not, among women in the conditions of urbanization, and if so, to what extent, respectively, whether or not differences can be established from this point between urban and rural areas.

There have been formulated statistically verifiable assumptions to control the relationship between certain factors that may appear as barriers or, on the contrary, may increase the chances of achieving the desired outcome in terms of the birth of the number of children. Such factors were considered to be those that target, the economic situation of the family, or the woman. For a more detailed and in-depth analysis, there has been a differentiation between objective welfare and subjective welfare. Factors related to personal characteristics, age, level of schooling, education, as well as attributes of personality, optimism, pessimism, have also entered as variables in the formulation of hypotheses. It also controlled the role of factors that address fundamental values, such as the level of religiosity, namely the circumstances that refer to the characteristics of the workplace, the circumstances of family life, or factors that concern the possibility of helping in the extended family, the proximity to the parents' home.

The main **hypotheses** were

- The author assumed that the achievement of the number of children planned at 18 years of age has a significant connection with the economic condition, namely the subjective appreciation of material welfare.

- The author assumed that the achievement of the number of children planned at 18 years of age has a significant link with the woman's level of religiosity.

-She assumed that the flexibility of the workplace has a significant connection with the possibility of achieving the number of children you want at the age of 18.

- The author assumed that there is a significant relationship between the achievement of the desideratum on the number of births and the marital status of the woman.

-Se assumed that there is a significant relationship between the place of residence of the woman's parents and the possibility of giving life to the number of children you want.

-She assumed that the level of schooling significantly influences the possibility of achieving the goal in relation to the birth of the number of children.

-The author assumed that those women who gave birth to the first child at a young age manage to make a significant increase in their youthful dream of the number of children they want.

The sample of the female population of Hungarian ethnicity in Bihor numbered 456 persons between the ages of 40-44. As a sampling method, stratified sampling was used. The stratification was carried out according to two criteria: 1. residential, urban / rural typology; 2. level of studies. This way, 19 localities were selected, out of which 7 towns and 12 rural localities.

The main conclusions of the research

A separate chapter presents the model of logistic regression, which prioritises the role of factors of influence in the decision of the women in the studied sample, meaning the birth of children at the age of 18. The independent variables in this model with the most explanatory power are: 1. the age of the woman at the time of the first child's birth 2. the flexible nature of the work program 3. the approaching of the parents 4. the economic situation of the family 5. the level of school education of the women's parents 6. the optimism 7. the level of schooling of the woman.

From this hierarchy it gets clear that the variable with the highest explanatory power is the age at the birth of the first child. This variable has a predictive value of 43.2. If the second variables are added, the flexibility of the work program, these two variables have a combined predictive power of 55.8%, with the addition of home parenting being added to 59% predictive power in the sense that the number of births desired by women to achieve. The economic situation of the family, the level of schooling, respectively the optimism, increases only by only 0.9% the explanatory power of the model. (Nagelkerke R Square = 0.602). If only the economic situation variable were taken into account, the explanatory power would be 1.6. If the variable of the material situation is added to the first three variables, the explanatory power increases from 59.3% to 60%.

The interrelations found in verified hypotheses can be ordered into three categories:

1. Variables with strong connections: the younger age at the birth of the first child, and the flexibility of the work program.
2. Various variables-parents approach.
3. Variables with weaker connections: economic situation, tuition level, personality factors.

The main conclusion is, that the decision to give birth to children involves a complex process, and therefore it is very difficult to identify any variable that could in itself positively influence this process. Analyzing the variables strengthens the assumption that rather the coexistence of positive factors influences the success of the birth plan of children you want in your youth. This conclusion is reinforced by the results of Sanderson and Dubrow (2000), which shows that the plan on the number of children and the achievement of this goal can be described only by a multi-causal narrative. From this it follows that any kind of social policy that aims to increase birth rates must take this into account.

The conclusions of the author of the thesis are consistent with the results of researches carried out in the last decade on national and international level. The author of the thesis presents, that with all the changes that have occurred in Romania in the last 30 years, the declared values of women towards the family and the desire to give birth to children remained largely unchanged. Thus, asking what number of children is considered ideal in a family, most of the answer is 2 children. The traditional system of values also appears in terms of the primacy of women (both urban and rural with some differentiation) to the role of mother, relative to occupational status. Regarding the hierarchy of these values, Spéder (2004) notes that recent demographic research conducted in Central and Eastern Europe points out that in the first half of the 20th century the beneficial factor in the number of births was the fact that women were predominantly employed domestic. Thus, if in the first half of the 20th century the highest values of fertility were reported in societies where the activity of women on the labour market was reduced, under the present conditions, higher values are reported in countries where the presence of women in the field of extracurricular activities is higher. The explanation of this fact is the author's opinion that the integration into the labour market of women contributes to raising self-confidence and this increases the courage to give life to children in the conditions in which the instability of family relations presents higher marks of uncertainty compared to the previous period.

Research data show that not only professional work, employment, but also opportunities for improvement and advancement are important to women interviewed by acknowledging that they can gain more secure and well-paid positions by continuing their studies. Under these circumstances, raising children becomes an increasingly late decision, which may result in the fact that they have no children or the number of children originally planned. This fact has been proved by all demographic research, that is, the fact that, while the number of children you wanted did not change essentially in the last 50 years, this number is still sufficient today for the reproduction of the population, two trends can be observed: the average age of women at first birth is steadily increasing. The results of the present research show that women want to give

birth to children but want safety, as a precondition for birth, job safety, material and family safety. This is reflected in respondents' answers to questions about the factors they consider important to achieve the number of children you want. What the author of the thesis considers to be important is to highlight the role of women's parents, their help and accessibility as a safety valve in raising the children and the birth of the second child in the postponement period may not be achieved.

The results of the present research show that women want to give birth to children but want safety, as a precondition for birth, job safety, material and family safety. This is reflected in respondents' answers to questions about the factors they consider important to achieve the number of children you want. What the author of the thesis considers to be important is to highlight the role of women's parents, their help and accessibility as a safety valve in raising children.

The lack of a strong correlation between the material wealth of the family and the realization of the number of planned children calls into question the attempts to redress the demographic situation only through economic incentive policies. The results of the research highlight the fact that what seems to be effective in this situation is the safety, the sense of security for the present and the future situation. In this sense, in order to achieve efficiency, social levers need to find those levers that act to increase this feeling. In order to achieve this, we must create those conditions that are legally guaranteed to provide women with safety, even in the case of negative life events such as job loss, divorce, etc.

Research data reveals the importance of women's age at the birth of the first child. This conclusion highlights the importance of adjusting the possibilities of further studies with the adjustment of the role of mother in young women case.

The study has shown that the environment, the values they behave, although lost in significance, are still determinants of behaviour and attitudes.

The author of the thesis finally states that the birth of the number of children in the family is the result of a complex of factors, of which a series is not suitable for the quantification. However, some key factors are being set up, which favour, or, on the contrary, prevent the realization of the children you want in the family. Thus, the proximity and availability of parents, the circumstances of the workplace, the material factors, are those elements of differentiation that seem to play a significant role in this process. By taking into account the influence of these factors, it is clear that the necessity and importance of creating the social space that through the various mechanisms of public policies can serve as a lever for decision-makers in order to redress the demographic situation.

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