

Patterns of fertility intentions and gender relations. A within-group comparison of Turkish migrants living in Germany

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Introduction

Growing shares of immigrants at the total population are a part of today's reality in Western Europe. Some European-Union member states such as Germany and France estimate that about 20 percent of their current population are immigrants or have an immigrant background. Migration movements are causing a "growing trend toward ethnic, cultural and religious diversity" in the EU (Council of the European Union 2001). This cultural diversification is also likely to lead to different demographic patterns of sub-groups within the population of one country and that needs to be considered in population research and public-policy making. Demographers often begin work, however, with an assumption that the population they are examining is homogenous, which is of course not true. There are differences not only between the indigenous population and the immigrant population, but also within the immigrant population. The latter aspect is an under-studied field in European demography.

The goal of our study is to examine within-group differences in the Turkish migrant population living in Germany. Germany ranks first as destination country for emigrants from Turkey, and persons of Turkish background form the largest minority group in Germany. We investigate fertility intentions of women and men of Turkish background and pay special attention to gender relations, education, and employment in shaping fertility intentions. We compare first-generation immigrants and their descendants. Attention to gender roles is important within the context of family policies and women's policies. Immigrant sub-groups within a population may be different from the majority population or may show more variations. Examples are prominent in family structure, social inequality, family relations, and division of labor between women and men. Since welfare states are based on certain assumptions about the relative homogeneity of their populations, it is rewarding and necessary to investigate the effects of policies on sub-groups who differ from the majority population.

Theoretical background

The impact of migration on fertility is discussed based on competing hypotheses that aim to address the following questions (c.f. Milewski 2008): Does the act of migration, and its related cultural and socio-economic consequences, have a depressing or a stimulating effect on childbearing behavior? Do migrants continue to display the behavior of their old environment, or do they adopt behavior typical of the new environment? And what are the mechanisms behind these respective behaviors? Studies on Western European countries find that on the whole first-generation immigrants display fertility levels that

are somewhat between the levels in their countries of origin and destination, thus indicating that socialization effects work along with adaptive processes. In addition, selectivity plays a large role, as marriage migrants are shown to have very high fertility levels immediately following the move (indicating that marriage and move are interrelated), and compositional differences between migrant populations and host society explain a large part of fertility differentials. So far a disruptive impact of international migration has not been seen.

Research into the fertility of immigrants and their descendants in West Germany has shown (Milewski 2010) that not only do women of different migrant generations display differential fertility, but also that there are large differences between national sub-groups and these become even more apparent in the second immigrant generation – with Turkish women having higher fertility than women of other origins. Demographers use to hypothesize that the welfare-state framework and the low-fertility context in (West) Germany tended to influence fertility behavior to the extent that women of the second immigrant generation exhibited fertility behaviors similar to those of West Germans. Because this is not the case, we must address question as to why country differences occur. Previous studies (e.g., Milewski 2010) do not suggest that immigrants in Germany follow a path that leads to ‘segmented assimilation’ (e.g., Portes and Zhou 1993). According to the segmented-assimilation theory, the socio-demographic development of a minority group would follow a path that is distinct from the pattern of another group. This seems to be not the case in Germany, and other Western European countries, as we do observe a clear trend towards higher educational attainment among the second generation than among the first generation. Although the socio-demographic structure of all immigrant groups may still be characterized by the former ‘guest-worker’ milieu, there appears to be a development towards differentiation within each country group. This has also been pointed out by others (e.g., Bade 1984, Fritzsche 2000).

Even though this segmented-assimilation theory is not supported in the West German context, it does seem that there appears a trend toward the formation of cultural sub-groups: family norms, values, and behavior are influenced by the socio-cultural context, and this applies in particular to persons of Turkish background. Marriage and a first child are, for example, almost universal within the Turkish immigrant population in Germany, and both occur relatively early compared to other women of other immigrant groups and German women.

So far, studies on fertility of immigrants living in Germany focused in the comparison of women of different origin groups and Germans. They revealed that higher fertility levels of Turkish immigrants and their descendants can mainly be traced back to compositional differences between the groups with Turks having an education lower than average. Our study focuses on persons of Turkish background and compares the migrant generations and women and men. We are especially interested in the role of education and

employment shaping fertility intentions and behavior. We assume that women with higher education may be the first ones in the migrant population that adapt to the German low-fertility context since they may also give priority to employment and therefore reduce fertility (intentions).

In this context a number of studies related to Western European countries point also to the importance of gender equality for fertility. Policies that promote a better compatibility of employment and having children (by alleviating women's care obligations or by fathers' uptake of parental leave) are regarded as conducive to increase fertility (e.g. Brewster and Rindfuss 2000; McDonald 2000; Engelhardt and Prskawetz 2004). Such studies draw a consistent picture of the interrelation of gender equality and fertility: On the macro-level, a de-gendering of labor-force participation and a de-familialization of childcare are necessary to create conditions that have a positive influence on fertility intentions. On the micro-level, the interrelation of female labor-force participation and childbearing is to a great extent conditioned by the institutional support offered to women. A more equal distribution of private care between mothers and fathers has proved to be conducive to fertility in countries which strive towards a gender-equal society. In countries that support female-carer/male-breadwinner family forms the link between a equal division of care and childbearing is more ambiguous (Neyer and Rieck 2008).

Whereas the relationship between gender equality and fertility has been studied to a growing extent for the non-migrant populations of Western European countries this question has been only partly addressed for immigrant populations. In Germany the indigenous population shows a development toward a growing diversity of gender-role models., In our study we want to find out whether a similar trend can be observed in the Turkish immigrant population or whether the male-breadwinner model continues to dominate fertility intentions and behavior.

Data and method

For our study we use data from the German Generations and Gender Survey (GGS). In two different samples Germans and migrants of Turkish origin living in Germany have been interviewed. Both surveys are part of the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP). The latter is a system of national Generations and Gender Surveys and contextual databases on several European and some non-European countries.

The aim of the surveys is to improve the understanding of demographic and social developments and of the factors that influence these developments. Highlighting the relationship between partners as well as the relations between children and their parents is a special focus of the surveys. Moreover, topics like gender role orientations and religious attitudes are stressed. The programme furthermore focuses on the determinants of the transitions in these relations, marked by demographic events, such as leaving the

parental home, the formation and dissolution of partnerships, and childbirth (Vikat, Spéder et al. 2007).

The first part of the data sample we use is the German Generations and Gender Survey carried out in 2005. The survey is organized as the first wave of a panel. The sample size of the German GGS is approximately 10,000 persons with an age span from 18 to 79 completed years. The second sample which was conducted in 2006 includes 4,000 interviews with Turkish citizens living in Germany. This survey also contains several indicators for gender roles attitudes and behaviors of migrants (Diehl, Koenig et al. 2009).

For the investigation of fertility intentions of Germans and Turks in Germany we use logistic regression models. The dependent variable is the question whether respondents wish to have a or another child (within the next three years) or not. We carry out the analysis with those persons aged 18 to 40 and compare women and men of the first and second immigrant generation. Crucial control variables are educational attainment, employment status, marital status, number of children already born, as well as family and social networks.

Results

Results and conclusions will be available in time for the meeting in September.

References

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