

The influence of religion and family values on the fertility of refugees in Hanover

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Introduction

Due to the increase in the number of asylum seekers in recent years, refugee research is currently of great interest in Germany and Europe. Nevertheless, there are currently only a few published studies on those who fled to Germany during this period, especially on fertility. For Germany, the total fertility rate (TFR) is below the replacement level, which leads to a negative trend in population development. It is therefore interesting to see how the fertility of migrants, who predominantly come from countries with a higher TFR than Germany, develops and which factors influence this growth.

A person's fertility depends on many different factors, including the values that represents these person. Two of these factors are empirically examined in this paper: To what extent do religious affiliation and family values influence the number of children among refugees in Hannover? In the analysis, the survey is limited to refugees from the Arab and North African regions, as they make up the largest part of the sample.

Different theories are used to explain the results. These include the theories of the first and second demographic transition and their role in the development of fertility in societies. In the first demographic transition, couples' willingness to plan families and control births increased as parents shifted their economic resources to raising children. As a result, the number of births decreased. In addition, scientific developments increased general health and improved, for example, the supply of food. The second demographic transition is associated with fertility below the replacement level. The possibilities of contraception and the separation of sexual intercourse from marriage led to a further decline in fertility rates. One or two children could already satisfy the emotional need. While the first demographic transition is a worldwide phenomenon, the theory of the second demographic transition mainly refers to European countries, among others. The question therefore arises whether this theory can also be applied to the countries of origin of the refugees considered in this paper. According to the UN World Population Prospectus 2017, the total fertility rate (TFR) of the countries of origin of the refugees most frequently represented in the dataset on which this study is based is above the conservation level, but with a downward trend. Other theories included in this article are those of planned behaviour or migration-related fertility mechanisms. The former is based on the assumption that general attitudes and personal traits are related to behaviour. For migration-related fertility mechanisms, it is important to distinguish whether migration is voluntary or forced. In forced migration, also called flight, fertility usually adapts to the pre-migration level when arriving in a safe place and is comparable to that of non-migrants. The core of the interruption mechanism is that the fertile phase is interrupted by separation from the spouse during the flight. The adjustment mechanism works in such a way that the fertility of the migrants after arrival adapts to that of the population in the destination country. Based on the theories, it can be assumed that migrants living in Germany will undergo a second demographic change if they become more integrated, adapt social values and show fertility rates below the replacement level over time.

Important aspects to be examined in more detail in this paper are the effects of religion and religiosity on fertility. Religiousness describes the extent to which a person agrees with the norms and values defined by a religion. The religions of Islam and Christianity considered in this paper represent different religious teachings and values related to reproduction and fertility. To consider the effect of religious values, they must be divided into two categories. The first category includes religious positions on abortion and contraception. The second category includes the religious terms family size, attitude to the number of spouses, minimum age for marriage, remarriage after divorce or widowhood, and gender roles.

Family values also have an impact on fertility. This refers to general family planning and forms of cohabitation of couples that have an influence on fertility development. Political influences can also be important, because family life in the Arab-Muslim countries of North Africa and the Middle East is strongly influenced by religious laws. In Arab societies, the family has traditionally had a high status. Due to the increasing age of marriage and the proportion of permanently unmarried people, the decision for children is either made later or left out altogether. The postponement of marriage shortens the fertile phase of the married couple and thus biologically limits the possible number of children. These developments give rise to the assumption that the importance of the family for the individual in the Arab states is declining.

Methods

This paper examines the extent to which religious and family values influence the fertility of newly immigrated refugees in Hanover. The survey instrument is a standardized paper-pencil questionnaire on the topics of flight, integration, expectations, dealing with (social) media and sociodemography. After a preliminary investigation in July 2016 in refugee homes in Mardorf and Neustadt am Rübenberge (N = 25), the survey took place in November and December 2016. A total of 692 persons took part in the main investigation, who at the time lived in communal accommodation and decentralised housing complexes for refugees in the urban area (N=365) and in the municipalities of the Hannover region (N=327). For the operationalisation, the theoretical considerations and constructs presented above refer to the empirically recorded variables of the underlying questionnaire. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Muslim refugees in Hanover have more children than refugees from other religions (including no religion).

H2: The higher a refugee in Hanover considers the importance of the family, the higher its fertility.

Fertility intensity and fertility behaviour are not directly measurable with the database used. The behavioural performance, i.e. the number of children of an interviewee or an interviewee and thus the result of his actions, was, however, determined by the questionnaire. The religious affiliation is examined in a question with a categorical nominal scale and treated in the following as an independent variable of the first hypothesis. Sociodemographic control variables are also used in the empirical analysis of the data.

In the statistical analysis, the first section of the analysis comprises the univariate description of the variables relevant for regression analysis. For the nominally scaled variables gender, country of birth and religious affiliation, only the frequency count was performed to describe the sample. The

variables about the meaning of the family, the age and the number of children are scaled metrically. In the analysis of the underlying data set, a multiple regression was performed for the first hypothesis with the number of children as a dependent variable and the various expressions of the dichotomized variables of religious affiliation as an independent variable. In addition, the relationship between these variables was verified with a single factor variance analysis. The simple linear regression model to test the second hypothesis includes the variable of the importance of the family as an independent variable and again the number of children as a dependent variable. Again, the regression model was supplemented by the control variables age, sex and country of origin. Subsequently, all independent variables mentioned here were summarized in a multiple regression with respect to the number of children.

Results

The data set used comprises a sample of 692 cases, of which 83.7% (N=447) were male and 16.3% (N=87) were female. The average age of the respondents (N=407) was 29.7 years with a standard deviation of 9.4 years. The respondents reported a total of 24 different countries of birth (N=521). The majority of the interviewees were of Arab origin. The average number of children of the interviewees (N=477) in the visual sample was 0.86 children with a standard deviation of 1.55. With regard to religious affiliation (N=440), the majority of the interviewees (63.4%) were Muslims and 11.1% Christians. The statement "My family is very important to me" (N=533) was fully accepted with 76.4% and 12.0% respectively. 3.0% of the respondents agreed less, while 8.6% disagreed.

To test whether Muslim refugees in Hanover have more children than refugees from other religions, a multiple linear regression was calculated to predict the number of children based on nondenominational, Christians, Muslims and members of other religions with the control variables age, gender and country of birth. The reference categories of this regression were Muslims for religion and Iran for the country of birth. A significant regression equation was found ($F(11,246)=17,488$, $p<.000$), with an R^2 of 0,414. There were 0.181 fewer children among participants without a religious community, 0.303 fewer among Christians and 0.338 fewer among participants with religions other than Muslims. In order to test whether the hypotheses "the higher a refugee in Hanover considers the importance of the family, the higher its fertility" apply, a multiple linear regression was calculated to predict the number of children based on the importance of family values with the control variables age, sex and country of birth. A significant regression equation was found ($F(9,272)= 23,573$, $p<.000$), with an R^2 of 0,420. The predicted number of children of the participants is 0,041, the more important the family is.

Discussion

The analysis showed that the assumption derived from the theory that Muslims have a higher fertility than members of all other religions can be confirmed for these data. In comparison to the first hypothesis, Muslims have more children than non-denominational people, Christians, members of other religious communities. The assumption that family values or the importance of the family have an influence on fertility can be confirmed statistically, but with 0.041 the measured effect is small. Based on the results and the theory of the planned behaviour, it can be stated that fertility behaviour is influenced both by the attitude towards the importance of one's own family and by the subjective norms of religion. In the coming years it will be interesting to observe whether the refugees retain

their values from their country of origin or harmonise them with those of German society. This will probably also be reflected in the fertility of this population group. The development of the fertility of the refugee population in the coming years will be an aspect of great interest both for research and, in particular, for German society.