

Contextual and Individual Effects Behind Fertility Change in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

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Context of the study

Palestinian fertility is among the highest in the Arab world (4.1 children per woman, PCBS, 2008). The demand for children is high even though conditions for fertility decline are met:

- Low infant mortality rate
- High level of urbanization
- High female education
- High prevalence of contraceptive use

No clear explanation for the high fertility or the persisting regional differences.

In such a complex setting as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, higher order factors may impact fertility.

Objective

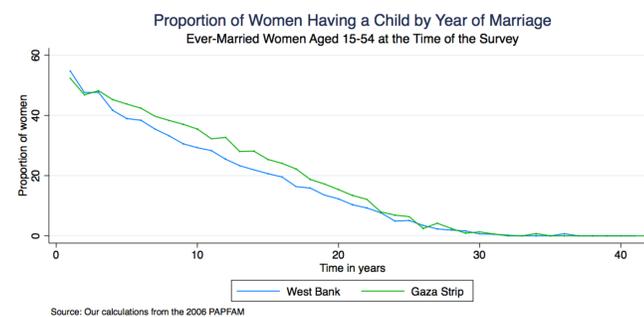
Analyze the main drivers of fertility in Palestine, accounting for individual and contextual effects and investigate if and how a conflictual environment influences individual behaviour, what it leads to, and how it matters compared to other factors commonly used to understand fertility trends.

Research questions

- What factors best explain a constant high demand for children and the timing of fertility change?
- How does the importance of these factors vary among women of different regions, SES characteristics and age groups?
- Does the specific context of the region and its consequences on a contextual level influence individual fertility behaviour as hypothesized by the *political fertility thesis*?

Background

- Despite a constant fertility decline in both regions, the intensity of fertility differs:



- Individual-level predictors of fertility: age at marriage, education, family income, parity, child mortality, age difference, kinship, etc.
- Contextual-level predictors of fertility: IMR, proportion of educated women, of prisoners, presence of settlements, of checkpoints, etc.

Data & Methods

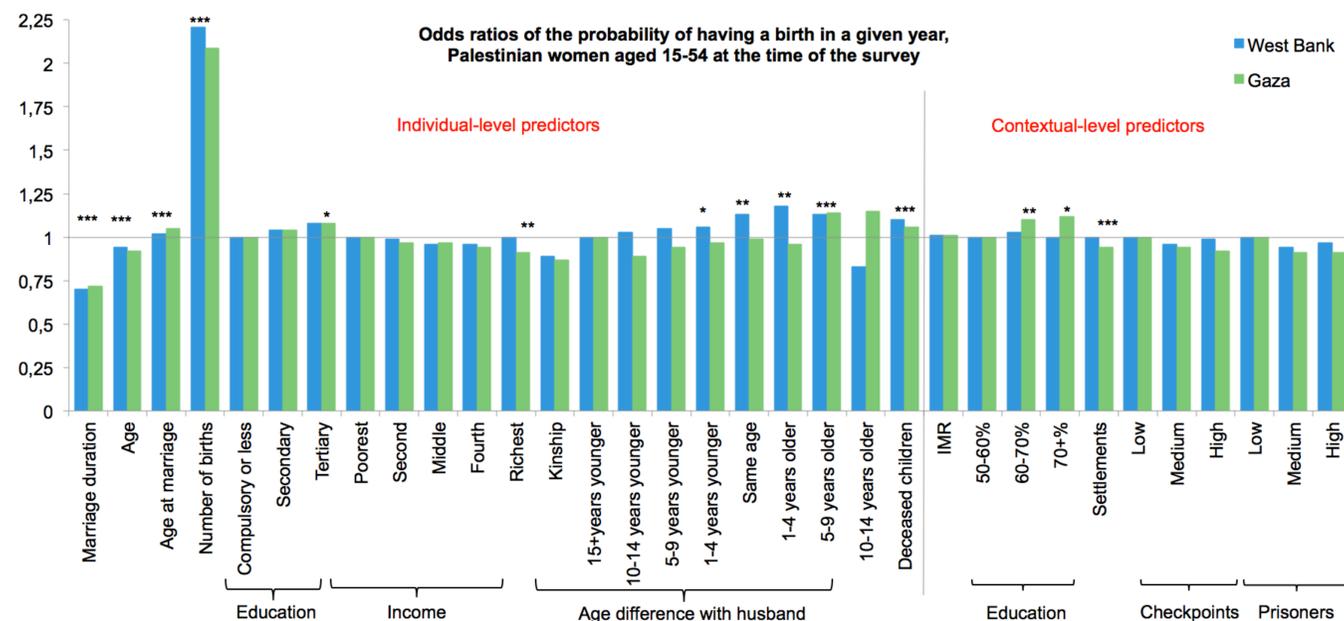
DATA

- Palestinian Family and Health Survey 2006 (PAFAM)
- Contextual variables provided by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)
- Reconstructed full birth histories of ever-married women aged 15-54 at the time of the survey
- 10,644 women observed for an average of 15 years

METHODS

- Multilevel discrete-time event-history logit models
- Women are observed from the year of their marriage until the date of the survey
- Indicator of whether a woman gives birth in a given year (set to 1 in years a woman gives birth and 0 otherwise)

Results



Key findings

Results show the fertility determinants are mostly *individual* but their effect is very limited.

Living in a region with a larger proportion of Jewish settlers appears to have a *negative impact on fertility* in the Gaza Strip, not in the West Bank.

Most contextual variables associated with the conflict do not have a significant impact on fertility.

Conclusions

- Marriage duration is the most important factor associated with a decreasing probability of having a child.
- More educated women have a higher probability of having a child, especially in the West Bank.
- A higher income decreases the probability of having a child, especially in Gaza.
- The presence of family members at home has a negative impact on the probability of having a birth in both regions.
- In the Gaza Strip, the probability of having a child is significantly lower in regions with a higher proportion of educated women.
- Living in a region with a higher proportion of settlements also decreases the yearly probability of having a birth.

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