

# **Low fertility intention in Tehran, Iran: The role of attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control**

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**\*\*\*Extended Abstract\*\*\***

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## Abstract

Informed by the Theory of Planned Behavior, this study examines the hypothesis that individuals' background factors are external variables influencing fertility intentions largely through *attitudes to* positive or negative outcome of having a (another) child, *perceived norms*, measuring external social pressures for having a/another child, and *perceived behavioral control*, measuring whether a person is able to have a (another) child. This study uses data from the 2012 Tehran Survey of Fertility Intentions, conducted by the author among a representative sample of 2,267 married women aged less than 36 and men living with such women in Tehran, the capital of Iran. Multivariate results show that individuals who viewed having a (another) child more detrimental for their personal life, those who felt less social pressures from their peers for having a (another) child, and those who perceived a greater control over resources, required for childbearing, were more likely to intend to have no (more) children or to be unsure rather than to have a/another child. Attitudes and norms had a greater effect on the intention to have a first child, whereas the intention to a second child was largely influenced by attitudes and perceived behavioral control. The implications of the results for policies, aiming to raise fertility, are discussed.

## **Introduction**

The studies investigating the determinants of fertility intentions have generally focused on background demographic characteristics, including age and parity, as the key determinants of the intention to have children. However, an important question that has been understudied in the literature of fertility intentions is how these contextual background factors influence individual's fertility intentions. Informed by theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2005), this study aims to address this gap in the literature by examining the hypothesis that individuals' background factors are external variables influencing fertility intentions largely through three mediators of intention: attitude to having a(another) child, perceived norms related to social pressures for having a (another) child, and perceived behavioral control.

## **Methods and Data**

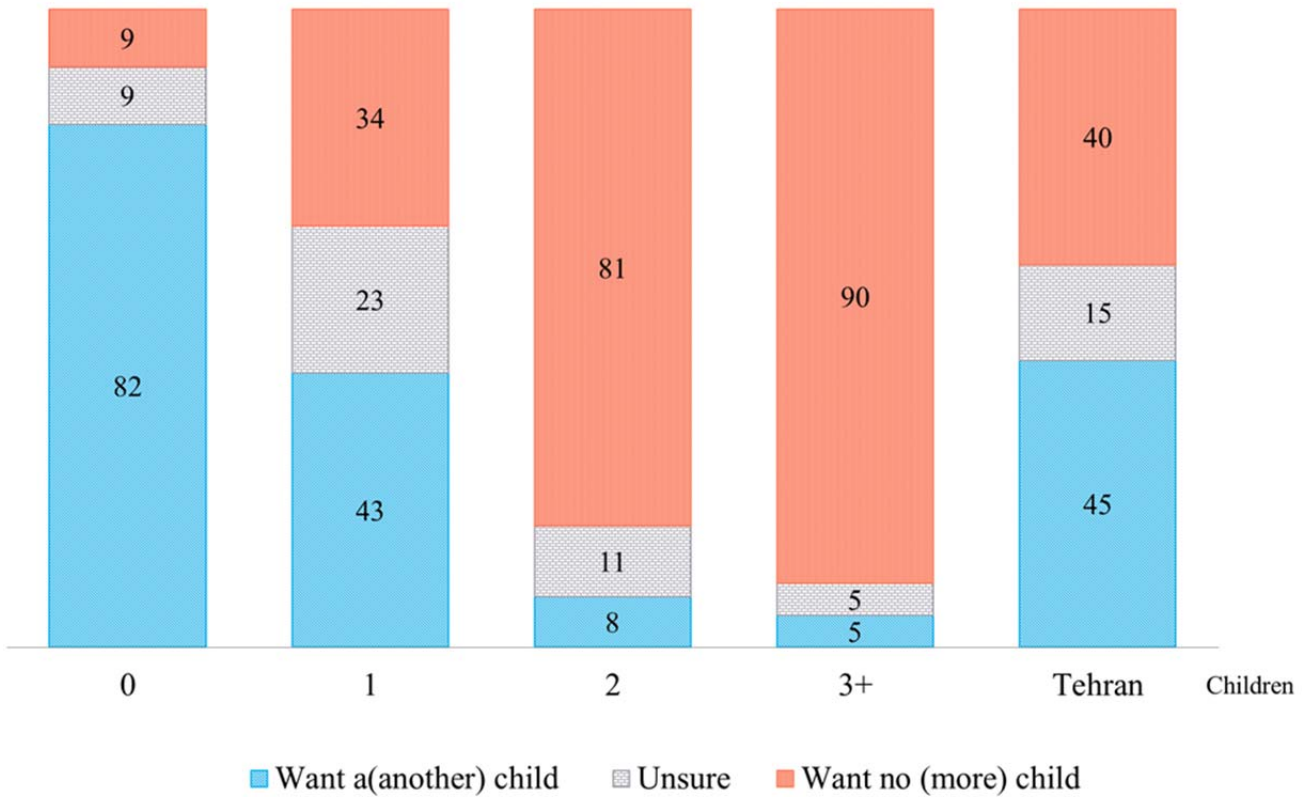
The research use data from the Tehran Survey of Fertility Intentions (TSFI). The dependent variable is a person's fertility intention, measured by "Would you like to have a/another child in the future?" If the answer was "Yes", respondents were asked 2) "When do you intend to have your (next) child?" Independent variables include attitudes to childbearing, perceived norms, perceived behavioral control, and socioeconomic background factors.

This study uses a series of multinomial logistic regression models to examine the gross and net effect of proximate factors on fertility intentions.

## **Preliminary Results**

Figure 1 shows that while 45% of respondents want a/another child in the future, more than half of respondents either want no more children (40%) or are unsure (15%). Figure 1 also shows that more than four fifths of young married adults in Tehran who have two children or more want no more children, whereas 82% of childless individuals want a child. The fertility intention of respondents with one child is interesting. While 43 percent of persons who have one child want to have another child in the future, 23 percent are unsure and have not decided yet, and 34 percent want to stop childbearing. The variations in fertility intentions in the whole study sample and among those having one child will be further examined by analyzing proximate determinants of fertility intentions.

**Figure 1. Percentage of young married adults by fertility intentions, according to number of living children: Tehran, Iran 2012**



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