

# Assuming the Decision of Having One (More) Child: The New Dimensions of the Post Communist Romanian Family

Raluca-Ioana Horea-Şerban, Marinela Istrate

**Abstract**—The first part of the paper analyzes the dynamics of the total fertility rate both at the national and regional level, pointing out the regional disparities in the distribution of this indicator. At the same time, we also focus on the collapse of the number of live births, on the changes in the fertility rate by birth rank, as well as on the failure of acquiring the desired number of children. The second part of the study centres upon a survey applied to urban families with 3 and more than 3 offspring. The preliminary analysis highlights the fact that an increased fertility (more than 3<sup>rd</sup> rank) is triggered by the parents' above the average material condition and superior education. The current situation of Romania, which is still passing through a period of relatively rapid demographic changes, marked by numerous convulsions, requires a new approach, in compliance with the recent interpretations appropriate to a new post-transitional demographic regime.

**Keywords**—Family size intention, fertility rate, regional disparities, third birth rank.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**D**ESPITE the social and economic mutations, in Romania family is still regarded and preserved as a central element in the life of most people and the quality of family relationships is strongly associated with the quality of life on the whole. The studies dealing with the analysis of the number of children desired by Romanian women at a fertile age clearly reveals their desire of having children, a desire which is widely spread regardless of age, residence or education level. Nevertheless, in Romania, the fertility rate is of about 1.3 children/woman, the real situation being placed; however, behind the image created on the ideal family. Starting from these hypotheses and using an appropriate methodology meant to identify the present changes in the population's reproductive behaviour, the authors intend to measure, investigate and forecast the new dimensions of the post communist Romanian family, in the context of a general evolution disturbed by the effects of the selective international migration of the population and by the recent enforcement of some policies meant to support families with more children, in keeping with the European norms.

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The total fertility rate decrease has always and everywhere accompanied the process of society modernization, reflected in female emancipation and the associated changing role of women in society, which has led to an increase in female employment and rose women's awareness of life perspectives other than that of "being a mother and housewife" [1].

The relationship between the educational level and 2<sup>nd</sup> births has arisen much interest among scholars since late 80's, in compliance with the rise in the number of men and especially women with university degrees [2] and with the diffusionist perspective, according to which individuals with higher education can be regarded as trendsetters, introducing novel behaviours subsequently undertaken by the others [3], [4]. The positive relationship between educational attainment and childbearing is often explained by means of the micro-economic theory of New Home Economics [5]–[7] which states that, as women acquire more education, they get access to better jobs and consequently the costs of childbearing get higher, triggering a motherhood wage penalty [8] and loss of career opportunities.

Northern Europe and several countries in Western and Central Europe (Belgium, France, Great Britain, the Czech Republic, Hungary) display a positive association between women's and their partners' education and second births. Western Europe features a positive relationship among partners but demonstrates a U-shaped pattern among women, whereas Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova) stands out through a negative relationship between the two. What causes the difference between these types of behaviour? - affordable public childcare services, generous parental leave, labour market flexibility, which all help highly educated women get disburdened of some of the costs that accompanies parenthood [9], [10].

Northern European countries excel in comprehensive support for working parents with young children and promote gender equality [11], [12], which led to an increase in the female employment rates [1]. Gender equity in both public and private life (as part of the second phase of gender revolution - [13]) has led to a recuperation of fertility in the Northern societies [14]. In Finland, for example, deliberate childless records a low level and there are few couples of the one-child family model [15].

France is also famous for its long-established generous family support policies, with a strong pro-natalistic orientation (with a whole variety of childcare options), whose major goal is the reconciliation of work and family life [16], [17]; work

and family life are compatible here, highly educated women being able to turn their education quite often into work opportunities and income [1].

However, this “income effect hypothesis” [18] does not stand true in the case of Germany, which has promoted female emancipation but has not introduced sufficient measures to strengthen compatibility between work and family life [1].

By contrast, the decline in fertility in the former socialist countries has been triggered by the cohort of changes induced by the transition to capitalism: increase of wages disequilibriums, uncertainty of professional life, stronger incidence of higher education [19], [20], the rather limited public support for families [21], reduced social service provisions. For example, in the post socialist period, Poland has been confronted with a dramatic decrease in the TFR, the value of 1.27 (recorded in 2007) forcing it to become familiar with the term of “lowest low fertility” (a term introduced to describe a TFR level below 1.3 [22]). Just like in other former communist countries, the opposite of the Northern “gender equity” is one of the reasons to blame: gender discrimination in employment, discriminatory practices by employers against pregnant women and women with small children are decisive in women’s decisions to postpone or forego childbearing [23].

On the other hand, women’s higher educational attainment and increased participation on the labour market strengthen their bargaining power in the couple’s procreative decision-making, which may be the result of a consensus in the couple, or only the female partner’s or the male partner’s intentions [24]. Women enjoying a high-level job have smaller chances of setting up a family [25] since this step negatively affects their professional targets, and this may impair the woman’s negotiating position [26].

One of the investigation directions in demography focuses on the difference between the intended and the actual number of children. For an overwhelming percentage of European countries, the average intended number of children has been for a long time around two. However, the actual average number of children is, many times, much lower. In 2011, only 3 countries had a TFR above 2 (Ireland, Iceland and France), whereas 10 recorded a TFR equal or lower than 2.36 [27]. The difference between fertility belief and actual natalist behaviour is explained by the Theory of Planned Behaviour [28], [29], which describes the factors that help intention become reality: the number of present children, woman’s age, attitude of the significant others (partner, parents, friends etc).

In Romania, specialty studies show that the two main factors that increase the odds of having children are the number of already born children and the age of the respondent: younger and childless women are more likely to express childbearing intentions [27].

## II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The present paper aims at drawing a diagnosis of the evolution of the fertility rate in Romania during the last 25 years, as well as of its repercussions from the perspective of the population dynamics and structure. The analysis of the features of the evolution of the fertility rate by residential

environments (rural and urban) is subsequent to this objective, there exists a well known cleavage between urban and rural spaces, not only from the demographical, but also from the economic, social and mentality point of view. At the same time we also focused on the major territorial disparities recorded and revealed by the cartographical representations, with significant medium-term effects on the demographic and economic evolution of the whole country.

The final purpose of the study was to identify the trends that have occurred during the last two decades and a half in the resizing of the post-communist Romanian family, the transition from an extended family (with 3-4 children) to a one-child family, as a basis of some as accurate as possible predictions in the context of the manifestation of a growing permanent population emigration, paralleled by fertility decline.

The statistical information used and processed in order to calculate indices and indicators was provided by the databases of the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (Tempo-Online), now available free of charge, as well as by official printed or online publications. The derived database thus created was correlated with a cartographical base necessary to visualize the results, especially the ones referring to the spatial distribution of the disparities of the general fertility indicator.

The methodology used in order to process the information complies with the chrono-spatial analysis specific to the geographical approach of the population, using the following indicators:

- the synthetic fertility index (TFR) taking as a basis the fertility of the female population by age groups. The necessary data were taken from the above listed sources. The choice for a not very large period (1990-2013) was dictated by the objectives previously mentioned, thus enabling the faithful underlining of the effects of the (in)existence of the demographic policies successively implemented during this lapse of time;
- the dynamics of the general fertility rate (15-49 years old) calculated at the level of the basic administrative units (NUTS 3) and used in order to capture the spatial disparities and the existence of some regional evolution patterns. For this purpose, we created a database with series expressing multiannual average values, typical of some well personalized periods of time: *1990-2001* – marked by the rapid decrease of the fertility indicators and, towards its end, by a stabilization of its regressive trend; *2001-2013* – characterized, at the beginning, by a reversal of the decline as a consequence of the amplification of the labour migration abroad and later, after 2007, by the implementation of some natalist-declared policies, which proved to be rather hesitant and without a spectacular impact if we think of the evolutions recorded in other post-communist countries.

Finally, in order to highlight a number of problems related to family size in post communist Romania, which are rather difficult to capture by official censuses, we applied a questionnaire consisting of three sets of questions that record, among other things, the parents’ and children’s age, the

couples' marital, religious and educational status, there exists a constant and consistent relation between these variables. The method used for the analysis of the survey data was the Multiple Correspondences Analysis [30], which is a multivariate analysis method, developed for the study of the associations between three or more nominal variables [31], being a generalized variant of *the factorial analysis of correspondences* [32]. Thus, for a sample of  $n$  individuals, we dispose of values recorded for a series of  $m$  associated variables, on the basis of which we can obtain the profile of an individual from a certain group, after studying the associations between the analysed variables. This method synthesizes the initial information by studying the associations between variables, highlighted by a scatter plot built on a system of factorial axes ranked in a descending order, according to their importance in explaining the total variance of the clouds of points.

The processing and analysis of the statistical information was doubled by a bibliographical introspection within this large-interest topic, using a large amount of both Romanian and international sources.

### III. FERTILITY TRENDS IN ROMANIA

#### *A. Social Aspects of the Conflict between Women's Financial Independence and Social Life*

In Romania, the consequences of the new economic system sometimes recorded tough and even "wild" accents. Thus, not only that the disequilibrium between the revenues of the different population categories significantly deepened, but the new capitalism also led to "a corrosion of the character" [33], to the loss of confidence in the others and of the meaning of the value of altruism, as well as to the general decline of the community [34].

These tendencies more strongly affected women, under the circumstances in which family itself is facing a period of great tension. Even in the harsh context before 1989, the state authorities intervened in different ways to protect jobs and salaries starting from the idea that each employer had a wife and children to support. Nowadays, employers consider that they have a diminished or zero responsibility towards their employees' family life, which mainly affects women because, in Romania, family itself continues to be characterized by the lack of genre equality.

It is precisely in this context that women exercise a very strong control over their own fertility, postponing marriage and having fewer children down to the level at which fertility drastically decreases. Thus, setting up a family brings about more risks to women than to men.

The society balance is tilted towards the later attainment of economic security, the investment in one's own human capital (education and labour market experience) representing the desideratum of most young people, both males and females. Consequently, getting married is delayed until accumulating human capital. Modernization provides individuals with the freedom of following their personal goals. Family requires altruism, time and money willingly offered to the others. Since

childbearing rather affects women than men, women tend to take this risk to a smaller extent than they used to do twenty years ago [35]-[37]. In those cases in which maternity leave revenues are correlated to wages, couples get one more reason to postpone having a child until they manage to have a bigger salary and the financial power of buying child care and other services related to children, financial power deriving from accumulating wealth.

#### *B. TFR Dynamics*

More than two decades after the change of the political regime in Romania, the total fertility rate continues to be under the value that would ensure the simple replacement of generations in time [38]. We must underline the fact that during the post-war period it could have normally been constant even in the context of the evolution of the demographic transition, due to an exceptional situation: between 1960 and 1996 the volume of the fertile female population continually increased (Fig. 1). It was only after 1996 that this cohort visibly decreased, a dynamics which is expected to get even worse, diminishing the chances of some governmental measures meant to relaunch fertility rates.

The legalization of abortions in 1990 had a general, fast and brutal effect especially on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> rank births [39], followed by a stabilization of this trend against the background of some controversial effects of the transition: rural areas of return migration have experienced a rise in the number of births, whereas former industrialized regions have faced a decline, thus leading to a demographic equilibrium, specific to Romania.

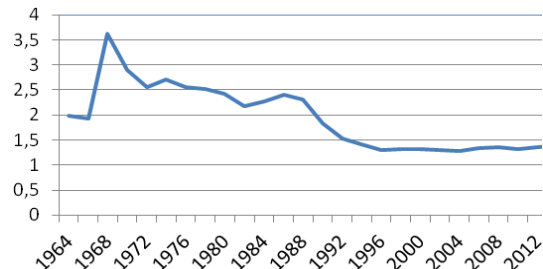


Fig. 1 Total Fertility Rates (children per woman) 1960 - 2013

#### *Evolution of the Total Fertility Rate (1990 – 2001)*

At the local level, in the 90's, the evolution of the population's total fertility rate was closely connected to the major changes imputable to the transition to the market economy: the process of deindustrialization triggered a strong decrease of the values of this indicator in towns and in the areas benefiting from more diverse economic activities (especially the mountainous areas); on the contrary, the destructuring of the former communist agricultural system led to the preservation of a significant demographic vitality in the predominantly rural areas that a massive return migration flow headed towards.

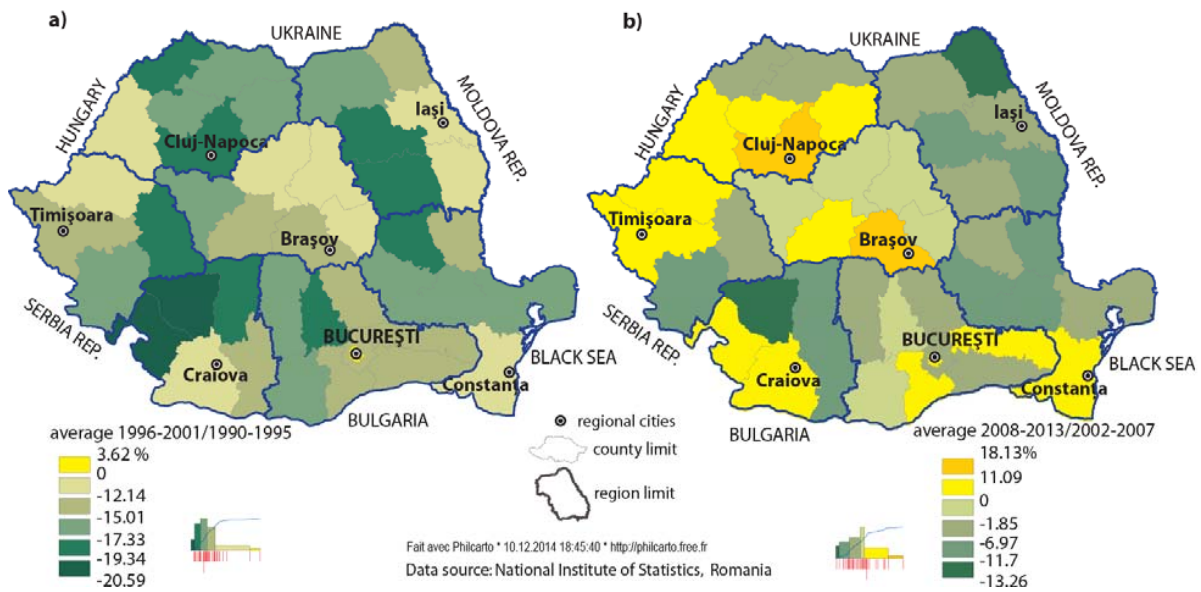


Fig. 2 Dynamics of total TFR between 1990-2001 (a) and 2002-2013 (b)

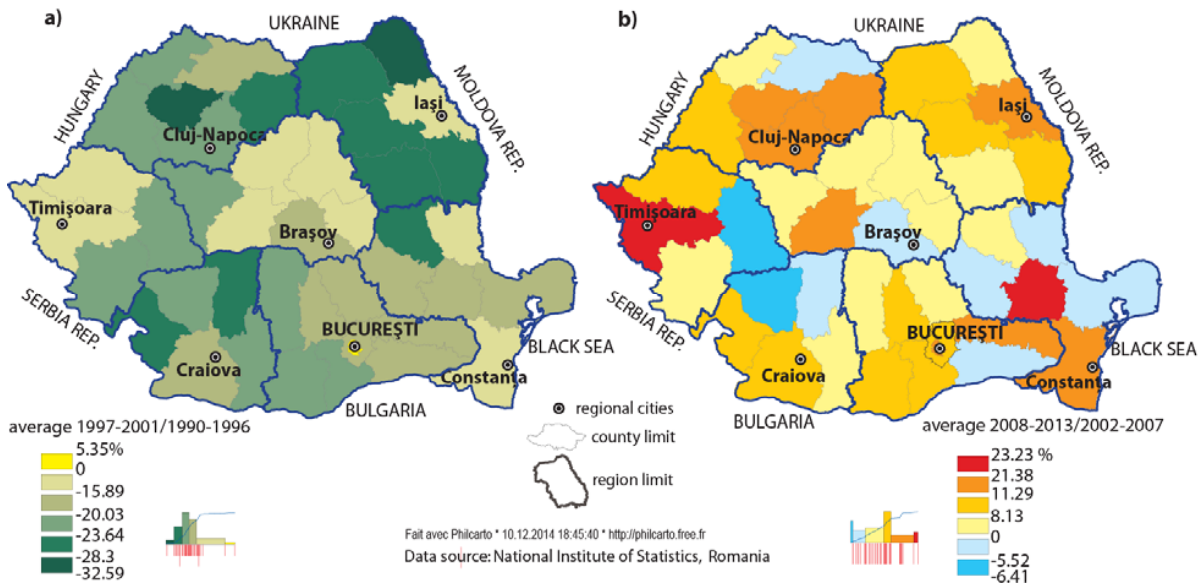


Fig. 3 Dynamics of urban TFR between 1990-2001 (a) and 2002-2013 (b)

On the whole, we can state that the central-western regions of the country are more advanced, already recording a recovery specific to the new demographic transition [40], a natural evolution if we relate to the secular trends. In other words, „the centre of gravity” of the demographic vitality is expected to move, in the near future, to the central-western part of Romania, especially to the counties with a high percentage of Hungarians and gypsies (Fig. 2).

The situation completely changed between 2002 and 2013. The areas that more rapidly adapted to the market economy (cities, the south-eastern and central-western part of the country) experienced a gradual improvement of the fertility indicators, in relation to the fertility stimulation measures. The

rural areas in the North-East and South-West recorded an obvious decline, against the background of a strong emigration of the young labour force and lack of investments.

The central-eastern part of Transylvania, together with Bihor and southern Bărăgan faced a significant recovery of the birth rate after 2005, there existing signs that this phenomenon was not incidental but connected to its attractiveness and a series of demographic phenomena, especially the delay of child birth.

After the year 2000, becoming aware of the need for a new stimulating demographic policy, the authorities took several successive measures, whose positive effects were negatively affected by the decrease of the volume of the fertile population

and massive emigration. However, there can be noticed a significant re-launch, mainly imputable to the large cities and highly educated active population (Fig. 3). The urban environment enjoys a more balanced structure, which is more favourable to supporting the fertility indicators, a fact which is easily noticeable when analysing the values recorded by this indicator after the year 2004, especially in close connection to the family and child support policies promoted during the period 2004 – 2009. On the contrary, the measures of cutting down some rights previously granted to mothers and children beginning with 2010 has recently led to a preoccupying decline of the number of births (noticeable since 2009, except for the capital and large cities).

The analysis of the evolution of the total fertility rate certifies the existence of some divergent trends at the territorial level: constant decline in the North-East and South-West (with differences induced by the initial level – 1999); relative improvement or stagnation in the middle part of the country, following a North-West – South-East diagonal, according to the propagation direction of investments. The loss of demographic vitality in the rural environment (Fig. 4) has long-term serious effects: from ensuring the replacement of the labour force and supporting a more and more numerous and aged inactive population to the amplification of the depopulation trends, especially in the absence of some coherent policies of territorial development meant to decrease disparities.

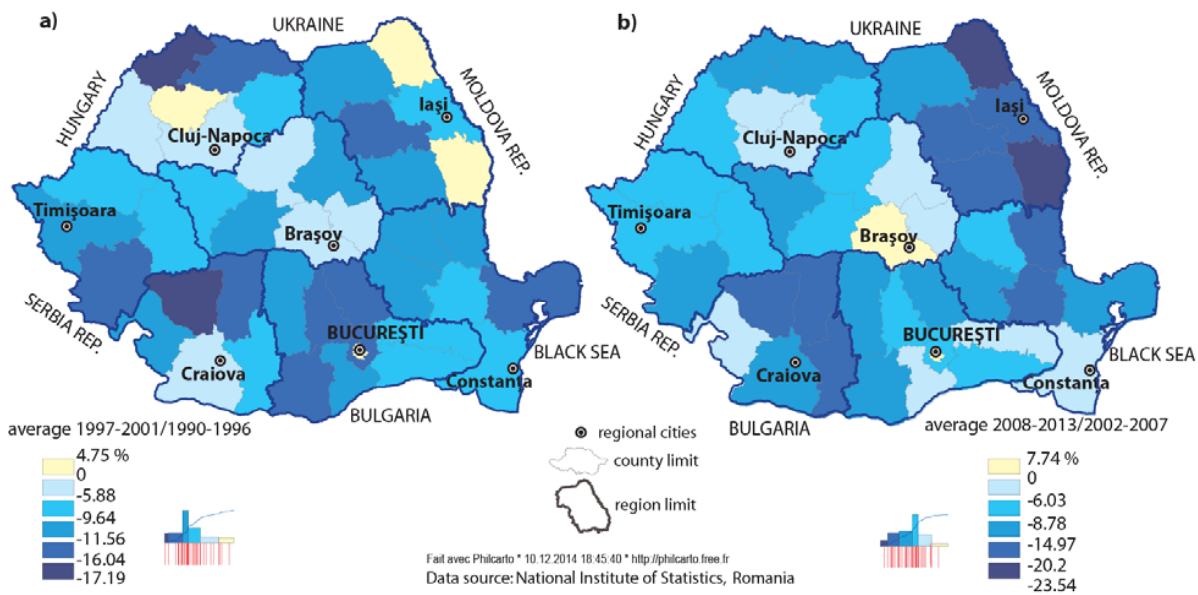


Fig. 4 Dynamics of rural TFR between 1990-2001 (a) and 2002-2013 (b)

There is an obvious present opposition between the typical post transition regions (with relaunched fertility indicators), partially adapted to the pattern specific to developed countries (especially the capital city) and the areas experiencing the last phase of classical transition (some counties in the North-East). The most spectacular part is the more rapidly growing trend in fertility (and seemingly in the life expectancy at birth) in the most dynamic regions of the country (the capital and Ilfov county, Cluj, Timiș, Constanța counties etc), at the same time with its decrease in the North-East counties, the areas which still face reminiscences of some refractory behaviours to modernism getting fewer and fewer, tending to dissolution. This new tendency can also be regarded from another perspective, related to the urbanization degree, the recent recovery of the fertility indices being primarily felt in the urban environment [41]. These new evolutions can lead us to accepting the idea of our country getting into a new demographic paradigm, in which the role of “growth engine” (or, better said, of preserving the equilibrium) is played by urban conurbations [42], predominantly rural areas acting as

spaces with a residual, ageing population, subject to depopulation, just like it happened to western countries long ago.

### C. Birth Rank

A significant component of the pro-natalist policy was the change of the fertility rate by rank: an increase in the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> and +3<sup>rd</sup> ranks. The measures of strengthening the enforcement of the anti-abortion law taken in 1984 had as main effect, in 1985, the prolongation of the fertile age (three quarters of the +4<sup>th</sup> children were born by mothers aged +40). By opposition, +4<sup>th</sup> births record smaller percentages for all age groups at present. The liberalization of abortions at the end of 1989 materialized in the decrease of the number of births and not in giving up having children (Table I).

### The Decision of Having One (More) Child

There are signs that very low fertility is generally opposed to the preferences of the individuals who experience it [43]. When they express their opinion on the „ideal family”, women



say that, in a different institutional frame, they think that they would have had more children [44]. Despite the social and economic changes, family still represents the central element in most Romanians' life and the quality of family relationships is strongly associated to the quality of life on the whole. For many people, the emotional benefits brought by children represent an important aspect of life. A 2005 study on the number of children desired by fertile women [45] clearly emphasizes the fact that the desire of having children is largely spread in our country, even among the youth, regardless of living environment (urban or rural) and acquired education level. However, the total fertility rate in Romania is situated around 1.3 children / woman, reality being thus beyond the image on the ideal family (however, we must point

out that this circumstantial fertility indicator has a value of 1.55 children / woman in the rural environment and of only 1.22 children / woman in the urban environment [46]).

One way to increase the fertility rate is to assure the youth that, if they get married and have children, they will be supported by the society, to a certain extent, in assuming this decision which is important both from the individual and social point of view. On the contrary, confronted with social schemes that disadvantage families with children, they tend to delay setting up families until they get a position secure enough to make them assume all implications [36]. The state must play an important part in the reconciliation between professional and family life.

TABLE I  
PERCENTAGE OF LIVE BIRTHS BY RANKS, BY MOTHER'S AGE GROUP

Age group	1985				2002				2012			
	1st rank	2nd rank	3rd rank	+4th rank	1st rank	2nd rank	3rd rank	+4th rank	1st rank	2nd rank	3rd rank	+4th rank
15 – 19	75.5	20	4	0.5	81.4	16.1	2.1	0.2	75.1	21	3.2	0.4
20 – 24	50.5	31.6	11.8	6.1	60.4	28.3	7.9	3.2	58.8	27.4	9.2	4.4
25 – 29	21.5	35	19.9	23.6	45.1	34.8	10.4	9.5	54.3	29.3	8.5	7.7
30 – 34	11.6	27.5	21.8	39.1	29.5	37.9	13.7	18.7	40.2	37.7	9.9	12.2
35 – 39	8	15.8	19	57.2	19	24.2	15.7	41.1	29.3	35.1	14.3	21.2
40 – 44	5.3	7.4	12.5	74.8	11	11.8	14.8	37.6	23.8	25.7	15.9	34.5
TOTAL	37.9	32.1	14.6	15.4	50.6	30.1	9.4	9.8	51	30.5	9.2	8.3

Data source: [44] (for the year 1985) and own calculation (for the years 2002 and 2012)

#### Mother's Average Age at Birth and Fertility Rate by Age Groups

Mother's average age at birth continues to be smaller in Romania in comparison to the European value (but close to that of Bulgaria) – only 26.5 years old at first birth and 28 years old at all births (in comparison to the value recorded at the European level: slightly above 30 years old).

TABLE II  
BIRTH CALENDAR IN ROMANIA

Indicators		Year					
		1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2013
Mother's average age at all births (years old)	Total	25	24.6	25.5	26.7	27.6	28
	Urban	25.7	25.4	26.3	27.6	28.6	29.1
	Rural	24.5	23.9	24.9	25.7	26.2	26.7
Mother's average age at first birth (years old)	Total	22.3	22.7	23.7	24.9	26	26.5
	Urban	23.7	23.8	24.9	26.3	27.5	28
	Rural	21.3	21.6	22.3	22.7	23.4	24
Percentage of births for women aged under 20	Total	15.2	17.2	13.8	13	10.6	10
Percentage of births for women older than 35	Total	6.6	4.9	4.8	8.7	11	13.1

However, in opposition to the year 1990, there is an obvious delay of first births (Table II) as a consequence of the new economic roles adopted by women: extension of the education period, extra work, amplification of the self fulfilment value, women's insecurity on their reintegration on the labour market etc. The contribution of the young women aged under 20 to

the total fertility rate began to decrease starting with the year 1995 (at present being of 10%), whereas the fertility of women aged more than 35 has recorded a steady and firm increase, practically doubling in less than 25 years (Fig. 5). Nevertheless, late fertility in Romania is far from being common practice, which can be regarded as an advantage from many points of view.

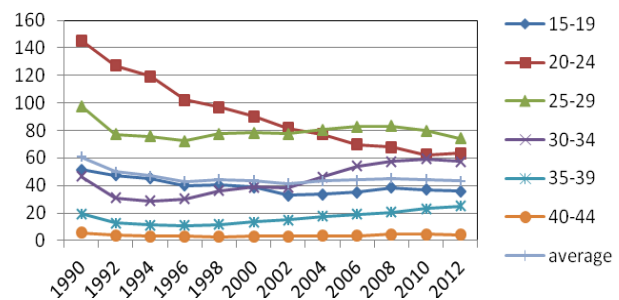


Fig. 5 Fertility rate by age groups (live births per 1,000 women for each age group)

The changes in the dynamics of the fertility rate by mother's age are mainly concerned with the moment of entering motherhood, respectively of postponing it for later in life. Fig. 6 reveals the fact that its delay is of more than 5 years, the curve being shifted to the right with 5-6 years, at the same time being lower, which indicates a decrease in the propensity for parenthood, a new phenomenon in Romania, a country in which the early fertility model used to be, until recently, universal.

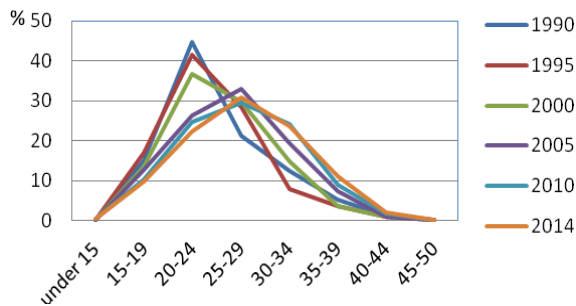


Fig. 6 Percentage of live births by mother's age group (1990-2014)

1<sup>st</sup> Rank Live Births

One can notice a delay in the transition towards parenthood, the level of 1<sup>st</sup> rank fertility continuously decreasing after 1990, and especially beginning with the year 2000. The postponement of the 1<sup>st</sup> child and especially the reduction of the total number of 1<sup>st</sup> births led to the decrease of the total fertility rate. This curve of 1<sup>st</sup> rank births reveals a shift of the maximum values from the 20-24 to the 25-29 year-old group and lower heights of the curves representing percentage values, which emphasizes a decrease in the fertility level starting with the generations born after 1970 (Fig. 7).

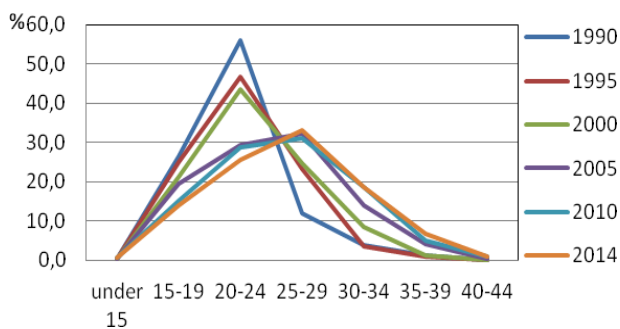


Fig. 7 Percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> born child by mother's age group

Half of the women would have become mothers before the age of 24 if they had preserved the reproductive behaviour practiced during the communist period, whereas between 2010 and 2014 the same percentage experienced motherhood before the age of 29.

2<sup>nd</sup> Rank Child

Immediately after 1990, the percentage of mothers who used to give birth to a second child was of 51-58%, smaller than in Bulgaria, for example, where it ranged between 59-68% [47]. Table II reveals both the drastic decrease of second rank births after 1990 and the shift of the maximum values (the maximum probabilities of having a second child) towards the age of 30-34 years old. Thus, the present trend is that of postponing 2<sup>nd</sup> rank births and of possibly extending the period between the first two deliveries (Fig. 8).

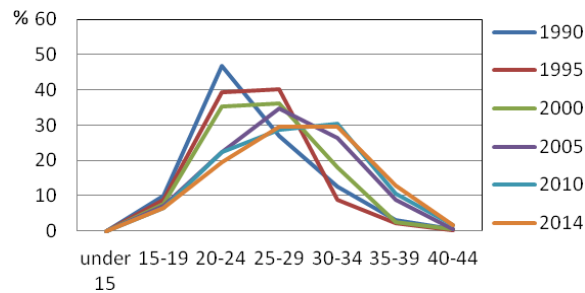


Fig. 8 Percentage of 2<sup>nd</sup> born child by mother's age group

3<sup>rd</sup> Rank Child

Just like in the case of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> births, 3<sup>rd</sup> births have also faced changes in respect of fertility intensity and calendar. Fig. 9 shows the extent to which 3<sup>rd</sup> rank births decreased immediately after the revolution, however the tendency being one of stabilization after 2010. Whereas during the first year of democratic regime the main change was a diminished level, the following years faced the delay of childbearing towards the age of 35 and the constant shift of the curve to the right and its stabilization between 2010 and 2014. Consequently there also appears a difference between the two living environments: whereas in urban areas only one tenth of the birth belong to +3<sup>rd</sup> rank, in rural areas these births represent nearly one quarter of the total [41].

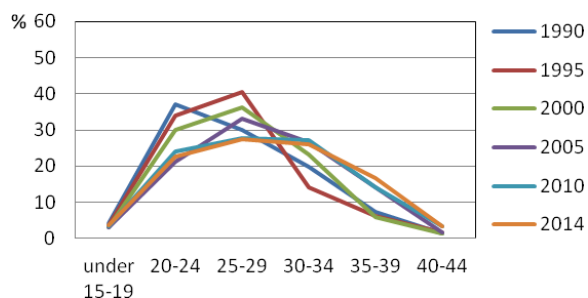


Fig. 9 Percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> born child by mother's age group

4<sup>th</sup> and +4<sup>th</sup> Rank Child

Surprisingly enough, the evolution of +4<sup>th</sup> rank has not experienced significant changes during the last 20 years (Fig. 10), which means that women who give birth to a 4<sup>th</sup> child are just as willing to keep this type of reproductive behaviour when it comes to giving birth to future children; these women are, most likely, women with a low educational level (quite rarely secondary school studies or without any education), living in poor rural areas or coming from ethnic minorities with traditionally high fertility (it is well known the fact that gypsy women record the highest fertility rates and also an increased probability of becoming mothers at very early ages, which increases the "risk" of having superior rank children – in other words, we deal with a category of women with early fertility, which probably remains high during their lifetime). Another possibility is that of belonging to a certain religion – Pentecostal, Evangelical Christian Gospel or Evangelical, the women belonging to these cults recording a fertility much

above the national average (according to 2002 census, 31% of the Pentecostal women and 22% of the women belonging to the Evangelical Christian Gospel had at least 4 children).

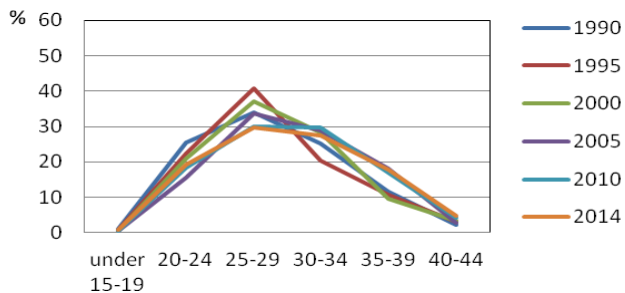


Fig. 10 Percentage of 4<sup>th</sup> born child by mother's age group

#### IV. QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

##### “Who Gives Birth to a 3<sup>rd</sup> Child in Present Day Romania?”

Starting from this question, between September and October 2014, we applied a questionnaire on families with 3 children, all of them born after 1990, the main purpose being that of pointing out the different social contexts of those who have effectively contributed to the increase of the number of children during this period. We obtained a sample of 62 surveys, most of them applied to mothers, all the families living in Iasi city and its metropolitan area. We are aware of the limitations of the present analysis (such as the relative narrow area of gathering data, the relative uniformity of the demographic basin, small number of questionnaires etc); however, we consider it relevant precisely because it represents the first approach of this type for us, hopefully to be continued and improved in the future.

In the present paper we analyse only the responses received to the last question in the questionnaire („How did you take the decision of having more children?”), a multiple-answer question in the case of which respondents could choose one or more of the 7 possible answers: *I like children*; *My partner's wish*; *Proper financial resources*; *It simply happened*; *Children represent a support when parents get old*; *Family pressures*; *I don't agree to abortion*; *Because of religious reasons*). The answers received were correlated to the independent variables obtained by processing the questionnaire, which allowed us to highlight the social and economic profile of the urban 3-child families, as well as the factors that play an important part in this choice. The correlation to parents' and especially mother's education level proved to be extremely strong. Women's educational attainment has a strong impact on the intended number of children because their high level of education increases their own future professional ambitions for their offspring. Therefore, more highly educated women are willing to invest energy, time and money in a smaller number of children, staking on the quality of the human capital they accumulate, as

being the chance of getting successfully integrated as an adult in a modern society [48]. This idea is strengthened by the traditional structure of the Romanian family and household, in which women still play the major part in respect of childrearing and domestic activities [49].

##### A. 'I Like Children'

The percentage of the positive answers to this option is the highest (nearly 37% - 52 out of 141), which entitles us to consider that the Romanian society still believes that family life fulfilment is closely connected to having children and that, regardless of sex, people wish to have children, which continue to be, in most cases, reasons of pride and personal success. If we correlate this answer (*I like children*) to family revenues, residence (house / flat) and parents' education, we can identify three profiles of 3-child couples (Fig. 11).

- (orange circle): couples having a 3<sup>rd</sup> child because *they like children* live either in a house or in a flat and have an average income (between 2,000 and 5,000 lei); fathers have Bachelor or PhD studies, whereas mothers have Bachelor or Master studies;
- (red circle): couples choosing the “*I like children*” answer live either in a house or flat, having an average income (between 2,000 and 5,000 lei ) but a lower level of education (they do not have Bachelor studies except for few cases);
- (blue circle): couples which have a 3<sup>rd</sup> child not necessarily because *they like children* have a high family income (more than 5,000 lei per month) and live in a house; mothers have Master studies and fathers at least Master studies.

Keeping the option “*I like children*” as the main one, we tried to correlate it to other items, such as benefiting from help with the housekeeping and from the direct support offered by grandparents and nannies in raising and educating their children, financial resources representing an important variable in this correlation. Starting from the diagram above, we identified two profiles of these couples:

1. (red circle): couples that state that the birth of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child was motivated by the love for children say that in the raising and breeding of their sons and daughters grandparents are actively involved, whereas housework is done with the help of grandparents and housekeepers.
2. (green circle): couples that state that the birth of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child was not necessarily motivated by the love for children claim that they do not benefit from nannies in raising and breeding their sons and daughters, whereas in respect of housework chores they get help from their elder children; in other words they “do not afford” wishing to have a 3<sup>rd</sup> child just for loving children, since their financial resources are limited.



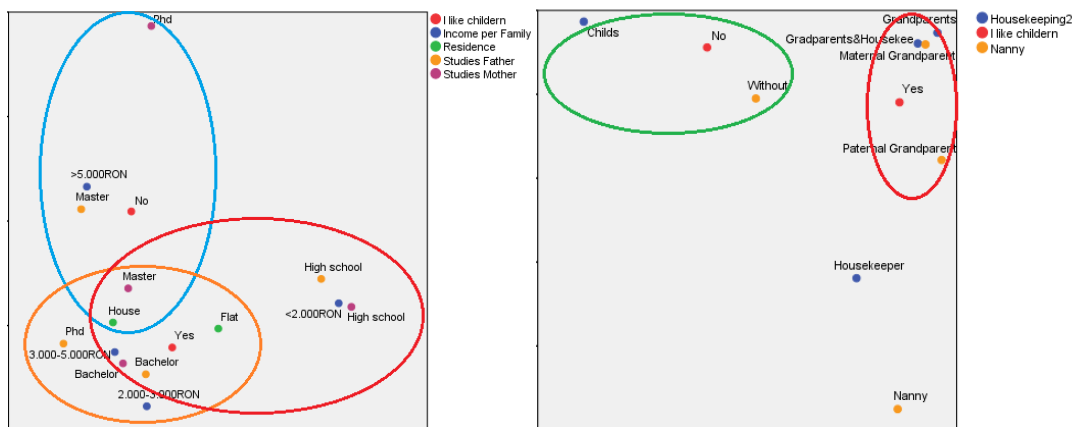


Fig. 11 Correlation between the answer *I like children* and family income, residence and parents' education (left) and the help provided by housekeepers and nannies (right)

**B. Partner's Wish (10%, 14 Answers out of 141)**

Many times, a larger number of children in a family can be the result of the husband's wish. Despite the fact that domestic activities and child raising and breeding are still considered, to an overwhelming effect, women's responsibilities, Romanian men still desire to have more children, especially when they enjoy a good material background.

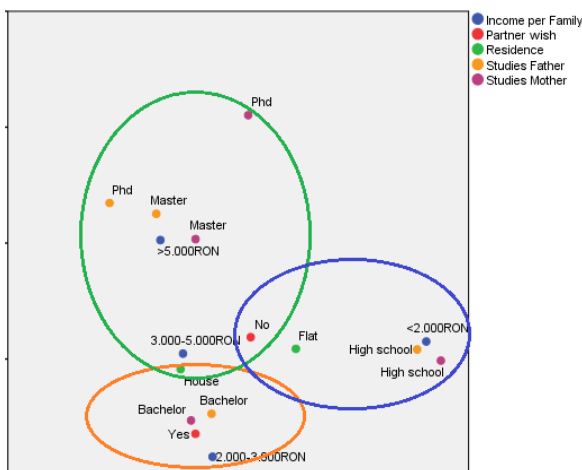


Fig. 12 Correlation between *Partner's wish* and family income, residence and parents' education

The Romanian society still preserves some traditional norms and expectations in respect of family structure, it is still dominated by the family pattern in which the man is the one who "keeps the pot boiling" in the house, genre inequalities still existing to a large extent. In this context, many times the partner's wish (in his quality of "bread winner") prevails over other factors (such as income, housing situation etc), the male actor's persuasive power being stronger in the bargaining process in which the two partners negotiate on the basis of their individual intentions [50].

First of all we tried to establish a correlation between the motivation for having a 3<sup>rd</sup> child ("*Partner's wish*") and other

categories, such as family revenues, housing situation (house / flat) and parents' education. The diagram emphasizes three profiles for this type of association (Fig. 12):

1. (orange circle): couples which motivate the existence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child on the basis of the *Partner's wish* live in a house, having an income of 2,000 up to 3,000 lei and Bachelor studies;
2. (green circle): couples which motivate the existence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child on the basis of the *Partner's wish* live in a house (and only rarely in a flat), having an income of 3,000 up to 5,000 lei (and even more) and at least Master studies;
3. (blue circle): couples which do not motivate the existence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child on the basis of the *Partner's wish* live in a flat, having a family income of less than 2,000 lei; they do not have Bachelor studies.

**C. Financial Resources (9.2%, 13 Answers out of 141)**

The birth of 3<sup>rd</sup> rank children in families enjoying a stable socio-economic status (average and high) is welcome because it reduces the social risks associated to large families. The appearance of a child automatically decreases the average income per family member and it is precisely for this reason that the re-launch of the birth rate in families with secondary and higher education, just like in families in which both parents are employed, should correspond to a higher quality of children's life (food, living conditions, clothes, medical care, school results, free time activities).

Fig. 13 reveals three profiles of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-child couples based on the association between motivation (*Proper financial resources*) and other items, such as: family income, living space (house / flat) and parents' education.

1. (orange circle): couples which motivate the birth of their 3<sup>rd</sup> child through *Proper financial resources* live both in houses and flats, having an income of 3,000 up to 5,000 lei (and even more) and Master studies;
2. (blue circle): couples which state that *Proper financial resources* do not represent one of the main reasons for the birth of their 3<sup>rd</sup> child live mainly live in a house, having

an average income between 2,000 and 3,000 lei and Bachelor studies.

- (red circle): couples which state that *Proper financial resources* do not represent one of the main reasons for the birth of their 3<sup>rd</sup> child live mainly live in a flat, having a family income of less than 2,000 lei and high school studies.

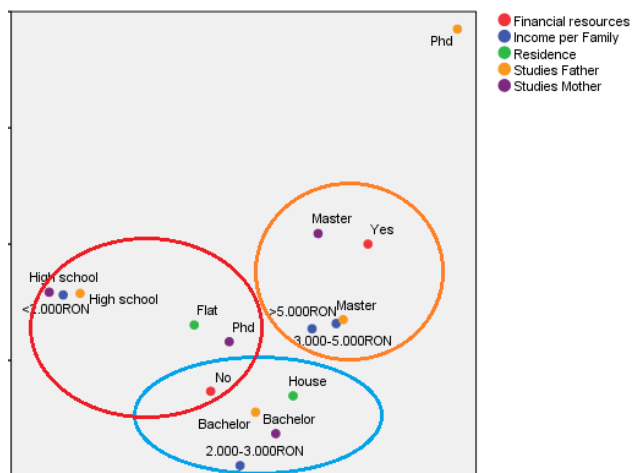


Fig. 13 Correlation between the answer *Proper financial resources* and family income, residence and parents' education

*D. It Simply Happened (15.6%, 22/141)*

Although the percentage of women who make use of contraception pills has gradually increased during the last 25 years (from 2.3% of the women aged 15-44 in the year 1993 to nearly 25% at present), the contraceptive behaviour in Romania is not modern enough, a fact which is also proved by the large number of women which still appeal to abortion not necessarily as a birth-delay method, but mainly as a means of limiting the final descent to the desired number of children [51]. That is why the motivation that *It simply happened* is still frequent in Romania, especially in the case of those families which do not really want to have another baby but which practice a traditional contraceptive behaviour, not using modern contraception means (the rhythm method is often the only one used).

Fig. 14 classifies 3-child families on the basis of the association between motivation (*It simply happened*) and other items, such as: family income, living place (house / flat), and parents' education.

- (red circle): couples that claim that the birth of their 3<sup>rd</sup> child was a random occurrence live in a house, having a family income between 3,000 and 5,000 lei (and even more) and postgraduate studies (Master and PhD);
- (blue circle): couples that claim that the birth of their 3<sup>rd</sup> child was not a random occurrence generally live in a house, having a family income between 2,000 and 3,000 or between 3,000 and 5,000 lei and Bachelor studies.

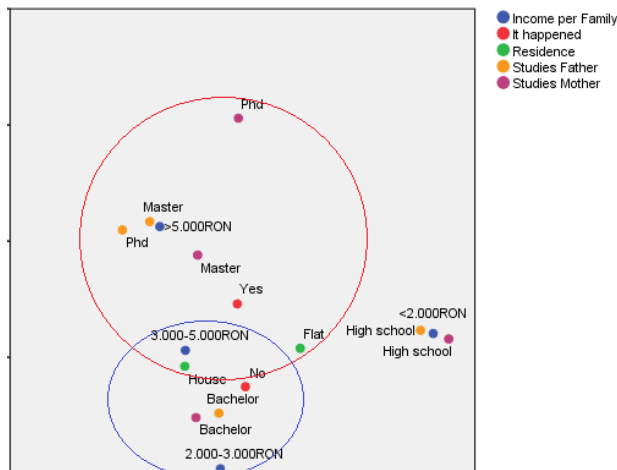


Fig. 14 Correlation between the answer *It simply happened* and family income, residence and parents' education

*E. Support at Old Age (5%, 7 Answers out of 141)*

The small number of positive answers to this item proves the gradual dissolution of the traditional mentality according to which children used to represent some extra manpower, actively contributing to the welfare of the whole family, a mentality derived from the long rural history of Romania. Nowadays, the quality of the child has become more important than the quantity. Parents no longer expect material benefits from the “investments” they make in their children, the important factor in rationally choosing to have one more child being represented by the financial and social cost he / she involves.

Fig. 15 depicts the two profiles of 3-child families derived from the correlation between motivation (*Children are a support at old age*) and other three items: family income, living place (house / flat) and parents' studies.

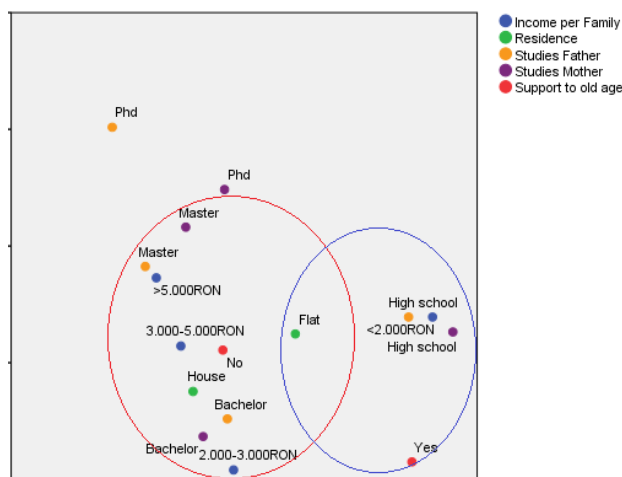


Fig. 15 Correlation between the answer *Support at old age* with family income, residence and parents' education

- (blue circle): couples which state that the birth of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child is meant to be *a support when they grow old*

generally live in a flat, having a family income of less than 2,000 lei and high school studies;

- (red circle): couples which state that the birth of their 3<sup>rd</sup> child is not meant to be *a support when they grow old* generally live a house (less often in a flat), having a family income between 2,000 and 5,000 lei and university studies (Bachelor, Master or Doctoral).

#### F. No Abortion and Religious Reasons (23.4%, 33 Answers out of 141)

In Romania, a profoundly Orthodox country (87% of the total population belonging to this cult), family enjoys deep respect within this religious system. At the declarative level, the Romanian society has a very high level of faith in God and of the role of Divinity in one's personal life. However, there are differences between declared and practiced religious values, especially in the case of younger women, which experience a tendency of delegitimation of the role of the Church in other spheres than the spiritual one [52]. The fertility rate of the women belonging to the Orthodox religion is very close to the national average level, but higher than that of the women belonging to religions such as the Reformed, Greek-Catholic and Mosaic one or of atheist women.

By correlating the motivation (*I am against abortions* and *Religious reasons*) with the parents' level of education, we obtained two main profiles (Fig. 16):

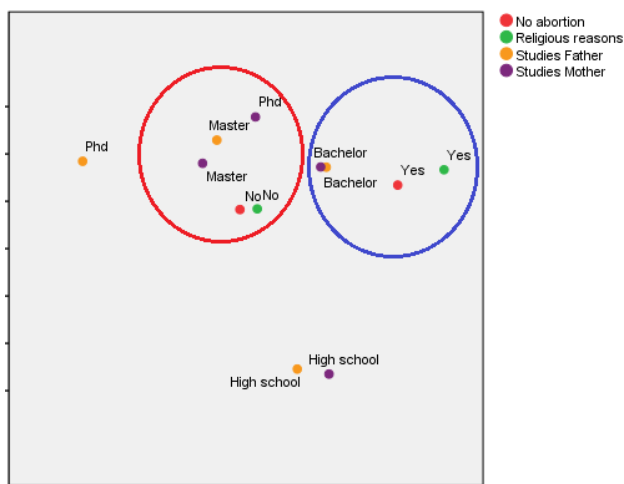


Fig. 16 Correlation between the answers *I am against abortions* / *Religious reasons* and parents' education

- (blue circle): couples which state that the birth of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child is motivated by *religious reasons* and an *anti-abortion mentality* do not have Bachelor studies.
- (red circle): couples which state that the birth of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child is not motivated by *religious reasons* and an *anti-abortion mentality* have post university studies (Master and PhD).

#### V. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Concluding, we can state that there are clear cut differences between the Romanian counties from the point of view of the

fertility indicators: on the one hand there is the South-West region, where the decreasing process began much earlier, in opposition to the North-East region, where the same process experienced a two-generation delay, the causes being manifold: a higher percentage of rural population, demographic conservatism, lack of West European influences on the demographic behaviour, postponement of the demographic ageing process through internal and international population mobility.

The period between 1990 and 2014 recorded the collapse of the fertility indicators, the causes being not only endogenous: rural areas, in particular, acted more openly to the effects of population mobility in comparison to the previous stages, the main erosion factor of the adult cohorts being represented by the international mobility of the labour force.

The probability of giving birth to a 2<sup>nd</sup> and especially 3<sup>rd</sup> child is very much reduced at present in comparison to the year 1990, whereas the incidence of +4<sup>th</sup> children is mainly typical of traditional communities, the reasons being ethnical (gypsies, hutsuls, lippovans), religious (Adventists, Catholic practitioners) or related to a traditional natalist behaviour (Vaslui, Suceava, Maramureş counties).

Romania has begun to record an interdependency between women's emancipation and fertility: the progress in women's emancipation leads to fertility decrease to a certain point, beyond which the effects gets reversed. Significant social changes have taken place especially in the urban environment, including at the mentality level: fathers' role has recorded changes, they are more involved in child raising – especially when it comes to partners who have (post)university studies, the support to the traditional role of women is smaller.

The present paper was intended to shape an overall image on three-child families and to investigate the reasons which led to the setting up of an enlarged family in the urban environment, in opposition to the trend of most Romanians of getting limited to one or two children at most; we also tried to see if the decision of having a 3<sup>rd</sup> child is related to a lower-quality socio-economic environment or, on the contrary, if this kind of behaviour is (also) typical of highly educated women, as certain theories suggest. Of course, our demarche has certain limits and, in order to shape a more complete image on 3<sup>rd</sup> rank fertility we intend to deepen our investigation in the near future, making a more thorough analysis of the questionnaire, including extra variables and, if possibly, a larger number of questionnaires.

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