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Caractéristiques de l'emploi féminin et fécondité au Bénin : une analyse micro économétrique.

Female employment characteristics and fertility in Benin: a microeconometric analysis.

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Résumé

Ce papier analyse l'effet des caractéristiques de l'emploi de la femme sur sa fécondité. A cet effet, à partir des données de l'Enquête Démographique et de la Santé au Bénin (EDSB-V) 2017-2018, nous utilisons un modèle probit avec sélection pour estimer la probabilité qu'une femme ait au moins un enfant sur une période de trois ans précédant l'enquête en fonction des caractéristiques de l'emploi occupé par la femme. Les résultats montrent que la grande majorité des femmes béninoises sur le marché du travail, ont tendance à travailler à la maison, dans les exploitations agricoles familiales ou à leur propre compte dans les branches de l'agriculture ou du commerce. Ces branches d'activité n'exigent pas forcément l'utilisation d'une main d'œuvre qualifiée ; par ailleurs, la gestion du temps y est relativement flexible. Ces caractéristiques du marché du favorisent une fécondité élevée des femmes actives béninoises. Ces résultats fournissent les éléments d'une politique de maîtrise de la fécondité au Bénin.

Mots clés : fécondité ; emploi des femmes ; endogénéité ; branche d'activité ; type de rémunération

Abstract

This paper analyzes the effect of women's employment characteristics on their fertility. To this end, we apply a probit model with selection to data from the 2017-2018 Benin Demographic and Health Survey (EDSB-V), and estimate the probability of a woman having at least one child over a three-year period preceding the survey as a function of the characteristics of the job held by the woman. The results show that most beninese women on the labour market tend to work at home, on family farms or on their own account in the agricultural or commercial sectors. These branches of activity do not necessarily require the use of skilled labor, and time management is relatively flexible. These labor market characteristics promote a high fertility rate among working women in Benin. These results provide elements for a fertility control policy in Benin.

Keywords : fertility ; female employment ; endogeneity ; industry ; wage type.

Introduction

The rapid growth of the world's population is a direct consequence of the high fertility of women in certain regions and countries of the world. In West Africa, the fertility rate remains among the highest in the world. The average in this part of Africa is estimated at 5 children per woman in 2020 (Tabutin & Schoumaker, 2020). The literature is pessimistic about the ability of high-fertility countries to capitalize on the demographic dividend, pointing to opportunities and risks. Indeed, according to the pessimistic view based on human capital theory (Becker, 1964), if the working population does not have an acceptable level of qualification enabling it to access decent jobs, demographic growth cannot promote rapid economic growth, and could even act as a brake on sustainable economic growth, social cohesion and a stable environment (Nguembock, 2023; Kahla & Hammami, 2022; Tagang & al. 2021; Clement & al. 2019; Karkanis, 2016; Ashford, 2007). Controlling fertility is therefore a necessity for sustained economic growth in the world's countries in general, and in those with enormous demographic pressure in particular.

The fertility's analysis is a various fields of research's preoccupation, including economists, demographers and sociologis. Within this framework, the fertility's theories are manifold, varying from one field of science to another. As far as economics is concerned, one dimension of the analysis focuses on the link between fertility and labour market; and in relation to this dimension, the link appears to be causal, despite the difficulties of establishing it. On tne one hand, from a macroeconomic perspective, fertility through its positive effect on population growth, positively influences labor supply (Ben Porath, 1973; Razin & Sadka, 1995, Asmadji & Dewi, 2024), and from a microeconomic perspective, fertility negatively affects women's labor supply (Edon & Kamionka, 2011, Aaronson & al., 2021; Doliger , 2008 ; Zamarro & Prados,2021). On the other, and from a microeconomic point of view, the labor market also influences women's fertility, and on this point in particular, many researchs focuses on certain labor market considerations's effect on women's fertility (Finlay & Lee, 2018; Marynissen, 2022). Since the work of Kempeneers (1985), the difficulties of establishing the causal direction of the link between women's activity and fertility have been a concern in the literature. According to the authors, these difficulties stem from the theoretical underpinnings of the debate on the relationship between women's activity and fertility. Among these foundations that Sweet (1982) classifies into four (04) axes namely compatibility of women's roles, gender roles, women's time allocation and women's life cycle, the woman's time allocation constitutes the

economic dimension according to which, on the one hand, a woman's time is considered a scarce good, which implies rationality in its management; on the other hand, children are considered durable goods, from which satisfaction is expected, according to Becker (1965)'s idea. This theoretical foundation implies that the woman evaluates the costs (direct, such as children's daily maintenance cost, education's cost, etc., and indirect, such as the time's opportunity cost) and children's producing and educaton's benefits. This cost-benefit analysis leads to the conclusion that the higher the cost, the fewer children a woman will have. The main criticism of this approach to time allocation (and indeed of the other three approaches) is that it remains purely individualistic, ignoring social relationships.

From an empirical point of view, when questioning the effect of employment on women's fertility, most of the literature uses methods based on the ordinary least squares (OLS) model or the hierarchical model (Rodriguez & Cleland, 1981, Schockaert & Dutreuilh, 2005, HILMI, & HILMI, 2016). In this context, the use of linear specifications to model highly non-linear relationships is common in the literature. The results obtained using these models vary widely from one country to another. However, women's access to modern and mixed types of employment seems to have a more frequently negative effect on fertility, and a stronger one than other types of work (Rodriguez & Cleland, 1981, Marynissen, 2022, Finlay & Lee, 2018). By first analyzing the difference between rural and urban fertility and then introducing variables such as husband and wife's schooling and professional's status, Marynissen (2022) shows that women's work has a negative effect on fertility, although this effect diverges from country to country and is stronger for salaried work than for family work.

While the previous studies were based on an econometric approach, Millogo & al (2018) shows, using a statistical approach, that women in income-generating activities whose spouses are unemployed, are around 50% less likely to have a child than those who are not employed and whose spouses have an income, thus extending the results obtained by Schockaert & Dutreuilh (2005), who show that working in the informal sector, which accounts for a very large proportion in Sub-Saharan African countries' economies (Ongono-Olinga et al., 2024, Soares & Chanhoun, 2024).), has a positive impact on women's fertility, compared with working in the formal sector.

Subsequently, some authors have pointed to the existence of a certain simultaneity between fertility and women's participation in the labor market. Thus, the causal effect between fertility and women's labor supply would remain biased if analytical methods do not take into account the endogeneity problem raised by fertility (Aaronson & al, 2021; De Jong & al. 2017; Guo,

& al. 2018). Endogeneity is removed by these authors using the instrumental variables method. Indeed, the comparative study of the results obtained by the instrumental variables method to a use of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), showed that, the effect of fertility on women's labor supply is overestimated, and therefore biased if OLS is used.

In Benin, women's salaried work has experienced a major dynamic with the promotion of female human capital. In 2015, over 60.7% of women were economically active in Benin (INSAE, 2016). However, the decline in women's fertility levels remains uncertain. Given women's involvement in economic activity, coupled with the uncertainty fertility's declining in Benin, the question that arises is what characteristics of women's employment are compatible with controlling population growth?

This issue has been of research's subject, particularly in developed countries (Sleebos, 2003), and the literature is not unanimous on the women's employment effects characteristics on fertility. Indeed, for some autors (Marynissen, 2022, Finlay and Lee, 2018), women's access to modern employment would have a negative effect on female fertility, but for others, the fear that an increase in female participation in the labour market would lower fertility seems less and less justified, and working in informal sector in particular would be a favourable factor to procreation (Ongono-Olinga et al., 2024). All in all, several dimensions of women's participation in the labour market attract attention in the analysis of women's fertility.

The aim of this article is to analyze how women's employment characteristics influence their fertility. To achieve this objective, this paper mobilizes an econometric approach based on the use of a probit model with selection, to estimate the probability of a woman having at least one child over a three-year period as a function of the characteristics of the job held by the woman.

The added value of this article is both theoretical and political. From the theoretical point of view, this paper allows us to discuss theoretical expectations based on economic models of fertility analysis. From a policy point of view, the results of this paper will enable us to define more precise policies for women's employment in order to control fertility in Benin in line with the growth constraints facing the country.

The rest of this article proposes in first a methodological approach describing the data source, the analysis model, the variables and the estimation techniques, then presents and discusses the results obtained, and finaly concludes the paper by formulating policy implications.

1. Methodological approch

We describe the data used's source, the econometric analysis model, the construction of the variables and the estimation techniques.

1.1. Data source

This paper uses data from the fifth Demographic and Health Survey in Benin (DHSB-V) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (INSAE), now Benin's National Institute of Statistics and Demography (INStaD) in 2017-2018. The main aim of this survey is to produce demographic and health indicators; the survey's "woman" questionnaire covers a sample of 15928 women aged 15-49. All women aged 15-49 usually living in the selected households and present the night before the survey were eligible to be interviewed.

1.2. Analysis model

The choice of analysis model depends on the nature of the female fertility variable. In the literature, fertility is generally approximated, from a microeconomic point of view, by the women of child-bearing age's number of children, which by construction, is a counting variable, justifying the usual use of the Poisson model, a particular form of generalized linear model. This regression model, in which the dependent variable's conditional distribution follows a Poisson distribution (Gourieroux & al. à1983), has the advantage of allowing adequate modelling of non-negative integer variables (Kareem & Yusuf, 2018; Stefan, 2010). However, approximating women's fertility by the number of children in an fertility's explanatory analysis presupposes the mobilization of regressors relatively likely to vary together with the number of children. For the purpose of this paper, the interest regressor is the woman's job characteristics, which means that we need for each woman, the job's caracteristics history throughout her fertile life. Since we only have a database from a survey that does not trace the history of women's job characteristics, we propose an analytical model that guarantees consistency between the explained variable and the job characteristics. Under the assumption that a woman's employment characteristics remain relatively stable over the last three (03) years, and that over this period a fertile woman who wishes to have a child is likely to do so if the conditions are right, the appropriate type of model is a limited dependent variable model, in this case a probit model. Thus, the idea in this paper is to estimate the probability of a random variable Y_i taking the value $y_i \in \{0,1\}$. Let y_i be a binary variable defined by

$$y_i = \begin{cases} 1 \; if \; the \; woman \; has \; a \; child \; in \; period \; T \\ 0 \; overwise \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

We are interested in the probability $P(y_i = 1)$

The decision whether or not to have a child in period T is subject to a latent process. Indeed, if the utility U_i^1 provided by having a child exceeds by a certain level the utility U_i^0 provided by not having one, then the woman will choose to have a child during the period. Denoting by $U_i^* = U_i^1 - U_i^0$ the difference between the two utilities, woman's decision can be described by the following latent process:

$$y_i = \begin{cases} 1 \;\; if \; U_i^* > 0 \\ 0 \;\; if \;\; U_i^* \leq 0 \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Assume that the unobserved latent variable (difference in utilities, hence continuous quantitative by assumption) is governed by a linear model such that :

$$y_i = X_i\beta + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

Where X represents the vector of characteristics governing the latent process, β the vector of parameters and ε the latent process's error term. By assumption, ε respects the linear model's basic properties. In particular, we have:

$$E(\varepsilon_i) = 0 \quad (4)$$

$$V(\varepsilon_i) = \sigma_{\varepsilon}^2) \quad (5)$$

Under the assumption that ε follows a normal distribution with distribution function F and is independent of X, we show that

$$P\left(y_i = 1/_{X_i}\right) = F(X_i\beta) = \int_{-\infty}^{X_i\beta} \left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-\frac{t^2}{2}}\right) dt \quad (6)$$

The determinants of the woman's decision are then those of the latent variable represented by the utility difference $U_i^* = U_i^1 - U_i^0$.

1.3. Identification of model variables

In view of the above justification of the fertility variable, we explain the probability of a woman having a child in the three years preceding the survey as a function of the interest variable represented by the woman's employment characteristics, while introducing a set of control variables.

1.3.1. The employment characteristics variables

The literature is not unanimous on the job characteristic's measurement in labor economics. Indeed, several indicators are used, with the researcher's choice of indicator depending not only on the objectives pursued but also on the available data's nature. Phélinas (2014) summarizes the literature on the basis of a classification founded on a segmented labor market's hypothesis; to this end, he distinguishes between formal/informal employment and self-employment/salaried employment, cleavages generally used in developing countries. Similarly, Ritter & Anker (2002) propose a classification according to the remuneration's level, of course if the job is paid. Based on these various classifications proposed by the literature, and considering the information's nature in the database, we propose an employment characteristics' classification according to four (04) criteria:

-The Criterion of the woman's sector of activity.

The activity's sector variable, which is qualitative, identifies whether the woman works mainly in the agricultural sector (*agric*), the commercial sector (*commerce*), the industrial sector (*industry*) or the service sector *(services*).

- The nature of the employer.

The characteristics of the job here are captured by the variable designed by employer_kind, which identifies whether the woman works for a family member (*family*), another person (*others*) or is self-employed (*self_work*).

- The type of remuneration criterion

The type of remuneration (captured by the variable *paid_tpe*) identifies whether the woman is unpaid (*no_paid*), paid in cash (*cash*), paid in kind (*kind*) or paid in both cash and kind (*cash_kind*).

- The criterion of job periodicity

The periodicity of employment, measured by the variable *work_period*, helps us to determine whether the woman works all the year (*all_year*), seasonally (*seasonal*) or occasionally (*occasional*).

1.3.2. Control variables

In addition to the job characteristics variables, the following variables, generally used in fertility analyses, are used to refine the estimates:

- The woman's education level : measured by the variable w_educ, the woman's education level takes the modalities *w_no_educ* if the woman has never been to school, *w_primary* if she has

reached primary level at most, *w_secondary* if she has reached secondary level at most, and *w_higher* if she has reached higher level.

- The woman's place of residence: this is measured by the variable *residence*, with the modalities *Urban* for urban areas, R*ural* for rural areas.
- The woman's religion: the woman's religion is measured by the variable *religion*, with the modalities *Christian* if the woman is of a Christian religion, *Islam* if she is Muslim, and *tradition* for other religions (traditional and other endogenous religions).
- The husband's occupation: this is measured by the husband's sector of activity (*h_sector*), identifying whether the husband works mainly in the agricultural sector (*h_agric*), in commerce (*h_commerce*), in the industrial sector (*h_industrie*) or in the service sector (*h_services*).
- The husband's education level: measured by the variable *h_educ*, husband's education level takes the modalities *h_no_educ* if the husband has never been to school, *h_primary* if he has reached primary level at most, *h_secondary* if he has reached secondary level at most, and *h_higher* if he has reached higher level.
- Household type: measured by the variable *monogamic*, it is a dichotomous variable taking the value 1 if the woman is in a monogamous household, 0 otherwise.

These different variables are available in the DHSB-V database, and are generally used in the literature, where numerous studies report their importance in fertility analysis. A descriptive statistical study of the data for these variables showed a strong causal link with the number of births to women.

2. Results analysis and discussion

2.1. Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis of women's fertility in the labor market over the three years before the survey reveals that around 48% of employed women have had at least one birth, compared with 38% of unemployed women. Although this result is in line with that of INSAE & ICF (2019), which shows in Benin, a simultaneous increase in the fertility's level and the women's participation rate in the labor market, it contradicts Becker (1965)'s economic theory of fertility, which states that there is a negative correlation between women's activity and fertility. According to Becker, women's labour supply reduces the time available for childcare, and therefore the children's demand. The literature in developed countries tends to confirm Becker's analysis of the relationship between women's participation in the labour market and reduced fertility (Isvan, 1991). However, this relationship remains ambiguous in developing countries. This ambiguity

is explained in the literature, notably by Kpadonou & al. (2011). In fact, according to the author, in around 70% of households in Benin, there is at least one adult over the age of 15, other than the wife and her partner; among these adults, there are women (mothers, sisters, aunts or servants, etc.), which are able to take care of children, which frees the woman to feed and encourages mothers to work/ According to Greenwood & al. (2017), the maid's relatively low cost, the grandmother or any parent's presence are all factors that facilitate female activity in the labor market.

The employer's nature in the Beninese labor market may also corroborate this relationship. Indeed, around 50% of self-employed women have had at least one birth over the three-year period, compared with 28% of women who are not self-employed, and over 47% of housewives or family members. We can deduce that, unlike self-employment, working for an employer reduces the time available for childcare, and therefore the children's demand.

With regard to the work's periodicity, women who worked full-year or full-time had fewer births than those who worked occasionally or seasonally over the three-year period under consideration. Women's participation in the labour market throughout the year reduces their fertility rate. This rate is 45.2%, compared with 51% and 53% respectively for women engaged in occasional and seasonal activities.

Furthermore, the proportion of women who have given birth decreases progressively with their education level. Similarly, the descriptive analysis confirms that women in households in the highest living standard quintiles had fewer births than those in households in the lowest living standard quintiles.

These statistical results are summarized in the following table, and will be supported by an explanatory analysis.

Table 1 : Explanatory variables description according to women's number of births in the last three years

Variables	Frequences	No births (%)	At least one birth (%)
Work (Women's employment status over the past three years)			
No works	3527	61,95	38,05
Works	12401	52,45	47,55
Nature of woman's employer			
Family	1928	52,96	47,04
others	999	72,27	27,73
self	9476	50,26	49,74
Type of woman's remuneration			
cash	7999	50,22	49,78
cash_kind	1615	46,87	53,13

kind	178	46,63	53,37
no_paid	2611	63,16	36,84
Periodicity of the woman's work			
all_year	8554	54,72	45,28
occasional	1148	49,48	50.52
seasonal	2701	46,54	53,46
Woman's branch of activity			
Agricult	3065	43,62	56,38
Commerce	4537	52,26	47,74
Industry	2368	55,57	44,43
Service	2433	60,88	39,12
Woman's level of education			
w_higher	365	67,4	32,6
w_no_educ	8762	47,69	52,31
w_primary	3116	57,16	42,84
w_secondary	3685	67,38	32,62
Woman's place of residence			
Rural	8883	51,29	48,71
Urbain	7045	58,67	41,33
Women's religion			
Christian	8784	58,96	41,04
Others	998	49,3	50,7
Tradition	6146	49,11	50,89
Husband's level of education			
h_higher	656	38,57	61,43
h_no_educ	11079	60,92	39,08
h_primary	2130	39,72	60,28
h_secondary	2063	40,77	59,23
Household wealth			
very poor	2856	45,48	54,52
poor	2976	50,97	49,03
Middle	2985	51,66	48,34
Richer	3281	56,45	43,55
Richest	3830	64,73	35,27

Source : based on DHSB-Vdata

2.2. Explanatory analysis

2.2.1. Absence versus presence of selection bias in the relationship between fertility and female employment

As in most studies using econometric methods, estimating the effect of employment characteristics on fertility requires particular attention to the endogeneity problem. The endogeneity problem emerges when causal inferences are explored through standard

regressions that induce estimation biases (Wooldridge, 2010). Generaly, there are four types of endogeneity causes: the omission bias of relevant explanatory variables, the measurement bias, the simultaneity bias and the selection bias (Crane & al., 2017). In this paper's case, studying the effect of employment characteristics on fertility calls for investigating this effect on women in employment; however, taking into account only working women potentially leads to a selection bias. This bias can be justified by the fact that a woman's situation on the labour market is the result of an endogenous process to the household; it is a process involving an unobserved latent variable, which is itself dependent on a set of variables (e.g. the woman's age, place of residence, husband's level of education, husband's branch of activity, etc.).

In view of the above, we implement a selection bias control procedure. In the literature, Heckman (1979)'s two-stage approach is used to control for this bias. To this end, the binary variable of labor market participation is regressed on a set of explanatory variables, and the Mills ratio's inverse obtained from this regression is introduced into the fertility model, allowing the influence of female labor market participation to be taken into account in the fertility model. The estimation result is presented in the following table:-

Table 2 : fertility model's results, taking into account probit selection

Variablles	fertility equation		Selection equation	
	Coefficient	Standard error	coefficient	Standard error
Branch (ref : service)				
agricult	0.294***	(0.036)		
commerce	0.083***	(0.025)		
industry	0.039	(0.026)		
Work_for (ref : family)				
others	-0.065*	(0.037)		
self	0.131***	(0.028)		
Paid_tpe (ref : no_paid)				
cash	0.267***	(0.025)		
cash_kind	0.188***	(0.035)		
kind	0.171**	(0.082)		
Work_period (ref : occasional)				
all_year	-0.062**	(0.032)		
seasonal	-0.043	(0.038)		
N_wealth (ref=Poorest)				
Poorer	-0.046	(0.031)		
middle	-0.024	(0.032)		
richer	-0.091***	(0.032)		
richest	-0.184***	(0.034)		
W_educ (ref : no_educ)				
primary	-0.166***	(0.027)		
secondary	-0.270***	(0.028)		
higher	-0.270***	(0.070)		
hh_educ (ref : no_educ)				
primary	0.059**	(0.030)		

	secondary	0.118***	(0.030)		
	higher	0.144**	(0.060)		
Hh_sex (ref : female)					
	male	0.124***	(0.022)		
Monogamic (ref : no)					
	yes	0.377***	(0.021)		
young_woman (ref=no)					
	yes	0.994***	(0.024)	-0.822***	(0.029)
Residence (ref : rural)					
	urban	0.069***	(0.023)	-0.116***	(0.023)
h_educ (ref : no_educ)					
	primary			0.477***	(0.039)
	secondary			0.317***	(0.036)
	higher			0.256***	(0.061)
H_branch (ref : service)					
	agricult			0.446***	(0.026)
	commerce			0.403***	(0.045)
	industry			0.573***	(0.033)
Constant		-0.957***	(0.055)	1.097***	(0.032)
/athrho		-2.476***	(0.162		
Observations		15,928		12401	

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source : based on estimates, after weighting

In view of the Mills ratio's inverse significance (represented by the athrho coefficient in table 2), there is indeed a selection bias, which is corrected by using the Heckman (1979)'s method. Thus, the parameters estimated in the fertility model are now unbiased and consistent. Employment characteristics effects on fertility's analyses can now be made using the regression results as presented in Table 2 above. These results reveal both positive and negative links between the various explanatory variables and the probability of having at least one birth over the last three years.

2.2.2. Industries that seem incompatible with motherhood

Explanatory analysis shows that the activity's branch in wich the woman works influences her fertility. Indeed, compared to women in the service sector, those working in the agricultural and commercial sectors are more likely to have had a child in the last three years. According to the existing literature, this result could be associated with the fact that in many developing countries, labor market participation, particularly for women, in the commercial or agricultural branches of activity, does not require the use of relatively intensive skilled labor (Baliamoune-Lutz, 2020). Thus, women who tend to be low-skilled or unskilled, see their access to salaried employment curtailed, and are heavily involved in trade and agriculture on the labour market. Moreover, this result can be justified by the fact that women are more likely to work at home,

on family farms or on their own account, where time management is flexible (Younger, 2006). Analysis of the effect of a woman's education level on her fertility adds further weight to the above justification.

2.2.3. Negative effect of education on women's fertility

Compared to uneducated women, women with primary, secondary or tertiary education level are less likely to have a child over the period considered. This result seems to concur with Samari (2019)'s analysis according to which women's education level is significantly compatible with lower fertility rates, and not contrary with (Sondjo, 2024) who finds that the education level and wealth influence are positively correlate. On the other hand, wemen’s education accelerates their probability of working full-time, and increases their income and wealth. Our results, like those of Samari (2019) and Baliamoune-Lutz (2020), suggest that education, while an important factor in women's participation in the paid labour market, has a negative impact on their fertility rate.

2.2.4. Working outside the family is a constraint on women's procreation

With regard to the nature of the employer, the fact of working for someone else reduces the probability of procreation for women compared to their counterparts in family employment over the period under consideration. On the other hand, this probability of procreation increases when the woman is self-employed. These results seem to be in line with the hypothesis of the economic theory of fertility according to which, women's access to salaried employment has a negative effect on their level of fertility (Becker, 1965), which corroborates empirical results such as Gbeto & Houngue, (2020); De Jong & al. (2017); according to which there is a negative effect of fertility on women's participation in the salaried labor market.

2.2.5. Type of remuneration and job security also determine women's fertility

Compared to women in unpaid employment, those receiving remuneration (monetary, in-kind or a combination of both) are more likely to have a child over the time period in question. This result ties in with the literature on the decision-making power of fertility in the household. Indeed, women's contribution to household income is a favorable factor for decision-making within the household (Acharya & al, 2010; Thiombiano, 2014). Referring to the social recognition and identity associated with motherhood, women with decision-making autonomy within the household concomitantly engage in professional activity and the reproductive path (Acharya & al, 2010; Thiombiano, 2014).

Furthermore, the positive effect of a woman's professional status on her fertility is underlined by the relationship between standard of living and fertility. Indeed, analyzing the effect of the labor market on women's fertility calls for questioning the role of income in the fertility decision. This is so because, by remunerating the work of the economic agent (both men and women), the labour market provides the resources needed not only for maintenance, but also for schooling and the various forms of care that guarantee the quality of the child, considered as a durable good (Becker, 1965).

Conversely, the results obtained on the effect of household well-being on women's fertility, show that higher levels of wealth (the top two quintiles) and higher levels of education of the wife and/or spouse negatively influence the woman's fertility decision. This negative effect obtained on our data confirms Becker's (1965) analysis showing that the high cost of children, considered as durable goods, is a factor reducing a woman's willingness to have children, illustrating a women's cost-benefit analysis of children. Thus, while we might have expected a positive effect of household standard of living on a woman's fertility decision if children were considered a durable good (like any other normal good), the empirical results highlight a fertility decision subject to a cost-benefit analysis by the woman. Under these conditions, would the household choose to devote a larger share of its income to the acquisition of other prestige goods ensuring it a social position in line with its standard of living, thus reducing the share of income to be devoted to spending on children to ensure them a better life.

This result, far from assimilating children to an inferior good (for which an increase in the standard of living leads to a decrease in demand), highlights not only the importance of cost-benefit analysis in considering the link between fertility and various aspects of the labor market, but also the effect of competition in household income between the good "child" and other prestige goods.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to show how labor market characteristics influence women's fertility in Benin. Our study on this issue yields a set of results with multiple implications for policies to control the demographic explosion, which has multiple consequences for poverty. Indeed, our results show that the vast majority of beninese women on the labour market tend to work at home, on family farms or on their own account in the agricultural or commercial sectors. These branches of activity do not necessarily require the use of skilled labor, and time management is relatively

flexible. These features of the labor market militate in favor of a high fertility rate among working women in Benin.

The analyses made of these results provide some implications worth highlighting. These implications point in the direction of a better understanding of measures aimed at promoting demographic control in order to foster household well-being in a context of limited resources intended to satisfy household needs. Thus, a first implication of the results is the need to strengthen women's human capital by pursuing efforts to get girls into school and retain them in the education system over the long term; this strengthening of women's human capital will encourage women to be better informed about the costs involved in having a child, for whom human capital is essential to guarantee quality. A second implication is the need for decision-makers to create the conditions for an increase in salaried work opportunities for women graduating from schools, universities and institutes; this will enable women to spend less time childbearing than working, and bring additional income gains to improve household living standards.

However, the thinking behind this paper is not limitless. Indeed, While this paper sheds light on the role of labour market characteristics in reducing women's fertility, the question of the quality of women's employment also deserves to be elucidated. Unfortunately, the data currently available do not allow us to examine this dimension of the labour market-fertility relationship. This limitation of the present study opens up the prospect of further research into the problem of the quality of women's employment and its repercussions on fertility. We hope that future work will address these issues using appropriate data.

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