

Determinants of the Kind of Partnership in Italy and Spain¹

Determinanti delle Scelte di Vita di Coppia in Italia e Spagna

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Riassunto: Lo scopo del lavoro è di valutare, in un'ottica di genere, l'importanza del sistema ideazionale sulla tipologia di unione scelta (matrimonio o convivenza) controllando l'influenza esercitata da un insieme di variabili di natura socio-demografica. A tal fine si sono utilizzati i dati provenienti dalle indagini Fertility and Family Surveys (FFS) degli anni '90 relativi a Italia e Spagna. Lo studio ha fatto ricorso, in una prima fase, all'adozione di un'analisi fattoriale e, in seguito, a una procedura in due passi mediante l'uso congiunto di alberi di classificazione e di modelli di regressione logistica. Ciò ha permesso di saggiare l'efficacia dell'approccio metodologico proposto, nonché di evidenziare l'importanza del sistema valoriale nei processi decisionali di uomini e donne.

Keywords: Cohabitation, Risk-Factor Analysis.

1. Foreword

In the last decades family behaviours have radically changed in the industrialised country. In particular in western countries, albeit with different intensities and time frames, cohabitation has become far more common, due to both an increase in the period spent in studying and therefore a delay in acquiring economic independence and the increased individual ethic, religious and political autonomy. In this analysis cohabitation is assumed to represent an innovative choice (Kiernan 2000), in opposition to the most traditional one, the marriage. Many studies (Lesthaeghe and Moors 1996; Pasquini and Samoggia 2003a; Miglio et al. 2003) have already demonstrated that value-orientations as well as socio-economic factors have a considerable influence on the kind of partnership chosen. The aim of the paper is to analyse the effects exerted by value-orientations on the partnership chosen. This is done by controlling for the socio-economic variables, in this case assumed as potential confounders.

2. Data and variables

The data were obtained from the European Fertility and Family Surveys, conducted in Italy and Spain and refer to a sample of 3,724 women and 1,050 men aged 20-39. Italy and Spain are jointly considered because, as shown by a preliminary descriptive

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analysis, they appeared to be permeated by the same ideational context (Pasquini and Samoggia 2003b). On the other hand the analysis is developed separately for men and women because it is well known that decisional processes are widely different between genders. The socio-economic variables considered in the analysis are age, education, professional activities, family experience, rural/urban area where interviewees grew up. Concerning the variables used to define the set of values, the reference is to the materialism/post-materialism (national goals to strive for, 4 items) (Inglehart 1990), tradition/innovation (importance of marriage, of family and motherhood outside a stable partnership, 3 items), the reasons for splitting up (8 items) and the ethics of abortion (5 items), the sense of responsibility towards one's children (total devotion to children; parents rights, neither, 3 items) and religiosity (2 items)².

3. Methods

In order to summarise the information given by the values a multiple correspondence analysis was performed. The active variables are those relating to values. The modalities of certain context variables were then projected into the factorial space in order to better interpret the meaning of the new dimensions identified. The analysis was conducted jointly for the two sexes. In fact, the cultural context within which any individual lives is characterised by the same value-orientation, even if it can influence men and women's orientation in different ways. On the basis of the multiple correspondences' results, the representation of subspace was defined as that identified by the first three factorial axes ("religiosity", "dogmatism", "tradition") (Pasquini and Samoggia 2003a), which account for approximately 90% of the overall inertia.

In the second part of the analysis the aim is to highlight how value-orientation is tied to the choice between cohabitation and marriage in the considered countries controlling for the effects of the socio-economic factors, which are related between themselves too.

So, a two step procedure was applied using a tree-based method to reduce the data dimension of the socio-economic factors, the secondary group of variables, and to construct a filter for the evaluation of value-orientation factors, the primary group of variables, through a logistic regression model (Zhang and Bracken 1996).

At the first step recursive partitioning was used to explore part of the data structure and to derive parsimonious models at the second one. Classification trees were constructed using socio-economic factors as exploratory variables and kind of partnership as class variable. The result of this strategy is a stratification of the study sample into a number of homogeneous subgroups identified from the most discriminant variables belonging to the secondary group.

At the second step of the analysis, logistic regression models were fitted to the data using as explanatory variables value-orientations and the new variable defined on the basis of the tree-based results. This new variable has as many modalities as the number of the leaves of the tree obtained in the previous step. The joint use of the two methods may be preferable to derive a parsimonious model. The recursive partitioning methods were used to select the most informative variables belonging to the secondary group taking into account local relationships between these variables.

² For an exhaustive treatment of the items and of the relation between value system and kind of partnership, see Pasquini and Samoggia, 2003a.

The analysis was performed separately by gender to highlight different decisional processes between males and females.

4. Results and concluding remarks

As described in the previous section, at the first step a tree-based method was used to stratify the study sample into a number of meaningful and homogeneous subgroups, each of which corresponds to a terminal node (leaf) in the tree structure.

Two binary trees were built, one for each gender, using a CHAID (Kass 1980) algorithm; the class variable was the kind of partnership chosen and the explanatory ones were socio-economic variables.

Table 1: *Variables related to the kind of partnership chosen (results of the logistic regression analysis for the female and the male data sets)*

Variables	Female data set			Male data set		
	% of cohab.	odds ratio	confidence interval	% of cohab.	odds ratio	confidence interval
Religiosity						
Low	11.1	7.58	4.65 - 12.36	14.1	9.07	3.22 - 25.50
Medium	4.4	2.92	1.73 - 4.94	2.4	1.93	0.58 - 6.37
High (ref.)	1.6	1.00		1.6	1.00	
Tradition						
Low				12.0	2.32	1.18 - 4.58
Medium				5.1	1.37	0.63 - 2.96
High (ref.)				3.2	1.00	
Leaves						
Leaf 1	14.3	7.33	3.18 - 16.90			
Leaf 2	10.8	5.02	2.20 - 11.42			
Leaf 3	1.4	0.59	0.24 - 1.47			
Leaf 4	7.0	2.64	1.01 - 6.90			
Leaf 5	11.7	4.94	2.10 - 11.59			
Leaf 6	4.4	1.79	0.72 - 4.46			
Leaf 7	2.4	0.98	0.39 - 2.46			
Leaf 8	6.3	2.34	0.96 - 5.75			
Leaf 9 (ref.)	2.1	1.00				
Leaves						
Leaf 1				6.53	0.89	0.48 - 1.64
Leaf 2				2.12	0.26	0.10 - 0.67
Leaf 3				25.00	3.01	1.24 - 7.31
Leaf 4 (ref.)				9.18	1.00	

For women sample, nine leaves were obtained; among these it is possible to identify groups where the percentage of cohabitants is higher (e.g. when women are very young, aged 20-24, leaf 1; when women are older and occupied, leaves 2 and 5) and groups where it is lower (when older women, aged 30-39, are not occupied, have never worked and have grown in small-sized town, leaf 3). For men sample, a more simple tree with only four leaves was obtained: the highest percentage of cohabitants corresponds to leaf

3 where men are young, aged 20-29, and high educated, the lowest belongs to leaf 2 where men are older, aged 35-39, and less educated.

At the second step, the results of the logistic regression show how value-orientations are relevant in decisional process (Table 1): the well-known importance of religiosity on behaviours in Mediterranean countries is stressed, in fact its influence is significant for both genders, with very high odds ratios.

Among women, religiosity is the unique ideational factor tied to the kind of partnership, while men are also strongly influenced by tradition. In fact, men need also to be released from conventional behaviours for choosing cohabitation.

Moreover, some leaves have a significant odds ratio pointing out the mix of socio-economic variables that influence the choice of the kind of partnership. The interactions between value-orientations and the variable representing the leaves are never significant, so it is possible to assert that religiosity and tradition have a considerable influence on the choice of partnership taking constant socio-economic characteristics which identify homogeneous groups.

The two step procedure used in this study seems to be useful in the analysis of such processes, which involve a large number of different nature explanatory variables. In this case, it has allowed to focus on the effects of a specific subset of variables, controlling for the other ones. Moreover, the two step procedure leads to parsimonious models selecting the variables that contribute more to explain this complex process, thus improving the understanding of the underlying frame.

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