

Religiosity, Perceived Costs and Benefits of Having Children and Their Impact on Fertility Intentions in Poland

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Introduction

Why are more religious people more likely to have children?

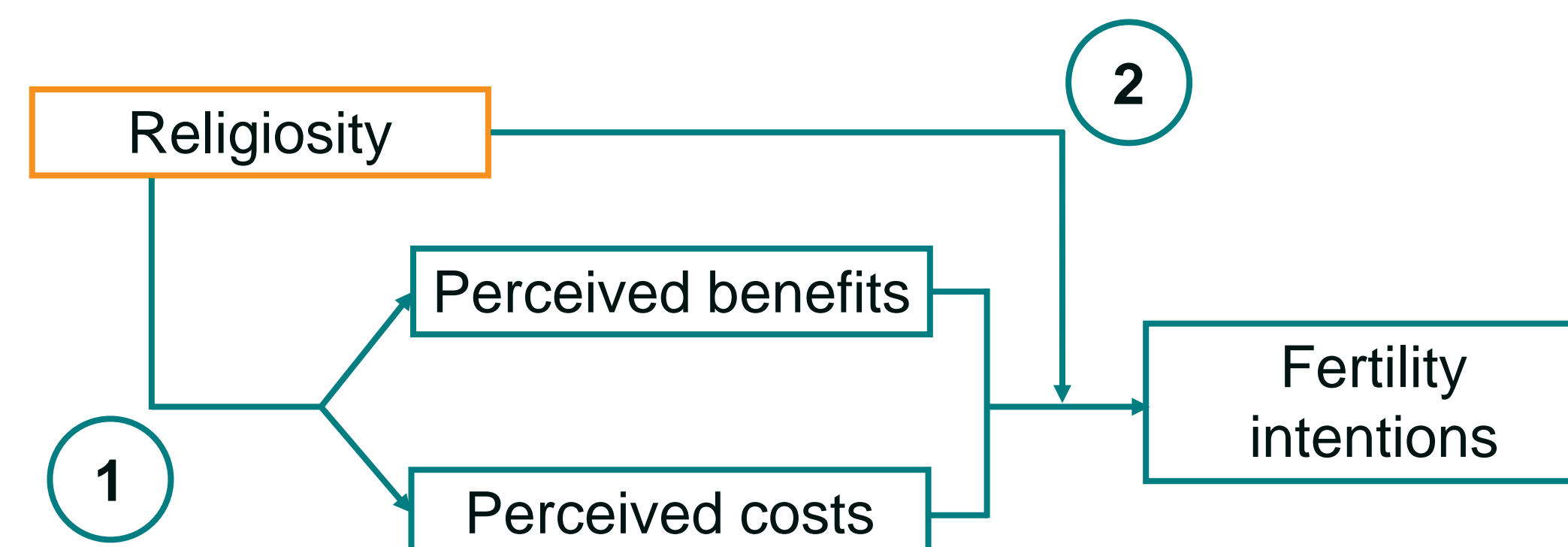
Possible explanations are:

- Highly religious people see more benefits and less costs in having children
- They believe that a higher power may protect them from high costs regarding childbearing
- The critical stance of some religions towards abortion and contraception
- Direct commands such as “be fruitful and multiply”

In this study, we examine the first two explanations by looking at the interrelations between costs and benefits of having children as well as religiosity and how they shape fertility intentions.

Research Questions

1. How much of the effect of religiosity on fertility intentions can be explained by the influence of religiosity on perceived costs and benefits of having children?
2. Does religiosity also influence how people react to those costs and benefits?



Data and Methods

- Wave 2 of the Generations and Gender Survey, Poland, 2014/2015
- Men aged 18-49 and women aged 18-44 (n = 4892)
- **Dependent variable:** Intention to have a child in the next three years (yes/no)
- **Explanatory variables:** Self-assessed religiosity, scales of perceived costs and perceived benefits of having children
- **Method:** Mediation (1) and moderation (2) analysis

Items on Perceived Costs

- Difficulties in engaging in paid employment
- Partners have less time for each other
- Limitations to parents' leisure time
- Financial difficulties
- Worries and concerns related to child raising
- Women's difficulties in combining work and childbearing
- Too many responsibilities
- Pregnancy and delivery are strenuous
- A fear that a child will be born ill

Items on Perceived Benefits

- Children are needed for the future of Polish economy
- Support for elderly parents
- Children inherit parents' properties
- Children prevent parents from feeling lonely in older age
- Children take over parents' personal characteristics and values
- Special love and closeness
- Watching children grow and develop
- To make a union stronger and more committed
- To feel more complete as a woman / a man

We created two scales from those items on perceived costs and benefits. They are used as determinants in our models.

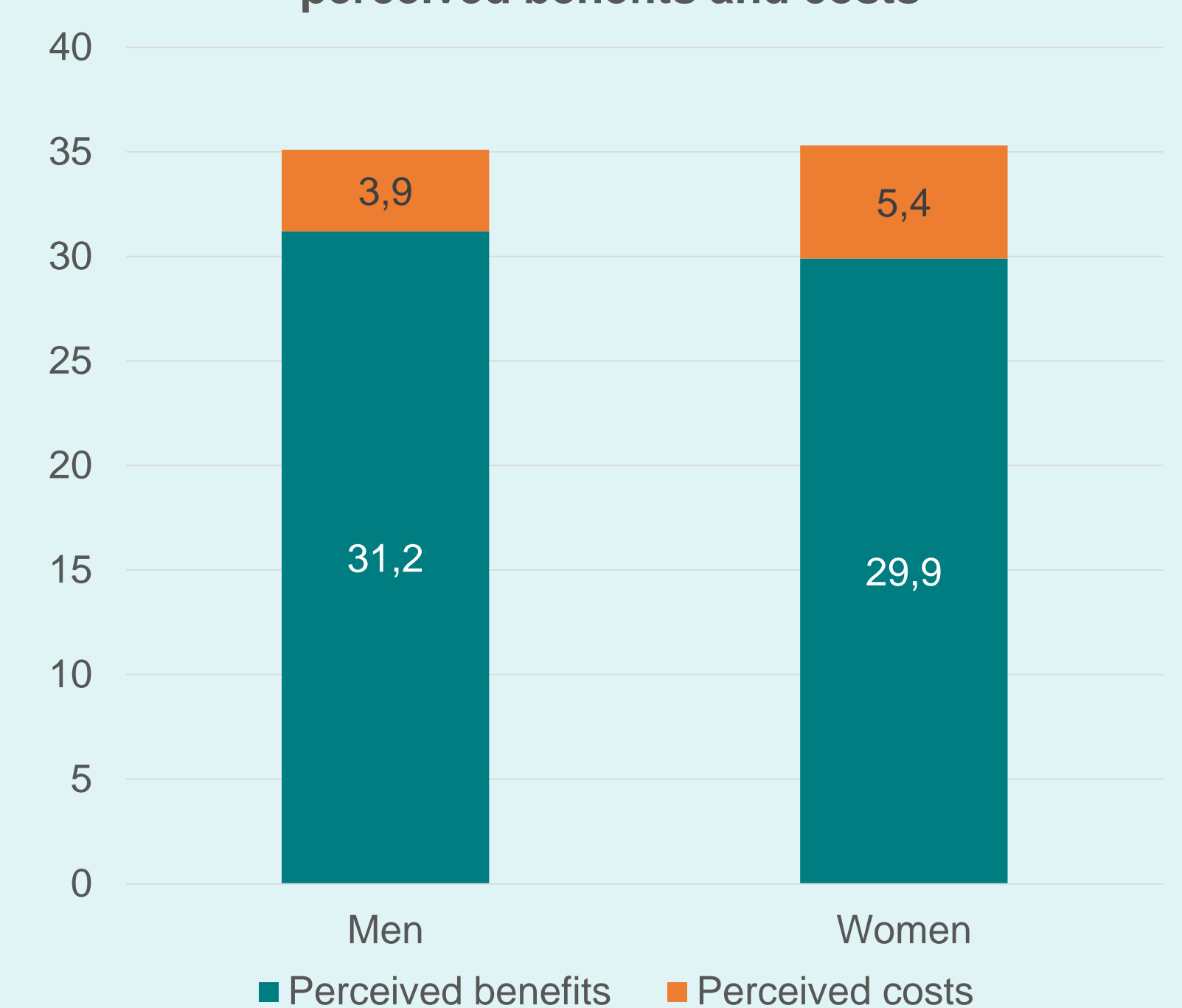
1 Mediation Analysis

Intentions	Logits	Men	Women
Perceived benefits	Index (1-5)	0.59***	0.62***
Perceived costs	Index (1-5)	-0.21**	-0.28***
Religiosity	Total effect	0.22***	0.27***
	Direct effect	0.14*	0.17**
	Indirect effect	0.08***	0.09***
	n	2323	2569

Controlled for: age, partnership status, parity and educational level
Significance levels: *** p<0.001 ** p<0.01 * p<0.05

Among men 35.1%, and among women 35.3% of the total effect of religiosity on fertility intentions is mediated by perceived benefits and costs.

Percentage of the total effect of religiosity on fertility intentions mediated by perceived benefits and costs



2 Moderation Analysis

Men	Logits	1	2	3	4
Religiosity	Index (1-4)	0.15**	0.45	0.21***	0.02
Perceived benefits	Index (1-5)	0.58***	0.85*		
Perceived costs	Index (1-5)			-0.19*	-0.40
Rel. # Benefits			-0.08		
Rel. # Costs					0.06

Women	Logits	1	2	3	4
Religiosity	Index (1-4)	0.19**	0.08	0.25***	-0.32
Perceived benefits	Index (1-5)	0.63***	0.52		
Perceived costs	Index (1-5)			-0.28***	-0.98**
Rel. # Benefits			0.03		
Rel. # Costs					0.18*

Controlled for: age, partnership status, parity and educational level
Significance levels: *** p<0.001 ** p<0.01 * p<0.05

In the case of women, there is a significant positive interaction term between religiosity and perceived costs of having children: For higher religious women, the negative effect of perceived costs on fertility intentions is less pronounced.

Conclusions

- A substantial part of the effect of religiosity on fertility intentions is mediated through perceived benefits, a small additional part through perceived costs
- Religiosity moderates the impact of costs on fertility intentions among women -> For highly religious women, costs have only a small impact on fertility intentions. For less religious women on the other hand, the impact of costs is very pronounced
- Religiosity encourages their followers to have children by affecting how people perceive consequences of having children and in the case of women also by influencing the reaction on those perceptions

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