

Editorial

Addressing the Global Decline in Total Fertility Rates

Budi Wiweko

In recent years, the world has witnessed a significant decline in total fertility rates (TFR), presenting multifaceted challenges that require urgent attention from policymakers, healthcare professionals, and society at large. This editorial provides a comprehensive overview of the intricate factors contributing to this phenomenon.

Economic growth and urbanization are pivotal contributors to declining fertility rates. As nations evolve into the post-transition phase, many have seen TFRs fall below the replacement threshold. Eastern European countries, for example, demonstrate low TFRs alongside rapid depopulation, while nations such as the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, UAE, and Germany manage low TFRs with continued population growth (Wiweko et al., 2024; Fauser et al., 2024). This divergence underscores the importance of tailored strategies that account for the socio-economic and cultural contexts influencing fertility decisions.

Multiple studies suggest that increased female literacy plays a pivotal role in declining TFR, as it often correlates with greater autonomy over reproductive decisions (Aitken, 2022). However, societal pressures, such as peer influence, personal regrets, and the presence of supportive networks, significantly impact women's choices regarding childbearing (Wiweko et al., 2024). The prevailing societal norm that prioritizes career and personal development over family formation further shifts reproductive timelines (Aitken, 2022).

Recognizing pregnancy as more than just a natural biological process is essential. It serves as a critical window of opportunity for addressing and preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs), while ensuring the health of future generations. The FIGO *pre natal and non communicable disease control* life cycle approach emphasizes the need for comprehensive strategies that encompass pre-conception, pregnancy, and postpartum management. By addressing risk factors such as diabetes, obesity, and hypertension early on, we can prevent immediate complications and long-term health issues for both mothers and their children (Wiweko et al., 2024; Aitken, 2022).

Accessibility and affordability of fertility services are key elements in addressing infertility challenges. With the rising costs of living due to urbanization, it becomes increasingly crucial to enhance access to reproductive health services, including in vitro fertilization (IVF) (Wiweko et al., 2024; Fauser et al., 2024). Educational initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of reproductive health, fertility preservation, and timely intervention are fundamental (UNFPA, 2021).

Additionally, adopting a life-course perspective is essential, as decisions regarding family planning made in youth can significantly impact future generations. Promoting fertility awareness across schools, workplaces, and communities can empower individuals and couples to make informed choices about reproductive health (Wiweko et al., 2024).

As we confront the implications of declining fertility rates, implementing proactive and multifaceted strategies is imperative. Creating an environment that reduces the stigma surrounding fertility issues and encourages informed health-seeking behavior must be a priority. This includes advocating for policies that enhance reproductive rights, improve healthcare access, and promote equity in fertility-related services (Aitken, 2022; UNFPA, 2021).

These insights serve not only as a wake-up call but also as a clarion call for collaborative efforts across various sectors to address these pressing reproductive health issues with urgency and compassion. The time for action is now; our collective future depends on it.

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