

The Quite Revolution:

An analysis of the change toward below-replacement-level fertility in Addis Ababa

By

Yohannes Kinfu Ashagrea

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Yohannes Kinfu Ashagrea

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ABSTRACT

Rural-urban differentials in fertility behaviour are neither new nor surprising, but a difference of over four children per woman as observed between rural Ethiopia and the country's national capital, Addis Ababa, in 1990 is rare, possibly unique. Reported fertility in Addis Ababa in 1990 was about 2.6 children per woman. By the mid-1990s, it declined further to 1.8 children per woman. This study investigates the dimensions, components and causes of this remarkable reproductive change.

The study specifically asks and seeks to answer the following questions. Is the decline real, or is it merely an illusion created by faulty reporting? If it is real, how has it come about? Did it result from a change in the onset of reproduction or a decline in the proportion of women reaching high parities or both? And in what context has such a fundamental, even revolutionary, change taken place in a country and a continent that are mostly yet to join the global transition to a small family-size norm.

Data for the study were drawn from two national population censuses, undertaken in 1984 and 1994, two fertility surveys, conducted in 1990 and 1995, and a number of supplementary sources, including a qualitative study conducted by the investigator. Results from the study confirm that the trend of declining fertility and the recent fall to below-replacement-level are indeed real. As the analysis shows the decline was largely driven by changes in the marriage pattern, and supplemented by the increased propensity of fertility control observed across all birth orders and age groups. All socio-economic groups in the city have had a decline in cohort fertility and this was brought about both by shifts in population composition (a composition effect) and increased intensity of fertility control within each group (a rate effect). The institutional and cultural factors that are believed to have prompted these changes are discussed in the thesis in some detail.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
List of tables.....	viii
List of figures.....	xi

CHAPTER ONE **THE RESEARCH BACKGROUND:** *Questions, Objectives and theoretical considerations*

	Page
1.1. The research question.....	1
1.2. Research objectives.....	6
1.3. Determinants of fertility change	7
1.3.1. The state of knowledge.....	7
1.3.2. Synthesis and the approach in this study	16
1.4. Order of presentation.....	19

CHAPTER TWO **SOURCES AND QUALITY OF DATA**

2.1. Sources and nature of data.....	21
2.1.1. The 1984 Population and Housing Census.....	21
2.1.2. The 1990 National Family and Fertility Survey (NFFS).....	24
2.1.3. The 1994 Population and Housing Census.....	27
2.1.4. The 1995 Fertility Survey of Addis Ababa (AFS).....	29
2.1.5 Other sources of data.....	30
2.2. Assessment of data quality.....	33
2.2.1. Quality of age data.....	33
2.2.2. Completeness and quality of births data.....	38
2.3. The qualitative study: Objectives and method of data collection.....	43
2.4. Concluding remarks.....	44

CHAPTER THREE **SETTING THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE:** *The institutional background and characteristics of the study population on the eve of the fertility transition*

3.1 Physical, political and historical setting.....	46
3.2 Population size and change.....	54
3.3 The people: Religion, language, ethnic affiliation and social structure.....	57
3.4 Education and literacy.....	62

3.5 Female labour force participation and occupational distribution.....	69
3.6 Mortality and health services.....	72
3.7 Family planning and population policy.....	76
3.8 Economy, well-being and unemployment.....	79
3.9 Concluding remarks.....	83

CHAPTER FOUR
THE STATUS OF THE FERTILITY TRANSITION:
A demographic accounting of past trends and recent levels

4.1. Trends in reported fertility and P/F ratio analysis.....	86
4.2 Estimates of period fertility from alternative sources.....	95
4.3 Trends in cohort fertility.....	102
4.4 Trends in censored parity progression ratio.....	103
4.5 Trends in the demand for children.....	108
4.6 Concluding remarks.....	110

CHAPTER FIVE
THE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPONENTS OF FERTILITY CHANGE:
Trends, patterns and relative importance of proximate determinants of fertility

5.1. Nuptiality trends and patterns.....	113
5.2. Deliberate fertility control.....	126
5.2.1. Contraceptive use.....	126
5.2.2. Induced abortion.....	133
5.3. Postpartum insusceptibility.....	138
5.4. Fertility impairment.....	143
5.5. Relative importance of the proximate determinants of fertility: An aggregate analysis.....	147
5.6. Determinants of first marriage: A multivariate analysis.....	159
5.7. Concluding remarks.....	164

CHAPTER SIX
FERTILITY VARIATIONS AND DIFFERENTIALS IN FERTILITY DECLINE:
The Impact of Socio-economic and cultural factors

6.1. Socio-economic and cultural determinants of fertility: A bivariate analysis.....	168
6.1.1 Education and fertility	168
6.1.2 Female labour force participation and fertility	173
6.1.3 Economic status and fertility	175
6.1.4 Child mortality and fertility	176
6.1.5 Migration status and fertility.....	178
6.1.6 Cultural factors and fertility	179
6.1.7 Marital status and fertility	181
6.2. Determinants of lifetime fertility: A multivariate analysis.....	184
6.3. Socio-economic factors and intermediate variables: Establishing the relationship using the 'Synthesis' framework	195
6.3.1 The model: A brief description of the 'Synthesis' framework.....	196

6.3.2 Links between socio-economic and cultural factors with the supply of births (Cn), the cost of birth control (CR) and the demand for children (Cd): A 'Synthesis' framework based analysis	201
6.4. Concluding remarks.....	205

**CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND SOME THOUGHTS
ON THE CAUSES OF FERTILITY DECLINE**

7.1. Introduction.....	208
7.2. Are the decline in fertility and its recent convergence to below replacement level genuine?.....	210
7.3. How was it attained and what are its demographic components?.....	211
7.4. What roles did socio-economic and cultural factors play?.....	213
7.5. What are the causes of fertility decline?.....	216
References.....	226

Annexes

I. A technical note on the application of the 'own-children' method of fertility estimation to the data from Addis Ababa.....	248
II. A method of estimating period age-specific and total abortion rates from data on lifetime abortion collected at two points.....	256
III. Computational procedures for the estimation of the indices of the proximate Determinants.....	259

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1.	Proportion reporting year of birth and Myers' index of digit preference by selected background characteristics of respondents, Addis Ababa, 1984-1995.....	34
Table 2.2.	Completed family size per 1000 women by cohort, period and age, constructed from the 1994 and 1984 censuses and 1978 and 1967 demographic surveys, Addis Ababa.....	40
Table 2.3.	Sex ratio of children ever born and proportion of children dead by current age of women, Addis Ababa, 1984-1994.....	41
Table 3.1.	Distribution of urban centers by size class: Ethiopia, 1971-1994 (population in thousands).....	55
Table 3.2.	Population size, growth and rate of in-migration, Addis Ababa, 1961-1994.....	56
Table 3.3.	Selected characteristics of the migrant population of Addis Ababa, 1978-1994.....	56
Table 3.4.	Literacy status of the adult population of Addis Ababa, 1967-1994.....	67
Table 3.5.	Distribution of women by age and level of education attained, Addis Ababa, 1984-1994.....	68
Table 3.6.	Labour force participation rates for women, Addis Ababa, 1978-1994.....	70
Table 3.7.	Trends in infant mortality and crude death rates, Addis Ababa, 1967-1995.....	74
Table 3.8.	Child loss experience of women by selected characteristics at time of enumeration, Addis Ababa, 1994.....	75
Table 3.9.	Family planning program effort score as per cent of maximum, Ethiopia and selected countries and regions of the world, 1970-1994.....	78
Table 3.10.	Average annual household income (in real terms), Urban Ethiopia, 1978-1994.....	82
Table 4.1.	Reported total and age-specific fertility rates, Addis Ababa, 1978-1995.....	86
Table 4.2.	P/F ratios by migration status, Addis Ababa, 1984-1995.....	92
Table 4.3.	P/F ratios from the birth history data, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS.....	93
Table 4.4.	Trends in total and age-specific fertility rates from alternative techniques of fertility estimation and sources of data, Addis Ababa, 1994 and 1995.....	99
Table 4.5.	Estimated total and age-specific fertility rates, Addis Ababa, 1980-1994 (Migration adjusted).....	101
Table 4.6.	Censored parity progression ratios by age and time period, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS.....	105

Table 4.7.	Trends in Coale's indices of marriage (I_m), marital fertility (I_g) and over all Fertility (I_f), Addis Ababa, 1967-1994.....	106
Table 4.8.	Desire for additional children among fecund currently-married women by number of children ever born (including current pregnancy) at time of survey, Addis Ababa, 1990 and 1995.....	109
Table 5.1.	Trends in the proportion of never-married adults in selected age groups, Addis Ababa, 1967-1995.....	116
Table 5.2.	Singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM), Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia, 1967-1995.....	118
Table 5.3.	Indices of marital status and proportion of ever-married women, Addis Ababa, 1978-1994.....	122
Table 5.4.	Ratio of never-married males per hundred never-married females, Addis Ababa, 1984 and 1994.....	124
Table 5.5.	Percentage of currently married non-pregnant women aged 15-49, reporting current use of contraception, by specific method, 1990 NFFS and 1995 AFS.....	127
Table 5.6.	Distribution of women aged 15-49 years at first use of contraception by current age, number of living children at first use and method at first use, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS.....	129
Table 5.7.	Percentage distribution of currently married women using contraception at the time of survey by fertility intentions, age at survey and number of children ever born Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS and 1995 AFS	130
Table 5.8.	Trends in current use of contraception among currently married non-pregnant women by selected background characteristics of respondents, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS and 1995 AFS.....	132
Table 5.9.	Knowledge and ever-use of abortion, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS and 1995 AFS.....	134
Table 5.10.	Indirect estimates of total and age-specific abortion rates, Addis Ababa, estimated from 1990 NFFS and 1995 AFS.....	136
Table 5.11.	Duration of postpartum variables (in months) following a live birth, estimated based on births in last three years preceding survey, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS and 1995 AFS.....	141
Table 5.12.	Some measures of fertility impairment, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS and 1995 AFS.....	145
Table 5.13a.	Estimates of selected reproductive measures and derived indices of five proximate determinants according to Bongaarts's model, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS.....	151

Table 5.13b.	Estimates of selected reproductive measures and derived indices of five proximate determinants according to Bongaarts's model, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS.....	152
Table 5.14.	Decomposition of the change in total fertility in Addis Ababa between 1990 and 1995.....	157
Table 5.15.	Coefficients and relative risks of first marriage from Cox proportional hazard Model, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS and 1995 AFS.....	161
Table 6.1.	Bivariate differentials and differential rate of change in average lifetime fertility, Addis Ababa, 1984 and 1994.....	170
Table 6.2.	Parameter estimates for Poisson and negative binomial regression models of lifetime fertility among currently-married women, Addis Ababa, 1984 and 1994.....	187
Table 6.3.	Parameter estimates for Poisson and negative binomial regression models of lifetime fertility among currently-married women, Addis Ababa, pooled data from 1984 and 1994 censuses.....	193
Table 6.4.	Definition and measurement of variables used in the Synthesis framework.....	199
Table 6.5.	Multiple regression result of supply (C_n) and demand for children (C_d) and cost of regulation (RC) on socio-economic and cultural variables, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS.....	202
Table 7.1.	Economic and demographic indicators for Addis Ababa and urban areas of selected African countries, 1990-1995.....	223
Table A.1.1.	Proportion of matched children in the 1984 and 1994 censuses and the 1990 and 1995 fertility surveys, Addis Ababa.....	249
Table A.1.2.	Comparison of migration adjusted and unadjusted total and age-specific fertility rates, Addis Ababa, 1984 and 1994.....	254
Table A.1.3.	Use-effectiveness rates for selected methods of contraception	249

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Trends in period total fertility rate (PTFR) per woman by place of residence, Ethiopia 1970-1990.....	4
Figure 2.1.a.	Digit preference (avoidance) pattern by marital status, Addis Ababa, 1995, AFS...	36
Figure 2.1.b.	Digit preference (avoidance) pattern by literacy status, Addis Ababa, 1995, AFS ..	37
Figure 2.2.	Number of births and sex ratio by number of calendar years of birth prior to survey, Addis Ababa, 1990, NFFS.....	42
Figure 3.1.	Proportion of literate person in Addis Ababa, 1961-1994.....	66
Figure 3.2.	Mean number of years of education by age group of women, Addis Ababa, 1984-1990.....	69
Figure 3.3.	Occupational distribution of economically active women, Addis Ababa, 1978-1994.....	71
Figure 3.4.	Unemployment rate among males aged 15-34 years, Addis Ababa, 1978-1994.....	81
Figure 4.1.	P/F Ratios by age of women and survey/census date, Addis Ababa, 1978-1995...	87
Figure 4.2.	Overlapping estimates of total fertility rate from own-children procedure, Addis Ababa, 1970-1995.....	100
Figure 4.3.	Cohort fertility per woman, Addis Ababa, 1990 NFFS.....	103
Figure 4.4.	Contribution to total fertility rate, Addis Ababa, 1978-1995.....	107
Figure 5.1.	The relative strength of influence of the five proximate determinants of fertility: A comparison of data for Addis Ababa with the average for countries having a similar fertility level as that of Addis Ababa.....	156
Figure A.1.1.	Devation in total and age-specific fertility rates estimated alternatively from MPN and RHH matching, 1995 AFS.....	250