

Social Norms towards ART in Italy: A Vignette Study

Daniele Vignoli, Ester Lazzari, Valentina Tocchioni, Marco Cozzani

The international literature has often depicted Italy as the antidote to the broad changes to the family occurring in other wealthy countries. However, the stereotypical view of Italy as an old fashioned and traditional society, at least demographically, stands to fall. The conundrum of rapidly changes in family-related behaviors, on the one side, and the enduring low fertility and sky-rocking age at first birth, on the other, make Italy especially interesting to study prevailing social norms and attitudes towards Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). The existing legal framework appears to be rooted in societal norms; however, it remains uncertain whether these regulations align with contemporary attitudes toward ART, or if they reflect antiquated societal norms in the present day. This paper addresses these questions by taking a novel perspective to assess the role of social norms and attitudes towards ART in Italy through the use of a factorial survey experiment. In our experimental setting, we expose the respondents to several scenarios (vignettes) characterized by different couple's characteristics (female partner's age; parity; duration of the couple's attempts to conceive a child; expenses of the procedure; type of treatment recommended by the doctor; proximity to a fertility centre) and ask them what this couple should and will do with respect to the eventual use of ART to achieve their fertility goals.