The Impact of Interfering Reproductive Events on the Spacing Between First and Second Live Births

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Existing research on the fulfilment of reproductive intentions and childbirth spacing often omits consideration of interfering reproductive events such as miscarriages, induced abortions, stillbirths, or infertility treatments, which can significantly impact the timing between live births. This study investigates how various interfering reproductive events influence the interval between the first and second live births among Czech women. It specifically examines the impact of different types and numbers of events, their timing relative to the first live birth, and their contribution to reproductive scenarios like the catch-up or postponement effect associated with late reproduction. Data from the Czech National Health Information System covering selected cohorts of women born between 1976 and 1991 are analysed using the Cox proportional hazards model. This approach assesses the effects of age, birth cohort, and the number and type of interfering reproductive events on the timing between the first and second live births. The study finds that interfering reproductive events are strongly associated with prolonged intervals between births. Notably, miscarriages and fertility treatments prior to the first live birth are linked to the catch-up effect, accelerating subsequent childbirth. In contrast, induced abortions, particularly those following the first live birth, relate to the postponement effect, where plans for a second child are delayed or abandoned.