



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI CAGLIARI

Economics Seminars

Friday 25 September 2026 at 12:00

Aula 11 Edificio Baffi

Facoltà di Scienze Economiche Giuridiche e Politiche - Viale Sant'Ignazio 74

Solmaz Moslehi

Monash University

Parenting Style and Fertility Choices

Abstract. Parenting style and fertility are inherently interrelated. Intensive parenting requires greater parental effort and may discourage fertility, while having more children constrains the time and effort parents can devote to each child, thereby shaping parenting choices. Despite this interaction, the existing literature has largely studied fertility and parenting style in isolation. This paper bridges the two literatures by examining how socioeconomic conditions and policies jointly shape parents' fertility and parenting-style choices, and how parenting style, in turn, affects fertility outcomes.

Using data from the World Values Survey, we document systematic cross-country patterns in parenting styles and fertility over the course of economic development. As countries become richer, parenting tends to shift from authoritarian to authoritative and eventually toward permissive styles, while fertility declines before partially rebounding in high-income economies. Micro-level evidence further shows that, relative to authoritative parents, authoritarian parents have more children, whereas permissive parents have fewer. To uncover the mechanism, we turn to the PSID Child Development Supplement, which lets us construct the expenditure and time parents put into their children under each parenting style, how much strain parents report, and how much time the child spends investing in activities that build his/her own human capital. A more intensive style demands more on every one of these margins: expenditure, active parental time, self-reported burden, and the child's own investment time, and this pattern differs by parental education.



To interpret these patterns, we develop a quantitative overlapping-generations model in which parents jointly choose fertility and parenting style. Parenting styles differ in how parents influence children's preference for instant gratification and in the effort required to raise children, thereby shaping the interaction between fertility, parental investments, and children's own learning and, consequently, the quantity–quality trade-off. We calibrate the model using PSID-CDS data, and the calibrated model is able to reproduce the observed relationships among parenting styles, fertility, child learning, and parental time inputs. Preliminary quantitative results reveal substantial endogenous sorting into parenting styles by parental education, child innate ability, and household income. Higher parental education is associated primarily with a shift from authoritarian toward permissive parenting. Higher child ability tends to be associated with more permissive parenting, whereas lower-ability children are relatively more likely to receive more interventionist parenting (authoritarian and authoritative styles). High-income households are substantially less likely to choose authoritarian and more likely to choose permissive. Additionally, endogenous sorting into parenting styles amplifies the negative relationship between parental education and fertility.