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An Examination of the Factors Influencing Newlywed Individuals' Motivations About Having Children

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Research Article

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Posted Date: August 14th, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-10127908/v1

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Additional Declarations: No competing interests reported.

Manuscript Title

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Abstract

This cross-sectional study examines childbearing motivations among childless individuals in Türkiye aged 18 and over who have been married for no more than 5 years, focusing on several psychosocial variables. Data were collected online using snowball sampling and included 204 newly married individuals. Most participants were women (81.4%), and the mean age was 29.90 years. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses were conducted. The regression results indicated that the model predicting positive childbearing motivation was significant and explained 7.3% of the variance; within this model, only life satisfaction was a significant predictor. The model predicting negative childbearing motivation was also significant and explained 12.7% of the variance; within this model, only financial well-being was the only significant negative predictor. Overall, the findings suggest that childbearing motivations have a multidimensional structure and are shaped by different psychosocial variables in different ways.

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Introduction

Family is often seen as the smallest institutional unit of social life. It gains formal recognition through marriage, and couples' decisions about having children contribute to the continuity of society. In recent years, however, young people's views on marriage have changed, and these changes have also influenced how newly married couples think about having children. Shifting social and cultural dynamics have reshaped how newly married couples view family life. As a result, people's views of children and their decisions about parenthood have also changed.

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (2024), the total fertility rate in Türkiye declined from 2.05 in 2011 to 1.48 in 2024. This means that fertility has fallen below the population replacement level of 2.10. Research has linked this substantial decline to the rising economic costs of raising children, increased female labor force

participation, high inflation, economic uncertainty, and especially widespread youth unemployment (İğdeli, 2019). At the same time, some childless individuals describe their situation as a conscious choice (Agrillo & Nelini, 2008). Kelly (2009), for example, argued that voluntary childlessness is a choice grounded in personal agency and individual freedom. In this sense, voluntary childlessness has become an increasingly visible phenomenon in contemporary societies (Sakman, 2021).

As in many other countries, these changes in family structure and childbearing tendencies are also evident in Türkiye, especially among newly married couples. Understanding how recent socioeconomic and global developments shape motivations to have children is important for understanding demographic continuity. Previous studies have shown that fertility intentions and childbearing preferences are influenced by a wide range of demographic, relational, and socioeconomic factors, including family experiences, employment conditions, age, and the division of domestic responsibilities (Erfani & Pilon, 2025). However, examining more contemporary psychosocial variables such as perceived financial well-being, climate change anxiety, and satisfaction with life may contribute not only to the literature but also to the development of public policies and family counseling services.

Childbearing Motivations

People's everyday behavior is shaped by both internal tendencies and environmental influences. One of the key forces behind behavior is motivation, a psychological process that initiates, directs, and sustains action toward specific goals (Arslan, 2013; Eyigün, 2015). Motivation does more than start behavior; it also gives behavior direction and energy. Its energizing component prepares the individual for action, whereas its directional component determines the goal toward which that action is aimed. Miller (1992) described motivation as a set of psychological tendencies shaped by genetic structure and life experiences and maintained relatively consistently over time. Motivation often operates outside conscious awareness, yet under certain conditions it becomes activated and directly influences behavior.

In this context, childbearing motivations can be defined as the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral tendencies that individuals develop toward the idea of parenthood. These tendencies shape the desire to have children and form the basis of the decision to become a parent (Huczewska et al., 2023). Childbearing motivation therefore plays a central role in understanding and predicting fertility behavior. The factors that influence motivation vary at both the

individual and environmental levels and include beliefs, values, goals, personal satisfaction and growth, reward and punishment mechanisms, and the desire for social approval (Miller, 1994). Childbearing motivations can also change over time. Today, having children is no longer viewed only as a responsibility to society. Instead, it is increasingly evaluated in relation to personal fulfillment, lifestyle preferences, economic constraints, and the responsibilities that come with parenthood. In this sense, motivations about having children play a critical role in shaping reproductive behavior, desires, and fertility intentions (Duran, 2023; Guedes et al., 2015).

Researchers generally discuss childbearing motivations in two broad dimensions: positive and negative motivations. Positive childbearing motivations are associated with factors such as socioeconomic gains, satisfaction derived from the marital relationship, personal fulfillment, and continuation of the family line. In contrast, social and ecological concerns, marital stress, and financial problems are often considered negative motivations. This two-dimensional structure provides a useful framework for understanding and explaining childbearing decision-making processes (Şimal, 2019; Taylan, 2009). Within this framework, contemporary social dynamics may further shape how these motivations are formed and experienced. In particular, childrearing has increasingly taken on a competitive character in modern societies, accompanied by the emergence of high parenting standards. This transformation may intensify both psychological and economic pressures on individuals. As a result, individuals may evaluate their parental adequacy through social comparison processes, which can influence their well-being and, in turn, shape both positive and negative motivations toward having children (Zong & Hawk, 2025).

In this study, we examined how childbearing motivations are shaped by financial well-being, climate change anxiety, and satisfaction with life.

Financial Well-Being

Financial well-being is a subjective concept that reflects how individuals perceive their economic adequacy and is widely considered an important indicator of quality of life. It depends on how people evaluate their own financial situation and is shaped more by personal perceptions than by objective indicators. As a result, individuals with similar economic conditions may still report different levels of financial well-being (Merdan, 2023).

Early work often linked financial well-being to subjective happiness and economic satisfaction. Fergusson and colleagues (1981, as cited in Kılınç, 2023), for instance, defined financial well-being in terms of income and material assets, whereas Leach, Hayhoe, and Turner (1999) emphasized satisfaction with one's economic situation. Williams (1983, as cited in Kılınç, 2023) approached financial well-being as a holistic structure involving both material and nonmaterial dimensions. More recent approaches view financial well-being as a multidimensional construct that goes beyond current financial status. From this perspective, it includes the ability to meet financial goals, fulfill financial obligations, feel secure about the future, and enjoy the economic freedom needed to live a satisfying life (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2015; Xiao, 2016). Financial well-being therefore also reflects people's sense of control over their economic lives and their confidence about the future. Its sustainability is closely tied to the ability to manage economic life effectively, reduce financial stress, and cope with future uncertainty (Lambert et al., 2023; Paylan & Kavas, 2020). Rising economic uncertainty, global crises, and concerns about job security can all weaken financial security and subjective well-being (Brüggen et al., 2017).

The literature consistently shows that financial well-being is meaningfully related to life satisfaction, happiness, and psychological well-being (Barclays, 2014; Özer & Kutbay, 2018; Yu & Chen, 2016). At the same time, economic uncertainty, perceived income inadequacy, unemployment, and housing insecurity may lead individuals to postpone having children or avoid parenthood altogether (Ayllon, 2019; Hashemzadeh et al., 2021; Szcześniak et al., 2025; Tavousi et al., 2016; Torkian Valashani et al., 2019). The rising costs of raising children and the perceived need for adequate financial preparation may strengthen the tendency to delay childbearing until individuals feel economically secure (Hamm et al., 2018; Zabak et al., 2023). This suggests that financial well-being depends not only on current income but also on future-oriented economic security and financial flexibility.

Among married individuals, perceived financial well-being appears to affect not only personal well-being but also marital adjustment and relationship satisfaction. Financial disagreements are a major source of marital conflict, and such difficulties can make relationship adjustment especially fragile in the early years of marriage (Aytaç & Rankin, 2009; Britt et al., 2008). Economic uncertainty and expectations related to shared financial responsibilities directly influence newly married couples' relationship satisfaction as well as long-term life decisions such as having children (Papp et al., 2009). In this sense, financial well-being is a multilayered variable that shapes couple dynamics, marital

adjustment, and family planning, not just individual well-being. For newly married couples in particular, perceived financial well-being appears to be directly related to the transition to parenthood (Rick, 2024).

Climate Change Anxiety

According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), climate change refers to changes in the climate system and increases in the planet's average temperature caused by the rise of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to human activities such as fossil fuel use, land-use change, deforestation, and industrial activity (as cited in Kovancı, 2019). Today, climate change is a major issue not only because of its environmental and physical consequences but also because of its effects on psychological well-being. The literature shows that climate-related crises can trigger emotional responses such as trauma, anxiety, fear, distress, and depression in both the short and long term (Özbay & Alcı, 2021). This has led to a growing academic discussion of the mental health consequences of climate change.

Within this literature, the concept of eco-anxiety has become increasingly visible. Eco-anxiety is commonly defined as a chronic fear of environmental disaster that emerges in response to future-oriented uncertainty and perceived threat related to the climate crisis. At the same time, emotional responses to climate change are not limited to eco-anxiety. They are also discussed through concepts such as climate trauma, ecological grief, and solastalgia. What these concepts share is an effort to make sense of the psychological responses individuals experience in the face of environmental degradation (Clayton et al., 2017; Crownshaw, 2020; Pihkala, 2020; Thompson, 2021).

As climate change accelerates, ideas about parenthood are also changing. This shift is reshaping adults' sense of responsibility and their understanding of everyday family life (Tracchegiani & Carone, 2026). Stewart (2021) argued that the effects of climate change on ecosystems and human cultures form the basis of fear and anxiety about future climate uncertainty. In this sense, environmental losses caused by climate disruption may generate psychological reactions similar to grief. Problems such as drought, extreme weather events, disruptions in food systems, and water insecurity have now become a global crisis that extends beyond individual experience. Against this backdrop, the role of climate change in childbearing decisions has become an important research topic. According to a report by UNFPA Türkiye (2024), the climate crisis should be understood not only in environmental and economic terms but also as a profound public health crisis in relation to sexual and reproductive health. Rising

temperatures, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation not only make access to health care more difficult but also undermine people's willingness and capacity to have children.

The literature further suggests that increasing uncertainty related to climate change may reduce fertility intentions among young adults. Dillarstone, Brown, and Flores (2023) found that climate-related anxiety influences individuals' decisions about having children. Similarly, Puglisi, Muttarak, and Vignoli (2025) reported that individuals who view climate change as a major issue or the greatest problem of the future tend to have lower intentions to have children. These findings suggest that growing numbers of individuals now consider environmental uncertainty and the possible future consequences of the climate crisis when making plans about parenthood. Galway and Field (2023) also reported that young people who experience fear, sadness, worry, and helplessness in response to climate change may develop serious hesitation about having children.

In recent years, studies examining the effects of climate change on childbearing decisions have also drawn attention to the idea that choosing not to have children is not only a personal preference but can also be framed as a political and ethical stance. One example is the BirthStrike movement, in which individuals consciously choose not to have children in response to environmental crisis, climate uncertainty, and ecological collapse, framing this decision as a form of ecological activism or "birth strike." McMullen and Dow (2022) found that participants in the BirthStrike for Climate movement viewed escalating environmental threats as a serious risk to the future livability of the planet and therefore positioned the limitation of fertility as an existential warning. This perspective highlights the ways climate change has taken on new meaning in relation to individual responsibility and social awareness, while also making visible the role of environmental anxiety in reshaping childbearing decisions.

Satisfaction With Life

Satisfaction with life is a component of subjective well-being and, together with positive and negative emotions, shapes individuals' overall psychological condition (Proctor, 2014). Positive emotions tend to increase life satisfaction, whereas negative emotions tend to reduce it. Satisfaction with life is therefore influenced both by people's emotional states and by their cognitive evaluations of their living conditions (Çavuş & Cumaliyeva, 2013). Demographic factors such as age, gender, educational level, personality traits, and socioeconomic status also shape life satisfaction (Mroczek & Spiro, 2005). Research generally shows that younger individuals report higher life

satisfaction, whereas this tends to decline in middle and later adulthood. Although economic status has a positive effect up to a certain point, higher income does not necessarily lead to a substantial additional increase. This pattern is often explained by the Easterlin Paradox, which suggests that people are more sensitive to social comparisons than to their absolute income level (Cansu, 2025; Easterlin, 2001). Importantly, individuals do not respond to economic conditions in a purely passive manner. In the face of financially challenging circumstances, they may develop cognitive and emotional coping strategies that help them regulate stress and reinterpret their situation. Such adaptive processes can play a crucial role in buffering the negative psychological impact of economic strain and sustaining individuals' overall life satisfaction (Pierce et al., 2026). Job-related challenges also affect life satisfaction. Long working hours, low wages, and heavy responsibilities may reduce life satisfaction by negatively affecting social and family life (Erdinç, 2018).

The literature has identified several domains of life satisfaction. Ulengin and colleagues (2001) described life satisfaction in relation to family life, working life, social environment, health, economic conditions, the conditions of the country in which one lives, self-perception, and spiritual life. Similarly, Rojas (2006) conceptualized life satisfaction in terms of economic well-being, physical health, emotional well-being, parenthood, social activities, political participation, and personal development.

Life satisfaction may shape not only personal happiness but also major life decisions. Research suggests that the relationship between life satisfaction and childbearing decisions is not fixed and may vary by context. For example, studies conducted in OECD countries did not find a universal association, but they did show that life satisfaction among individuals aged 35 to 49 was significantly related to moderate fertility levels (Lee & Choi, 2012). Similarly, Parr (2010) and Le Moglie et al. (2015) reported that life satisfaction positively influenced childbearing behavior and intentions to have a second child.

Aim of the Study

Rapid changes in social, economic, and environmental conditions are reshaping people's lifestyles, values, and future plans. These changes are especially visible in family life and parenting roles. In Türkiye, growing economic uncertainty and environmental problems linked to climate change have begun to reshape people's life choices and family dynamics. Rising inflation, housing market difficulties, and instability in the labor market are leading

individuals to make future plans more cautiously. As a result, people appear to be marrying later and postponing or reconsidering their decisions about having children. These trends extend beyond individual preferences and may influence the demographic structure of society, economic sustainability, and social welfare systems. Declining fertility rates, for example, may contribute in the long term to population aging, a shrinking working-age population, and imbalances in social security systems. Furthermore, the long-term consequences of declining fertility rates have become increasingly important in aging societies. Marcinkiewicz and Chybalski (2025) emphasized that population aging has significant implications for countries' economic and social structures. The decline in the working-age population and the growing pressure on pension systems make the long-term consequences of low fertility rates more visible. For these reasons, it is important to examine the factors that shape childbearing motivations from a multidimensional perspective (Bayer, 2013; Dillarstone et al., 2023; Engin, 2022; Kavas & Thornton, 2020).

Most studies on childbearing have focused on university students, parents, or the general population, whereas newly married individuals, one of the groups closest to the childbearing decision process, have received relatively little attention. By focusing on newly married individuals, the present study addresses an important gap in the literature. Examining this group's experiences may also help inform social policy and intervention programs developed in different cultural contexts.

Accordingly, we examined the effects of financial well-being, climate change anxiety, and satisfaction with life on positive and negative childbearing motivations among newly married individuals. The hypothetical model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

Place Figure 1 about here

We tested the following hypotheses:

H1. Financial well-being significantly predicts positive childbearing motivation.

H2. Climate change anxiety significantly predicts positive childbearing motivation.

H3. Satisfaction with life significantly predicts positive childbearing motivation.

H4. Financial well-being significantly predicts negative childbearing motivation.

H5. Climate change anxiety significantly predicts negative childbearing motivation.

H6. Satisfaction with life significantly predicts negative childbearing motivation.

Method

Participants and Procedure

This cross-sectional survey study targeted individuals living in Türkiye who were 18 years or older and had been married for no more than 5 years. We used snowball sampling, a nonprobability sampling method, to recruit participants (Arslan & Demir, 2022). Through this approach, we reached additional individuals who met the study criteria through initial participants with similar characteristics. Data were collected through an online survey because this method offered both time and cost advantages.

A total of 231 individuals accessed the survey. Twenty-seven responses were excluded because of incomplete questionnaires. The final sample consisted of 204 participants. Of these, 166 (81.4%) were women and 38 (18.6%) were men. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 41 years, with a mean age of 29.90 years (SD = 3.37). In terms of education, 55.9% held a bachelor's degree (n = 114), 31.9% held a master's degree (n = 65), 5.9% held an associate degree (n = 12), 3.4% held a doctoral degree (n = 7), and 2.9% were high school graduates (n = 6). Regarding income, 47.1% (n = 96) reported that their income exceeded their expenses, 41.7% (n = 85) reported that income and expenses were equal, and 11.2% (n = 23) reported that their income was lower than their expenses. In terms of marital adjustment, 35.8% (n = 73) described their marriage as very harmonious, 52.5% (n = 107) as harmonious, 10.8% (n = 22) as neither harmonious nor disharmonious, and 1.0% (n = 2) as disharmonious.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the author's affiliated university prior to data collection, and the research was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Participation was entirely voluntary, and only individuals who agreed to take part were included in the study. An informed consent form appeared on the first page of the online survey and explained the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, and participants' rights, including the right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Participants provided their consent before completing the questionnaire.

This manuscript was prepared in accordance with the STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) reporting guideline, and the completed STROBE checklist is provided as supplementary material (Elm et al., 2007; Elm et al., 2025).

Instruments

In addition to a demographic information form, we used the Childbearing Motivation Scale, the Financial Well-Being Scale, the Climate Change Anxiety Scale, and the Satisfaction With Life Scale. We obtained the necessary permissions to use all scales.

Childbearing Motivation Scale

Guedes and colleagues (2015) developed the Childbearing Motivation Scale, and Şimşek (2017) adapted it into Turkish. The Turkish adaptation established the reliability of the scale. The scale includes two subscales: positive childbearing motivation and negative childbearing motivation. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .93 for positive childbearing motivation and .89 for negative childbearing motivation.

Financial Well-Being Scale

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (2015) developed the Financial Well-Being Scale, and Çopur and Menjivar (2018) conducted its validity and reliability study in Turkish. In that study, Cronbach's alpha supported the reliability of the instrument. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .86.

Climate Change Anxiety Scale

Stewart (2021) developed the Climate Change Anxiety Scale, and Özbay and Alcı (2021) adapted it into Turkish. In the Turkish adaptation study, Cronbach's alpha was reported as .98. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .94.

Satisfaction With Life Scale

Diener and colleagues (1985) developed the Satisfaction With Life Scale, and Dağlı and Baysal (2016) adapted it into Turkish. In the Turkish adaptation study, Cronbach's alpha was .88 and the test–retest correlation coefficient was .97. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .83.

Data Analysis

We conducted all statistical analyses using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 and accepted $p < .05$ as the threshold for statistical significance. We first calculated descriptive statistics to examine the general characteristics of the data, including means, standard deviations, minimum values, and maximum values for all variables (Table 2). We also present the reliability coefficients, skewness values, and kurtosis values of the scales in Table 1. Because all Cronbach's alpha values were above acceptable limits and the skewness and kurtosis values fell within the ±1 range, we concluded that the data met the assumption of normality.

Because the data were normally distributed, we used parametric tests. Before conducting the regression analyses, we ran Pearson correlation analyses to examine bivariate relationships among the variables. We then used multiple linear regression analyses to test the predictive effects of the independent variables on childbearing motivations. We interpreted correlation coefficients as follows: .00 to .30 indicated a weak relationship, .31 to .60 indicated a moderate relationship, .61 to .80 indicated a strong relationship, and .81 to 1.00 indicated a very strong relationship. Positive coefficients indicated a relationship in the same direction, whereas negative coefficients indicated an inverse relationship.

Place Table 1 about here

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables examined in this study. Scores for positive childbearing motivation ranged from 23 to 106, with a mean of 52.72 (SD = 15.98). This suggests that participants generally

reported moderate levels of positive childbearing motivation. Scores for negative childbearing motivation ranged from 13 to 64, with a mean of 37.30 (*SD* = 10.93). Overall, this suggests that participants did not report extremely strong negative motivations toward having children, although the relatively high standard deviation indicates that some participants had notably high levels of negative motivation. Financial well-being scores ranged from 4 to 40, with a mean of 25.21 (*SD* = 7.08), suggesting that participants' perceived financial well-being was above the midpoint and varied across individuals. Climate change anxiety scores ranged from 10 to 50, with a mean of 25.11 (*SD* = 8.66), indicating a moderate level of climate change anxiety overall, again with some variation across participants. Satisfaction with life scores ranged from 6 to 25, with a mean of 16.08 (*SD* = 3.41). These findings suggest that participants' life satisfaction was above average and showed a more homogeneous distribution than the other variables.

Place Table 2 about here

Correlation Analysis

We conducted Pearson correlation analyses to examine bivariate relationships among the variables, and the results are presented in Table 3. Positive childbearing motivation was positively, weakly, and significantly associated with satisfaction with life ($r = .212$, $p < .01$). This finding suggests that higher life satisfaction is associated with stronger positive childbearing motivation.

Negative childbearing motivation was negatively and moderately associated with financial well-being ($r = -.311$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher financial well-being is associated with lower negative childbearing motivation. Negative childbearing motivation was also positively, weakly, and significantly associated with climate change anxiety ($r = .174$, $p < .05$), suggesting that greater climate change anxiety is associated with stronger negative childbearing motivation. In addition, negative childbearing motivation was negatively and weakly associated with satisfaction with life ($r = -.253$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher life satisfaction is associated with lower negative childbearing motivation.

Place Table 3 about here

Regression Analysis

We conducted a multiple regression analysis to determine the predictors of positive childbearing motivation. In this model, positive childbearing motivation was the dependent variable, and financial well-being, satisfaction with life, and climate change anxiety were entered as independent variables. The model explained 7.3% of the variance in positive childbearing motivation ($R^2 = .073$). The adjusted R^2 value of .054 suggested that the model had limited explanatory power. Still, the model as a whole was statistically significant, $F = 3.918$, $p < .01$. This indicates that, taken together, the independent variables had a small but significant effect on positive childbearing motivation.

When we examined the individual predictors, only satisfaction with life had a statistically significant positive effect on positive childbearing motivation ($B = 1.538$, $\beta = .328$, $p < .001$). In other words, as life satisfaction increased, positive childbearing motivation also increased. By contrast, financial well-being ($B = -0.274$, $\beta = -.122$, $p = .132$) and climate change anxiety ($B = 0.082$, $\beta = .044$, $p = .526$) did not significantly predict positive childbearing motivation ($p > .05$). Accordingly, H1 and H2 were not supported, whereas H3 was supported.

Place Table 4 about here

We then conducted a second regression analysis to examine the predictors of negative childbearing motivation. In this model, negative childbearing motivation was the dependent variable, and financial well-being, satisfaction with life, and climate change anxiety were again included as independent variables. The model explained 12.7% of the variance in negative childbearing motivation ($R^2 = .127$). The adjusted R^2 value of .109 again indicated limited explanatory power. However, the model as a whole was statistically significant, $F = 7.208$, $p < .001$. This suggests that the independent variables, when considered together, had a significant but limited effect on negative childbearing motivation.

Among the predictors, only financial well-being had a statistically significant negative effect on negative childbearing motivation ($B = -0.332$, $\beta = -.215$, $p = .006$). This indicates that higher levels of financial well-being were associated with lower negative childbearing motivation. By contrast, climate change anxiety ($B = 0.164$, $\beta = .130$, $p = .056$) and satisfaction with life ($B = -0.401$, $\beta = -.125$, $p = .131$) did not significantly predict negative childbearing motivation ($p > .05$). Accordingly, H4 was supported, whereas H5 and H6 were not supported.

Place Table 5 about here

Discussion

In this study, we examined childbearing motivations among newly married individuals through the lens of economic, psychological, and environmental variables, distinguishing between positive and negative motivations. Overall, our findings suggest that childbearing motivations are not shaped by a single factor. Instead, they reflect a multidimensional process in which different variables operate in different ways.

For positive childbearing motivation, satisfaction with life emerged as a significant positive predictor. This finding suggests that life satisfaction is an important variable for understanding why newly married individuals develop more positive motivations toward having children. Earlier research has similarly shown that life satisfaction supports long-term goal setting and is linked to the search for personal meaning (Luhmann & Hennecke, 2017; Parr, 2010; Le Moglie et al., 2015). From this perspective, individuals with higher life satisfaction may be more likely to view parenthood as a meaningful experience that adds value to their lives. Our regression results further showed that life satisfaction was the only significant predictor of positive childbearing motivation. The fact that it remained significant even after controlling for the other variables suggests that it may serve as a key psychological resource in shaping positive childbearing motivation.

For negative childbearing motivation, financial well-being emerged as a significant negative predictor. This finding suggests that financial well-being plays an important role in reducing newly married individuals' negative motivations toward having children. This result is consistent with previous research showing that economic uncertainty may delay or constrain fertility decisions (Tavousi et al., 2017; Vahdani et al., 2018; Wei et al., 2018). Our regression results indicate that financial well-being was the only significant negative predictor of negative childbearing motivation. This suggests that economic security may be especially important in reducing the concerns and hesitations that underlie negative childbearing motivations.

Climate change anxiety did not significantly predict negative childbearing motivation in the regression model. This suggests that the effect of climate change anxiety on childbearing motivations may be less direct and may operate through more contextual or indirect pathways. This interpretation is consistent with Ojala's (2021) argument that

trust or distrust in climate science shapes young people's levels of environmental worry, coping strategies, and identity development processes. In this sense, the psychological effects of climate change may not translate directly into a clear decision about parenthood; rather, they may first influence how individuals interpret environmental threats, regulate their emotions, and position themselves in relation to the future. Therefore, climate change anxiety may affect childbearing motivations indirectly through broader meaning-making processes and future-oriented attitudes rather than as an immediate standalone predictor. Previous studies have shown that environmental concerns may reduce fertility intentions by shaping individuals' perceptions of the future (Fagan & Huang, 2019; Golovina & Jokela, 2024; Rackin et al., 2023). It has also been argued that growing media attention to the climate crisis strengthens uncertainty about future generations (Abnett, 2024; Dickie, 2023; Smith, 2024), which may in turn affect decisions about having children. Rotkirch and colleagues (2017) suggested that individuals may connect their reasons for not having children to macro-level threats, whereas Powdthavee, Oswald, and Lockwood (2024) found that individuals with higher environmental concern were less likely to have children. People may hesitate to raise children in a future world they perceive as uncertain or risky. They may also adopt a more cautious stance toward parenthood when they consider possible difficulties in accessing basic resources. Similarly, as Pegram (2018) emphasized, climate-related disasters such as floods, droughts, storms, and wildfires threaten not only present quality of life but also expectations of a safe and livable future. Even so, in our study, climate change anxiety did not emerge as a significant predictor in the regression model.

Life satisfaction also did not significantly predict negative childbearing motivation. This suggests that its influence on negative motivations may not be sufficiently independent or strong once the other variables are taken into account. Put differently, life satisfaction may matter more for strengthening positive motivations than for reducing negative ones.

Taken together, our findings show that childbearing motivations are shaped by different variables in different ways. Life satisfaction appears to be more important for positive motivations, whereas financial well-being appears to play a stronger role in reducing negative motivations. By contrast, the influence of macro-level variables such as climate change anxiety appears to be more limited and indirect. This multidimensional interpretation is also consistent with findings from other contexts showing that childbearing motivations are shaped not only by individual-level perceptions but also by broader structural conditions. For example, Kang and Hwang (2024) showed in South Korea

that low fertility is closely linked to childcare-related structural conditions and the accessibility of child-care-friendly communities. Their findings suggest that motivations regarding parenthood may be influenced not only by personal resources and psychological evaluations but also by how supportive the surrounding social environment is for raising children.

Finally, the relatively low explanatory power of our regression models suggests that childbearing motivations cannot be fully explained by the variables included in this study alone. This points to the need for a broader framework that also considers cultural values, social norms, individual life goals, and career expectations.

Practical Implications

Our findings suggest that childbearing motivations should be understood not only in terms of individual preferences but also in relation to economic and psychosocial conditions. In particular, the significant negative effect of financial well-being on negative childbearing motivation suggests that when people feel more financially secure, they may view having children less negatively. At the same time, the limited explanatory power of the model suggests that economic factors alone are not enough. Policies aimed at increasing fertility rates may therefore have limited impact if they rely only on economic incentives. Instead, family and population policies should adopt a more holistic approach. Alongside improving individuals' financial conditions, such policies should also support work–life balance, career planning, and the transition to parenthood. Expanding childcare services, developing flexible work arrangements, and promoting family-friendly workplace policies may all help strengthen childbearing motivation indirectly. In addition, family policies designed to enhance economic security and promote gender equality may contribute to stronger childbearing motivations. Chybalski and Marcinkiewicz (2024) argued that supporting women's participation in the labor market, strengthening their economic and decision-making roles within the family, and expanding family-friendly policies may positively influence individuals' decisions to have children.

Our finding that life satisfaction positively predicted positive childbearing motivation further suggests that subjective well-being may play an important role in parenthood decisions. Social policies and interventions that support psychological well-being may therefore strengthen childbearing motivation indirectly by increasing life satisfaction.

At the same time, the fact that climate change anxiety did not emerge as a significant predictor in the regression analyses suggests that this variable may play a more indirect or contextual role rather than a direct one. For this reason, environmental factors that shape people's views of the future should be considered together with other psychosocial variables.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. First, we limited the sample to childless individuals who were 18 years or older and had been married for no more than 5 years. This limits the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should include broader and more representative samples covering different age groups, marriage durations, and sociocultural contexts.

Second, the literature on this topic remains limited, and existing studies have used different samples, which makes direct comparison somewhat difficult. More studies focusing specifically on newly married individuals would make an important contribution to the literature.

Third, the cross-sectional design did not allow us to examine causal relationships among the variables or changes over time. Future research could use longitudinal designs to better capture how childbearing motivations develop and change over time.

Finally, the relatively low explanatory power of the regression models suggests that other variables may also play an important role in shaping childbearing motivations. Future studies should consider including variables such as cultural values, social norms, individual life goals, and career expectations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these decision-making processes.

Acknowledgements

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Funding

The authors declare that the current study was not financially supported by any institution or organization.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethics approval

The research was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and before the data collection phase the necessary permissions were obtained from the Hacettepe University Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics approval number: E66777842-300-00003282420).

Informed Consent

Informed consent is obtained from all participants.

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Table 1 Reliability, Skewness, and Kurtosis Values of the Scales

Scale	n	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
Positive Childbearing Motivation	204	0,843	0,656	0,930
Negative Childbearing Motivation	204	0,010	-0,314	0,896
Financial Well-Being	204	0,497	0,179	0,868
Climate Change Anxiety	204	0,189	-0,532	0,942
Satisfaction with Life	204	-0,227	0,088	0,833

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of the Scales (Min–Max–Mean–SD)

Scale	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Positive Childbearing Motivation	204	23,00	106,00	52,72	15,98
Negative Childbearing Motivation	204	13,00	64,00	37,30	10,93
Financial Well-Being	204	4,00	40,00	25,21	7,08
Climate Change Anxiety	204	10,00	50,00	25,11	8,66
Satisfaction with Life	204	6,00	25,00	16,08	3,41

Table 3 Correlation Analysis Between Positive and Negative Childbearing Motivation and Financial Well-Being, Climate Change Anxiety, and Satisfaction with Life

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Positive Childbearing Motivation	1				
2. Negative Childbearing Motivation	-0,123	1			
3. Financial Well-Being	0,005	**-,311****	1		
4. Climate Change Anxiety	0,056	**,174***	**-,185****	1	
5. Satisfaction with Life	**,212****	**-,253****	**,500****	-0,032	1

$^{*}p<0,05$; $^{**}p<0,01$

Table 4 Regression Analysis Results of Independent Variables Predicting Positive Childbearing Motivation

Independent Variables	B	Beta	T	P
(Constant)	50,530		4,835	**0,000****
Financial Well-Being	-0,274	-0,122	-1,514	0,132
Climate Change Anxiety	0,082	0,044	0,635	0,526
Satisfaction with Life	1,538	0,328	3,860	**0,000****
R		0,270		
R²		0,073		
R² Adj		0,054		
F		3,918		

**p<0,05; **p<0,01*

Table 5 Regression Analysis Results of Independent Variables Predicting Negative Childbearing Motivation

Independent Variables	B	Beta	T	P
(Constant)	51,692		7,454	**0,000****
Financial Well-Being	-0,332	-0,215	-2,758	**0,006****
Climate Change Anxiety	0,164	0,130	1,924	0,056
Satisfaction with Life	-0,401	-0,125	-1,516	0,131
R		0,356		
R²		0,127		
R² Adj		0,109		
F		7,208		

**p<0,05; **p<0,01*

Figure 1 Hypothetical Model

