

Lifestyle and Its Impact on Stability of an Urban Family

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Abstract

The paper presents an attempt to study the way a family depends on the nature and intensity of demographic processes, to identify relationship between reproduction and family behavior, its way of life (including reproductive behavior) and stability. There is analysis of changes in the nature of marriage and family relations as well as revealed factors that influence urban family life as well as birth, marriage and divorce rate. The article calls attention to the problem of stabilization and destabilization of urban families and the ways to regulate family relations. The paper is based on the results of the target sociological survey of two-parent families conducted by the author as well the statistics data.

Keywords: lifestyle, family, family stability, birth rate, marriage destabilization, marriage rate, divorce rate, migration

1. Introduction

Reproduction of population and family-marital relations as a part of public being and mind comprises not only the repeated generation alternation resulted from birth and death rates but reconstruction and change of social relations concerning family, marriage and children. Family takes a specific part in reproduction process being both a unique social institute and a small social group therefore acting as an object as well as a subject of reproduction.

Nowadays problems of family stability become relevant first of all for some negative trends of the current demographic situation namely high divorce rate, increased number of children brought up outside the family, more unmarried men and women, secondly, for evolutionary changes in family such as transition from authoritarian to egalitarian relations, restructuring family functions with spiritual and moral values being the most important ones (Gurko, 2010).

The literature devoted to the family problems and its stability pays much attention to the analysis of economic (Vasil'eva, 2001), social and psychological (Forsberg, 2009; Beach, 2007) conditions that make family ties stronger or loose. The aim of the work is to study family stability dependence on the nature and intensity of demographic processes, to find out relationship between reproduction and family behavior, its way of life (including reproductive behavior) and stability. We claim that the best tool to study undetected effects between these processes is the lifestyle of the given city.

2. Methods of Study

Various social institutions and agencies take part in the process of population reproduction. The states regulates family and marital relations directly or indirectly; work collectives, public organizations give effect to labor and moral education of a person, develop their scientific view of the world. The greatest part is played by public consciousness particularly public opinion as well as political psychology that perform regulative function in relation to different groups of population. For the time being there is great need for new relations and their character and stability influence the course of population reproduction, family development and functioning. We believe that among these relations there are following ones: 1) family type and its members mobility; the number of children in the family and social attitudes; 2) the character of family and marital relations and family stability level; 3) type of the settlement and the level of social and areal mobility of its residents; 4) demographic structure of the settlement and levels of marriage, birth and death; 5) public opinion, traditions and reproductive objectives of the family.

To reveal these relationships and dependence in 2006-2007 the author of the article conducted a special sociological research of full families. The results of sociological survey have become the experimental base of the given investigation. Full family was taken as a unit of measure, 600 families were studied, quota sampling was used. The study used survey methods, standardized interviews and document analysis (statistics). The aim of investigation was to study the functioning of an urban family, revealing influence of its lifestyle on reproductive behavior and stability of marriage relations.

3. Results

Lifestyle is an accumulator concentrating changes in conditions and nature of city population reproduction. In turn, the way of life as a way of people's activities and typical and mass stereotypes and behavior based on it has a direct impact on a family and its stability. Lower stability, destabilized family relationships in certain parts of the population are apparently connected to new values that can silence "marriage values" to some extent. We believe that these values are mostly of real and mythical character, but it is obvious that they are formed not only by concerted efforts of the government but also thanks to the mass commonplace sense. Hence there is need for special measures to influence the public consciousness.

Lack of harmony in marital relationship, marriage satisfaction with extremely high divorce rate is inversely proportional to the level of fertility. It goes without saying that one mustn't ignore all the socio-economic factors and demographic structure of the population that impact on reproduction. But they also have to take into account marriage. As L. E. Darsky notes: "increased probability of marriage breakup contributes to a lower level of marital fertility, as a woman is afraid to be alone with children and spouses do not want to "be bound" with a large number of children, taking into account possible divorce" (Darsky, 1999). Therefore, as marriage and family experts reasonably claim one of the most important conditions to increase the birth rate, in addition to stimulating measures of demographic policy in the country (talking about maternity capital) is to take measures against divorces, to prevent family breakdowns, to higher stability of marriage and family relations (Grall, 2011).

Urban family as a social institution as well as a small social group performs important social functions; it reproduces new generations, moral norms and patterns of behavior, being actively involved in socialization. The challenge is to create the most favorable conditions for normal functioning of a family.

Among measures to improve and control population reproduction and family development there must be those of ideological as well as social and psychological character. Our research of different families showed that as far as material wants are met moral and psychological factors in the life of a man and the family become more important. Developing preferences on the number of children in the family, ways to spend free time, communication modes, spouse expectations and claims are moving towards mental and moral realm. Particularly lower stability, destabilization of family relationships in some part of the population can be due to new values that somehow break family values. We claim that these values are both real and fabulous and they are developed not only at the expense of the state but mass common sense. Here arises need for special measures to influence social mind to make it healthy and draw attention of state and public organizations to the problem of the family and population reproduction. Awareness campaign with the help of mass media to inform people about the population, family, children education, indirect influence on public opinion, moral norms and ideals by law enforcement institutes are a part of methods and means to do to develop public opinion in agreement with the demographic policy conducted in our country.

4. Discussion

It goes without saying; professional, social and territorial mobility of citizens is reasonably required because it promotes development of new communities. On the other hand intense migration processes have a direct impact both on birth rate and urban family stability for worse living conditions of migrants can cause deferred demand for children; the time to adopt and change qualification result in economic and social and psychological difficulties in migrant families. We find here dialectically contradictory interrelation between migration mobility of population and family stability.

Feedback effect of family-marital relations on demographic development of the city is mainly produced in the way relations within the family affect migration mobility and marriage rate. It should be noted, a part of migrations is involuntary and caused by disharmony in family relations that intensify territorial mobility of the population and have negative impact on marriage and child birth dates.

Thus we can conclude that family instability results in deferred demand for children, attempts to change residence that all in one lead to smaller families with fewer children or one-parent families as well as misbalance in bride and groom age.

Family instability has a direct impact on birth rate because tension in family relationships, lack of confidence in their partner often become a key factor to decide how many children there will be in the family. Mostly it is the very decision on the second and the third child, whose birth is a response for the question what relations are in the family. It is indirectly proved by our studied materials of Ufa Civil Registry Offices (900 couples). Among spouses to get divorced only 5,6 percent had 3 children, 52 percent had one child and 12 percent didn't have any child at all (Igebaeva, 2005).

The very fact that there are children in the family makes it stronger because spouses are imposed responsibility for each other and the society. The higher educational function of the family more stable and balanced it develops. The family size is dependent on the character and well-being of family-marital relations and its stability level. It is also proved by our studies. Thus stable balanced families have more children than instable and tensed ones.

Family instability is shown up in its higher social and territorial mobility. It takes place as the result of divergence in cultural values, interests, social attitudes to real-life situations of older and younger generations.

Interest divergence in urban families can be explained by absence of joint activity that may unite all family members. This fact seems to result in father's status fall. Sampling studies conducted among students of high school in Ufa show that only 15 percent of children share their troubles and joy with their fathers. Father is an authority in no more than one third of the families. Some students rate fathers the second after mothers and in some circumstances they are mentioned after grandmothers, grandfathers or even aunts.

Speaking about diverse needs and interests of different families it is necessary to distinguish at least two ways of behavior: the first is aimed at saving and strengthening of living conditions, the second one is to change these conditions. Satisfaction and discontent in labour, wage and accommodation are directly related to evaluation of real-life situation and family stability level. More stable and socially similar families are aimed at saving and strengthening of existing living conditions. And on the contrary, unstable socially mixed families tend to change living positions and conditions.

We believe that the main factor that contributes to family stability and harmonious relations between spouses is mutual understanding and respect for each other. Lack or absence of these things in family relationships creates a particular moral atmosphere where there is more than usual nervousness, instability not only between spouses but between parents and children (Tamara, 1982). The question of our survey "How often do you feel a sense of confusion on the part of your husband (wife)?" was answered in the following way: "very often" by 12.5% of women and 9.8% of men; "sometimes" by 38.9% and 42.6% respectively, "rarely" by 24, 3% and 15.0%, "almost never" by 24, 3 % of women and 32, 6% of men.

Unsatisfaction in marriage often occurs due to different interests and ideas on family life values. Each spouse has their own model of family life, particular expectations from marriage. Influenced by the example of parents a stable image of future partner and family life is gradually formed, and for some time, especially in the early years of marriage, each spouse holds to their image. And at the very moment when mismatch in expected and real image of a partner and married life is detected there comes a state of frustration, reappraisal that sometimes lead to conflicts up to family disruption (Sweeney, 2002).

Statistics show decreased marriage stability resulting in increased number of divorces. As our study of married couples applied to Ufa People's Court for divorce shows the most intensively diverge family have lived 1-4 years, they amount 36% of all respondents. Thus divorce is primarily a problem of stabilization of young families. However disturbing is divorce in families where spouses have lived together for 10-12 years, they account 22% of all divorce cases. In most cases divorce initiators are women (63.4%). These data are consistent with the results of surveys in other cities of the country (Pasovets, 2011).

Reasons for higher divorce rate are different and due to structural and functional changes in the family. Family relations stability is being greatly affected by uneven load to carry by a man and a woman in the family itself as well in the social life. Woman is more tired of her duties at work and at home, she has too many problems to solve. As our research showed more than 60 percent of women find their marriage happy if their household duties are shared with husbands whereas 80 percent of women with unfair distribution of duties in the family think of their marriage as unsatisfactory. Moreover economic independence of women makes them more confident in money matters after divorce. We don't think it's casual that mostly women become divorce initiators (63,4 %).

Among the diverse motives of divorce one can distinguish between five the most common ones: alcoholism, infidelity, lack of mutual understanding, bad temper of a spouse and mismatch of values accounted for 70% of the possible causes of divorce. Thus the main reason of divorces doesn't relate to the material but moral factors.

5. Conclusions

Urban family lifestyle is due to specific nature of urban relations, common behavior stereotypes, mindsets and value systems. Urban life is characterized by the nature of employment, social and recreational activities of population. Work in large groups, more job opportunities, wider range of leisure activities, abundance of information, social networks and groups intensify lives of citizens and their families. Tendency to expand contacts and social relationships worsen neuropsychic load and interpersonal relationships that leads to concern and anger often affecting the family (Kharchev, 2004; Blossfeld & Hofmeister, 2005).

It should be noted that a city is not a closed self-reproducing social and demographic system. One of urban population reproduction characteristics is its rather unstable demographic structure. If in rural settlements proportion of younger and elderly people has been the same for many years, in urban areas depending on their size, location, age, rates of economic growth, indicators of demographic development are considerably different.

Higher dynamics of social and demographic structure of a city is sure to result in distortions in the ratio of gender and age groups. It, in turn, has an effect on lifestyle of population as many young people having no wedded partners cannot get married thus reducing marriage and birth rates in the city. It goes without saying, sooner or later there will be married couples but the optimum grooms and brides age difference will be broken. According to studies harmony relations in a family mostly depend on an age ratio between a wife and a husband. According to some family researchers age difference between spouses must be 4-6 years (Toschenko, 2007).

The optimum age difference of spouses is dependent on both biological and social reasons. Women live longer but grow old earlier while social maturity of men comes later (years of studies, service in the army delay their independent life). Therefore if the early marriage of women is somehow well taken, early marriages of men aren't approved at all. The situation when husband is much older than his wife or wife is older than her husband mostly ends up with disharmony in sexual life, and as a result, disharmony in family life in general. Disharmony in spouse relations is generated by social factors as well as physiological growth of partners. Sexual distress in marriage arises from internal reasons, however sexuality is sure to be one of the main values of marriage.

Female dominance in a city population structure brings in another very important moral result: considerable number of men gets married for the second or next time to younger women who haven't been married before. For example, according to the statistics data in Bashkortostan the second and next marriage were entered by 12-14% of men and only 9-10% of women (Demograficheskie protsessy v Respublike Bashkortostan, 2012). If you take into consideration the fact that in next marriage men mostly (about 35-40%) get younger women while divorced women very seldom get wedded to men who haven't been married before, it becomes obvious that gender disproportion turns to the so-called men polygamy. It is also due to the fact that the increasing number of divorced women and men do not enter other officially registered marriage but live with their partners outside marriage. It is proved by population censuses data with more married women than married men. Difference is explained by the fact that unmarried women consider themselves married and neither do their partners. Besides, it must be taken into account that men become single twice rare (annually about 300 thousand men get widowers in the country) than women and no more than 1/3 of men whose marriage broke up last year enter another marriage (Walters et al., 2000). Recently the number of unmarried men is known to be growing (both legally and in practice).

It should be also noted that "bending" of the demographic structure of the urban population, violation of its proportions by sex and age, generates a specific social phenomenon as a "rivalry" of girls and women in creating wedlocks. If we add to that part of the women, who are doomed to be unmarried due to the lack of marriage partners those ones who are divorced and not re-married, we get a large proportion of female population that falls out of the process of reproduction of new generations. Meanwhile "excess" of unmarried women has a psychological impact on fragile families, creates additional conditions for adultery, it reduces the level of claims to potential male partners. In particular, divorces that easily occur in cities can be explained by not only the simplified procedure of divorce, but also by psychological confidence in a choice for another spouse. So, in big cities divorced men have chances to get marry again three times higher than women. To a certain extent women "rivalry" as a result of less marriage opportunities stimulates extramarital affairs and adulterate children (Antonov et al., 2002).

"Bending" of demographic structure of urban population and therefore fluctuations in birth rate largely depend on the character of migration flows to cities and out of them. Migration mobility of population has an indirect

impact on family stability. Higher youth rate in migration flows results in gender ratio violations destabilizing existing families for increased extramarital relations, more chances to choose sexual partners and so on (Edin & Kefalas, 2005).

Sampling studies conducted in Ufa showed that every second adult resident is a first generation citizen where more than a half of pollees (55,6%) are rural descents and 18,6 percent people come from small towns and industrial communities. It gives evidence that a large city population is developed thanks to alien people mostly from rural settlements (Varlamov et al., 2006).

What does this fact mean for population reproduction and family-marital relations? First of all it implies that some families having changed their residence retain former reproduction preferences that were developed while they lived in the country. As demographer investigations in different countries of the world show want for certain number of children in the family is developed in childhood and youth and this want is rather stable (Blossfeld & Hofmeister, 2005; McDonald, 2006). Former living conditions, previous reproduction preferences are realized in a new social medium.

Migration of rural people to towns and cities results in changed lifestyle, development of new norms of behavior though it doesn't happen at once. What is more, changing opinions on desirable number of children in the family depends on how long the spouses have been living in the city as well on their education and qualification. In a large city the level of education and qualification is higher than it is in small towns. But there is a contradictory situation: the level of education and qualification has different effect on birth rate but is directly related to divorce level. Thus, some part of city people come from the country being low-skilled workers are notable for intensive reproduction another more educated and qualified part with higher needs and wants for marriage and family isn't very active in reproduction processes but in divorces.

Migration mobility appears to intensify social mobility of population. Meanwhile natural way of population reproduction can both stimulate and suspend intense migration. For example, higher youth and divorcement rate create special conditions for migration. On the other hand migration scale can reflect birth rate: worse living conditions of migrants, overall instability can cause deferred demand for children. Migration mobility seems to change birth date of the first or the second child but it doesn't determine the number of children in the family. As it was mentioned previously rural descendants in the city change their reproduction preferences though it doesn't take place immediately. As for aboriginal inhabitants, third-generation citizens, they are the very bearers of common stereotypes of city lifestyle including negative attitude to a large number of children in the family. Probably it is the very circumstance that makes difference between first- and third-generation city people.

Hence birth rate can be influenced not only by means of economic incentives like higher wages and accommodation but indirect measures for regulating population migration. Still deforming demographic structure of urban population has negative demographic as well as social consequences. Uneven proportion of young and elderly men and women in marital fertile age prevents natural process of family formation and has extensive social implication.

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