

Strategy of Inclusion of Reproductive Work in the Social Production

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with a set of economic, social and psychological factors that result in decrease of birth-rate and render the market incentives in overcoming depopulation of Russia inefficient. Doubts about the appropriateness of Western models, which are being continuously and ineffectively adapted to Russian reality by researchers from Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, call for attempts at finding solution within the framework of social constructivism. Analytical sessions and a sociological research into circumstances and considerations, which are perceived as those impeding the realization of the reproductive potential of Russian women, helped to lay down the conceptual statements on the formation of new strategies aimed at inclusion of reproductive labor in the process of social production. Ascertained were the specific social-psychological and medical factors that influence reproductive processes and can bring about considerable demographic changes.

KEYWORDS

birth-rate, depopulation, reproductive labor, human
capital, socio-constructivist approach

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Introduction

A few years ago, some scientists did not see serious danger in reducing the population of Russia due to the narrowed mode of reproduction of population (excess of deaths over births and small families). For example, Karl Popper among the five most important social objectives formulated them pointed to the need to deal with the population explosion, urging Russians do not be afraid to reduce the population (1992). And Sergei Kapitsa, stating the termination of growth of the population in Russia, argued that nothing catastrophic happens to birth in our country (1999).

Among the experts on this issue (demographers, sociologists, economists) are strong enough and alarmist position. For example, Irina Zbarskaya characterizes the demographic situation in Russia as a crisis (1999), Anatoly Baranov believes that depopulation will continue for several decades in Russia (2000), Vladimir Borisov says that our society is indifferent to the family crisis (1995). Anatoly Antonov, reflecting on the fate of the Russian family, sees no possibility of counteracting family decline and depopulation (1995). As part of the socio-

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constructivist paradigm can be offered another approach, due to the ambiguity of the existing approaches to the inclusion of reproductive work in economic production.

The highest value for the overcoming of depopulation has reproductive attitudes of the family or the “number of children the norm”. This is confirmed by the survey of 1500 people conducted by the Fund “Public opinion” in 100 settlements of 44 subjects of the Russian Federation in May 2010. In accordance with the obtained results of the survey, the main reason for the decline in Russia's population 62 % of respondents consider the low birth rate, and 83 % as the most important factor in fertility decline pointed to the decline in living standards (What do Russians think..., 2002).

The survey of 680 pregnant women, conducted by sociologist A. Bezrukova in St. Petersburg, also showed that in the first place financial difficulties (2011) are among the factors that prevent the birth of children.

Methods

Identifying the relative importance of the factors of fertility in this study was based on self-assessment by women hierarchy reasons preventing the realization of their reproductive plans. Relevant sociological survey was conducted by the author in January – April 2015, ten settlements of Stavropol Territory. Total surveyed 2073 women and girls aged 16 to 43 years, representing different social groups (students and pupils of secondary schools, vocational schools, colleges and universities, employed in the main sectors of the economy (the hired personnel, managers and entrepreneurs); public and municipal employees, the unemployed, housewives).

During the processing of the results of the research sample characteristics were re-weighed at densities corresponding age groups in the general population of the female population of the Stavropol Territory, in order to eliminate the representativeness bias, generated some deviation from the structure of a sample of the general population.

In general, in all age groups of women the most important causes of fertility decline were listed economic reasons: inappropriate material and unsuitable living conditions; causes of social and psychological problems: insecurity, lack of support by the state of motherhood; medical reasons: the poor state of women's reproductive health.

Results and Discussions

In the study of the causes of fertility decline, special attention was paid to women in the most active reproductive age (21 – 34-year-olds). For example, such a specific reason – the absence of her husband – no marked in two age groups of five, for 21 – 27 year old women by frequency second only to the first three reasons that are obvious “leaders” of our survey.

Representation of Russian women on the ideal number of children in the family (2 – 3 children) develops in a negative direction for the demographic development of our society – children from 2 to 1 child in the family. For example, in the group of 16 – 20 year old women is lower at 15 – 21 %, than in the group of 21 – 43-year-olds. The mean actual number of children per women surveyed between the ages of 35 to 43 years is equal to two children, and only 24 % of respondents in this group have 3 – 4 children. Thus, the current situation is almost does not correspond to two-child family model implemented by previous generations of Russians.

Average planned number of children in different age groups has no clear trend, but in the analysis of reproductive plans at least should make allowance for the possibility of their implementation. As a result, a more realistic estimate of the expected number of children in the family and its interpretation provide important conclusions for practically significant results:

1) a group of women aged from 35 to 43 years completed period of greatest reproductive activity, which was able to realize the traditional for our society two-child family model;

2) a group of women (28 – 34 years) in the second half of the period of greatest reproductive activity. This group, keeping was common ideas about the ideal number of children in the family (2 – 3 children), forced to change their intentions for their birth, as the confidence in their implementation has fallen to 48 %. Women model (one in four of them is not going to get at least one child);

2) a group of women (28 – 34 years) in the second half of the period of greatest reproductive activity, keeping was common ideas about the ideal number of children in the family, obviously forced to significantly adjust (to reduce) their intentions in their birth; confidence in their implementation has fallen to 48 %. Women in this group are largely lost faith in the feasibility of the model at least one-child families (one in four of them is not going to get at least one child);

3) a group of women (21-27 years), which is in the first half of the period of greatest reproductive activity. The group has maintained ideas about the ideal number of children in the family, exceeding the threshold for the extended mode of reproduction (2.15 ppm). Women in this group exhibit a relatively high level of claims for the implementation of their own reproductive plans. Average real expected number of children in this group of women at 0.27 ± 0.33 ppm higher than that of respondents 16 – 20 years of age group is 1.49 ppm. 50% of women in this group intend to have a one-child, and the other – two-child family;

4) the average expected number of children in any age group do not even come close to the threshold level of expanded reproduction mode. It is obvious that without decisive action on the part of society the trend towards depopulation cannot be overcome. Rather, most fulfilled the worst predictions for a threefold reduction in the total population of Russia in 2050.

Naturally, the above findings may be specified in the course of further research, but they will not be diametrically opposed. It seems appropriate to look for the root cause is that even in countries with highly developed market relations the current socio-economic mechanism does not provide the normal mode of the extended reproduction of the population, which leads to its depopulation.

The problem is, in your opinion, is that the current implementation of the reproductive function of a woman is her purely private affair. Therefore, our solution is seen in the changing attitudes to reproductive work, giving him civilized forms. What is reproductive work today, how it is organized and what is society's attitude to it?

Reproductive labor is a part of human activity – physical and social – biological and social reproduction of human society, including domestic work service, care and education of current and future workforce. It is not interpreted by economists as an economic activity. Reproductive labor is not paid and is usually not included in the national accounts, whose aim is the quantitative reflection of the costs and benefits of production of goods and services in the country (Kulagina, 2002).

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The problem, in our view, lies in the fact that the current implementation of the reproductive function of a woman is a purely private matter herself and family, and the solution lies in changing attitudes to reproductive work, giving him a civilized form. What is reproductive work today, how it is organized and what is society's attitude to it?

Reproductive labor is a part of human activity – physical and social – to care for current and future workforce, and the human race as a whole. He economists interpreted differently than, for example, the maintenance and care of the equipment, which clearly regarded as an economic activity. Reproductive labor is usually not paid and is generally not included in the national accounts, whose aim is the quantitative reflection of the costs and benefits of production of goods and services in the country (10, p. 489).

Meanwhile, domestic reproductive labor is performed mostly by women, and only takes a large share of their time. According to some reports, the entire unpaid work including domestic work, subsistence production for their own needs and unpaid production of goods for the market, if it is judged by the prevailing level of wages is in the world up to 16 billion US dollars, or more than 70 % of total world production, estimated at 23 trillion dollars (11). Only a few countries (Canada, Norway and Netherlands) have prepared auxiliary “satellite accounts” to enable quantitative estimates of domestic women's work (the most important for the analysis of costs in the reproductive sector of the economy) in the system of national accounts and to track changes in unpaid work.

Analysts in many countries point to serious consequences for society of negative external effects of certain actions of their governments. Thus, the implementation of structural adjustment programs of the process in the framework of market-oriented economic reform aimed at restoring a stable balance of payments and the reduction of inflation, leading to a deterioration of human capital (12). After all, the primary means of implement structural adjustment programs is the reduction of public funding for education and health care; increase the value of their services.

The situation is often exacerbated by the different directions of the individual components of the social effect on investment in human capital. For example, the social effect of the investments in the education of women is positive and significant: the growth of education is closely linked to improving the health of women and children themselves. But it also leads to a decrease in the birth rate (negative demographic effect), that is, depopulation and the direct loss of the human capital.

Another example: the macroeconomic benefit received by companies of women's reproductive labor is regarded as a positive externality. Indeed, maternal child care and pre-school education at home is good for society as a whole. However, its costs are predominantly women, which create problems in their vocational and professional growth and competitiveness in the labor market.

The requirement for women to fulfill the obligation to care for his family before leaving the labor market, acting as a kind of tax on reproductive labor. It is a duty,

“paid” in the form of staff time and effort, operates similarly to cash taxes, as this reduces the cash income earned for work performed by women.

Thus, the conditions of paid (market) and unpaid (domestic) labor differ most dramatically. The subject of domestic work is the use of the female workforce is beneficial to society, but not being included in economic production, no one is paid. How vividly expressed Ingrid Palmer, the national economy of each country is a kind of “free riders” who use women's labor – the main labor force in the unpaid reproductive sector (1991).

In view of the above, it is necessary to point out the negative effects of market failure, i.e. the failure of the market mechanism to transmit signals, reflecting the benefits to society by investing in the reproductive sector. The market does not grasp the full value of women's work, which produces both to pay for goods and services, and unpaid services for reproduction and accumulation of human capital.

It should expressly recognize that in our social structure continues to be maintained, “the bank in favor of men and the state”. Thus, in some macroeconomic models recently, the reproductive sector and work in it are regarded as an obstacle to the expansion of the manufacturing sector (Folbre, 1994; Mehra, 15). This approach may explain the crisis of many government programs of structural adjustment, which increase pressure on human capital, threatening the functioning of the reproductive sector and reducing its ability to respond to economic incentives.

A number of scientists are not without reason to believe that labor markets are segmented by gender, some say “economic discrimination” as a characteristic of this segmentation. For example, the levels of wages, recent studies have identified gender inequality, then there is a difference that cannot be attributed to differences in experience, seniority, or other socio-economic factors (Nyberg, 1998). Many Western analysts believe that if the market cannot provide equal pay for men and women, a simple continuation of the course on the further liberalization of the market will not improve their functioning.

Increasingly, it suggests that the correction of the situation is possible only through government regulation or public pressure. In our opinion, the non-operation of the market and “male bias in gender relations” could be overcome as a result of achieving “gender consensus” and to enter into a kind of social contract on such vital for the continued existence of the nation's problems, as the overcoming of depopulation, de-intellectualization of society, the spread of deviant forms behavior.

Trying to introduce reproductive sector out of the crisis made in the new household economics. It is, first of all, within the household production model proposed by Gary Becker (1991). The subject of “family economy” includes the market behavior of the household (supply of labor, demand for consumer goods), and phenomena such as marriage, birth, education of children and the distribution of the time family members.

The new economy of households, however, is subject to serious criticism of the axiomatic assumption that households combine useful features is the production of the new features that are useful to all its members, and for the a priori assertion of the existence of the harmony of interests within the household. We also add that the crisis of the American family “contract” (the latter is largely commercial in nature), gave rise to a powerful movement of radical feminists, clearly showed the impossibility of solving the problems of effective implementation of the reproductive

function in the conditions of existence of gender asymmetry, tightening of gender roles, what is happening in Russia today .

Currently, a number of scientists from Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries are still engaged in translation work and the problems of western feminists “adaptation” of Western theories to domestic conditions. The latter is increasingly recognized as not impossible (Zhurzhenko, 1999), because the conditions of “being” Russian gender relations are very different from the Western experience, which became the basis of feminism in developed countries. That is why a gender perspective is formed in a rather narrow the information society, but it remains a matter outside the rejection of feminist audience.

Doubts about the appropriateness of Western models contribute to finding solutions by domestic researcher’s eternal “woman question” in the framework of social constructivism. Here the main issue of gender relations and the organization of the effective implementation of the reproductive function can be formulated as follows: how to design a specific Russian model of relations between men and women in the economic, social and private life? At the same time the socio-constructivist approach leaves room for conceptualizing desirable for the society changes in gender relations and reproductive sector, which are the result of a particular problematization experience.

The socio-constructivist approach dictates certain requirements and to the research method. Reconstruction of the multiplicity of experiences and meanings of femininity/masculinity makes it necessary to use reflective method in which there are symmetric relationship between the scientist and the informant. This gives a chance to overcome the alienation of knowledge and translate it into a socio-economic project aimed at achieving gender equality and the growth of savings, not waste of human capital. At all stages of application of the method of reflection is the main feature of the socio-constructivist approach in the formulation of strategies for the inclusion of reproductive labor in the economic production.

Thus, formed by a reflective method of knowledge it is a reliable element of the project of deep socio-economic changes in gender relations and reproductive sector. It also serves as a tool to achieve genuine equality of women in family and society, consciousness, growth and change of identity. For the modern Russian society, has entered into a prolonged period of profound socio-economic transformations, needs intense search of bold creative solutions that are adequate to the complexity and the difficulties we face fundamental problems.

Turning of interest in research activities to the level of actions has allowed the prominent theorists of feminism (The social construction..., 1991) to incorporate the ideas of social construction of reality (Berger, Luckman, 1995), which fits into the channel of “socio-constructivist turn” in the social sciences. It seems necessary to achieve these changes in the public consciousness, in which both men and women tend not to continue the confrontation and tougher competition floor, and by the harmonization of gender relations and the integration of reproductive labor in economic production, without which it is impossible to favorable resolution of a crisis of the demographic situation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Using a socio-constructivist approach in forming new strategies for action in the field of reproductive labor is based on the following conceptual positions:

- recognition of women's work on the care and education of preschool children in the home in socially useful work to be counted as part of economic production;

- the need to transfer the center of gravity to the social assistance payment to mothers of reproductive (community service) labor in the household, that is, payment holidays for the care and education of children under the age of seven from a specially created gender funds of enterprises and regions;

- feasibility of the experiment on the formation of gender funds of enterprises and regions in which to concentrate the resources of the wage fund, social and medical insurance, funds for technical training, the net profit of budgetary funds;

- targeted use of funds is strictly gender fund to pay for reproductive labor of mothers of pre-school children, vocational training for women and to provide them with jobs and job training at home;

- a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of current and future programs of gender transformations over the final socio-demographic and economic results.

Strategy for integrating reproductive labor in economic production can be front or focal. The main strategy at the front is the introduction of paid leave for all women until the child reaches the age of seven.

It is more preferably a focal strategy in which gender-funds are only financially stable enterprises and relevant economically prosperous regions.

Significant demographic changes can be a result of influence of some factors of socio-psychological and medical nature that affect reproductive processes. Among them have special significance:

- benefits on home loans for young families (with a step-down size returned to the state loans as the birth of the first, second and third child - up to the total cancellation of the debt at the birth of the fourth child);

- an active policy of national and regional-scale health care support (especially maternal and infant);

- the formation of a trust relationship between the created in our country by civil society and the authorities in the spirit of partnership.

With the implementation of these conditions is a kind of “demographic revenge” – a return to the two-, three-child family in Russia – seems achievable. It should be pointed out that surveys have shown that only 10 – 15 % of women are willing to focus on only the reproductive function until their school-age children. The remaining 85 – 90% of women feel the need to combine reproductive labor or professional training, or with productive labor at home. Therefore, the implementation of women of reproductive, productive and skill-functions lies in the effective management of their combination.

Thus, the socio-constructivist approach to develop strategies that reproductive labor in social production allows us to offer very real solutions to complex problems at the interface of economics, sociology, demography, and psychology.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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