

THE PHENOMENON OF CHILDLESSNESS IN SCIENTIFIC THEORIES

Iroda Azlarova,*O'zbekiston Milliy universiteti**Ijtimoiy ish kafedrasi o'qituvchisi**E-mail:irodaunusova985@gmail.com***Annotation**

The increasing number of childless young families in modern society. Sufficient projects have not been developed or implemented by the social sector. That is why it is appropriate to study this issue. Today, the problem of childlessness among young families in Uzbekistan is growing. As a result, the number of divorces is increasing, or couples are unable to have children for a long time. This situation leads them to withdraw into themselves and somewhat distance themselves from society. The family is not only the foundation of one nation but also a great policy of all humanity. Therefore, it can confidently be said that this is an issue at the level of state policy. Because the survival and continuity of humanity depend on the family! If the family is not well-established and upbringing is neglected, no matter how great the nation is, it cannot survive long in the world. I believe that the completeness of the family further ensures its stability.

Key words: Modern family, reproductive health, men, women, dysfunctional family, illegal families; incomplete families; problem, conflict, crisis, guardianship and custody authority (GCA).

Annotatsiya

Zamonaviy jamiyatda farzandsiz yosh oilalarning ko'payayotganligi. Ijtimoiy soha tomonidan yetarli darajada loyihalar tuzilmagan va tadqiq etilmagan. Aynan shuning uchun mazkur muammoni tadqiq etish maqsadga muvofiq.

Bugungi kunda O'zbekistonda yosh oilalar o'rtasida farzandsizlik muammolari ko'payib bormoqda. Buning natijasida esa ajrimlar soni ortib bormoqda yoki bo'lmasa uzoq muddatga farzand ko'ra olishmayapti. Bu holat ularni o'z qobig'iga o'ralib olishga, jamiyatdan biroz uzoqlashuviga olib kelmoqda. Oila – nafaqat bir yurtning, balki umuminsoniyatning katta siyosati. Shunday ekan, bu – davlat siyosati darajasidagi masala deb bimalol aytilish mumkin. Nega deganda, bashariyatning tirikligi, uzluksizligi – oiladan! Bordiyu, oila tuzuk bo'lmasa, tarbiyaga ham e'tibor berilmasa, qancha buyuk bo'lsa ham, bunday millat dunyoda uzoq yashay

olmaydi. Oilaning to'liq bo'lishi esa uning mustahkamligini yanada ta'minlaydi deb o'ylayman.

Kalit so'zlar: Zamonaviy oila, reproduktiv salomatlik, erkaklar, ayollar, disfunktsional oila, noqonuniy oilalar; to'liq bo'lmagan oilalar; muammo, konflikt, inqiroz, FHDYO

Явление бездетности в научных теориях

Аннотация

В современном обществе наблюдается рост числа бездетных молодых семей. Социальная сфера недостаточно разработала и реализовала проекты, направленные на решение данной проблемы. Именно поэтому целесообразно исследовать эту проблему.

В настоящее время в Узбекистане проблема бездетности среди молодых семей становится все более актуальной. В результате этого увеличивается количество разводов или же семьи долгое время не могут иметь детей. Такая ситуация ведет к тому, что люди замыкаются в себе и отдаляются от общества. Семья — это не только важный институт для отдельной страны, но и большая политика всего человечества. Следовательно, это можно смело назвать вопросом государственного уровня. Потому что жизнеспособность и непрерывность человечества зависит от семьи! Более того, если семья не будет крепкой, если не будет уделяться должного внимания воспитанию, то даже самый великий народ не сможет долго существовать в мире. Я считаю, что полнота семьи обеспечивает её прочность.

Ключевые слова: Современная семья, репродуктивное здоровье, мужчины, женщины, дисфункциональная семья, незаконные семьи; неполные семьи; проблема, конфликт, кризис, ОВД (орган опеки и попечительства).

The Phenomenon of Childlessness in Scientific Theories

The family is not only a major policy issue of one country but also of all humanity. Therefore, it can be confidently stated that this is a matter at the level of state policy. This is because the survival and continuity of humanity depend on the family! Moreover, if the family is not stable and no attention is paid to upbringing, no matter how great a nation is, it will not be able to live long in the world. I believe that the completeness of the family further ensures its stability.[1]

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the family, motherhood, fatherhood, and childhood are under state protection. Motherhood and fatherhood are honored and respected in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The family is the main social institution of society responsible for the birth, support, and upbringing of children, and also for producing socially mature individuals and a socially capable generation for society. Considering the social and psychological integrity of the small group and the individual through the prism of the family includes criteria for reproduction, ensuring the continuity of generations, and the socialization of children and family members. Therefore, the family should be considered a fundamental unit in every society.

However, in modern society, there is a noticeable tendency regarding attitudes toward marriage and parenthood. In many countries of the world, including Uzbekistan, the number of families who do not plan to have children or delay childbirth is increasing. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, emphasized: "Our people need to know that the family is sacred for us. If we do not preserve the family, we will lose our identity."

Also, he said: "The family is sacred to me. Its sacredness lies in the fact that, regardless of where one works or who they are, if there is no proper upbringing, environment, honesty, relationships, and special attention to education within the family, there will never be any result. Therefore, I pay great attention to the upbringing of my children. I have a special attitude towards each of my children and grandchildren. I know each grandchild's character, dreams, and desires," he said.

The first scientific studies of the family took place in the 19th century. At that time, Johann Jakob Bachofen published his work titled *Mother Right*. In his work, he analyzed classical ancient literature and accepted it as a primary source in the history of the family. He also identified changes in the mutual positions of women and men as observed in ancient myths.

In addition, P. Sorokin spoke about the family crisis, emphasizing that the family is weakening and disintegrating. He cited several evidences, such as the increase in divorce rates and the decrease in the number of marriages. Sexual needs are satisfied outside of marriage, which leads to an increase in abortions and children born out of wedlock. According to P. Sorokin, the breakdown of families may result in a decrease in the number of children within families.

L.V. Andryushchenko, V.V. Boyko, V.N. Arkhangelsky, and other representatives of crisis theory link the emergence of childlessness to the consequences of family crises. That is, the family gradually stops fulfilling its functions. They emphasize that this is connected to the crisis of family values and, more broadly, the crisis of values in modern society. Traditional family values such as having many children, stability in marriage, and personal aspirations can be replaced. This creates a contradiction between society's need to increase and nurture the

population and the family's ability to fulfill its primary reproductive and socialization functions.[2]

M.G. Mityakin noted the tendency for childless families to remain intact for a long time. This is explained by the fact that such couples are happy with each other. He considered that people in such relationships may devote more time and attention to their partners, care for them, and be happy.[3]

However, for researchers, the deliberate refusal to have children is more interesting, since this phenomenon is widespread and actively spreading, threatening the demographic situation in society and having some key causes. Thus, V.A. Dupra Kushtanina and S.Yu. Lutoshkina distinguish the following types of childlessness:

Childlessness due to singleness — childlessness related to the absence of a partner. In this case, childlessness is not voluntary or intentional.

The "Gifted Child" model — in this case, childlessness is to some extent a voluntary decision, connected to some family circumstances, mainly related to caring for elderly parents or relatives.

Childlessness under partner pressure — one of the partners has a negative attitude towards fatherhood or motherhood, resulting in the couple refusing to have children.

4. Hedonistic Childlessness — assumes the individual's desire to maintain a "suitable" or "normal" standard of living. This type of childlessness often includes people who are career-oriented, value independence, and have personal space and free time.[4]

Canadian sociologist J.E. Weavers identified two types of voluntary childlessness:

"Rejectors" — people who harbor dislike towards children and everything associated with them (childbirth, breastfeeding, etc.).

"Affectionados" — those who do not have a negative attitude towards children, but are attracted to lifestyles that do not include offspring (usually due to material expenses, lack of time, energy, and other resources).[5]

The article *Silent Bodies: Childfree Women's Gendered and Embodied Experiences* by Peterson H. and Engwall K., published in the *European Journal of Women's Studies*, discusses "Femininity, Motherhood, and Others" as follows: Being a mother or not is described as the most important choice in a woman's life because motherhood is crucial to her sexual identity, self-esteem, well-being, social and economic status, and how others perceive her. The article explores how childfree women differ from women with motherhood experience, specifically how they perceive themselves differently

from cultural ideas about what it means to be a woman, who they should be, and what they should engage in. One of the most persistent, significant, and powerful cultural ideas connects being a “real woman” with motherhood. Motherhood, both biological and cultural, along with related practices and symbols, has historically and traditionally been understood as essential parts of the stereotypical ideal femininity. Rosemary Gillespie describes motherhood as the best fulfillment for women and partially as “hegemonic femininity”: “...Historically, child-rearing was women’s work, and mothers were seen as the core of normal and healthy female identity, the social role of women, and ultimately, the meaning of the term ‘woman.’”

Within the framework of the second demographic transition concept, all these causes and features of modernization are listed but with slightly different emphases. One of the theory’s authors, R. Lesthaeghe, emphasizes that the transition began with a multifaceted revolution that affected all aspects of fertility. The contraceptive revolution associated with the invention of the contraceptive pill and improvement of the IUD made it possible to delay first childbirth and increase birth intervals. The sexual revolution, previously dominated by a narrow sexual concept limited almost exclusively to marriage and mainly seen as a means of reproduction, marked the liberalization of sexuality for broad layers of the population. As a result, the age at first sexual intercourse decreased. The gender revolution, in turn, declared that women are no longer subordinate to men and have the right to independently regulate their reproductive behavior. Together, the increase in voluntary childlessness is one of the features of the second demographic transition, alongside other characteristics affecting fertility rates.[6]

To explain the decline in birth rates and the differences in total fertility rates across various European countries, Australian demographer P. McDonald proposed the **gender equality theory**. The theory suggests that today’s low fertility is a result of high levels of gender equality in individual-oriented institutions, but it remains connected to ongoing gender inequality in family-oriented institutions, particularly due to the persistence of the male breadwinner model. [7] According to this logic, if gender equality is achieved across all spheres—both at the household level and at the institutional level—the overall fertility rate will be higher. Therefore, the greater the gender inequality in a given country, the higher the proportion of childless individuals in modern society.

According to the **post-materialist values theory**, changes in social and demographic behavior arise from an increase in self-expression values, the pursuit of personal fulfillment, and liberation from traditional institutions and norms. However, Fahrislamova argues that this

theory still does not play a primary role in explaining changes in demographic behavior. On the contrary, the changes termed the **first demographic transition** helped spread the features listed above. It brought about freedom of choice, and the absolute determination, sequence, and meaning of demographic events within the life cycle were lost. Within this approach, childlessness is seen as a natural result of voluntary choice based on desires for independence and freedom.

Next, two economic theories attempting to explain the decline in birth rates can be considered.

The decline in fertility is associated with factors such as economic uncertainty and the increasing individualization of risks. In situations where future expenses and benefits are uncertain, or future economic, social, or personal circumstances are unpredictable, decision-makers tend to avoid risks.

Research by Hoyem et al. showed that in Sweden, during economic difficulties, the proportion of highly educated women aged 21-24 increased from 4% in 1989 to 41% in 1996. This is interpreted as a risk-avoidance behavior (investment in future stability and security) amid reduced state support. Many researchers emphasize that state support, such as financial compensation for child-rearing and a network of childcare facilities, helps reduce additional uncertainties and risks faced by those intending to become parents. This resembles P. McDonald's argument that a developed welfare state may be more effective at mitigating risks than individual strategies.[8]

However, in nearly all industrialized countries, the modern direction of socio-economic policy tends to shift risks from the state onto individuals. In such a context, further declines in fertility rates and increases in childlessness are expected because having no children is the safest behavior amid uncertainty. Thus, there is another option to increase fertility: people take risks, assume responsibility, and adjust their behavior despite uncertainty and risks. The potential to increase fertility rates and reduce the spread of childlessness requires time.

Gary Becker compares the decision to have children to investment decisions made by rational agents. From the perspective of rational choice theory, during the process of economic development, the cost of an individual's time becomes an independent and important factor for family and personal welfare, and with each subsequent child born, its "marginal benefit" for the parents objectively decreases. Becker and his followers associate the rise in the relative price of time spent on children with the mass entry of women into the labor market and the steady increase in wages. In other words, the more important the time lost due to pregnancy, childcare,

and upbringing is for women, the higher the value of their skills and corresponding working time. For highly skilled women, the costs related to children increase, so fewer children are born. The "value" of children depends on the services they provide and their usefulness to their parents; both of these, in turn, depend on the money and services invested in the children themselves. The higher the cost of raising one child, the greater their perceived value. Rational choice theory emphasizes that to positively influence birth rates, it is necessary either to increase the psychological benefits or reduce the economic costs of children. The authors of this approach do not say anything about indifference, but if we continue the logic, as researchers we become interested only in those who rationally decide not to have children. According to Becker's approach, such a decision may be related to the low "value" and "benefit" of children for the parents and the economic costs outweighing psychological benefits.

The author of the Preference Theory, E. Hakim, estimated that approximately 20% of women in each generation remain permanently childless. She emphasizes that modern societies have developed a new scenario that grants women the right to shape their lives as they wish, and about 20% of women prefer career advancement over family and are engaged in work. This is a debatable point because for men, career and family values occupy roughly the same position. Recent studies show that in most European countries, the share of women with children is below 20%. A recent study also indicates that childlessness among women aged 30-34 and 40-44 has increased almost everywhere except for some exceptions. In Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Russia, the share of childless women aged 40-44 is low (about 10%); in France, Belgium, Georgia, Germany, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, and the USA, it is moderate (11-15%); and in Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, and the UK, it is high (about 20%).[9]

Hakim highlights the importance of the contraceptive revolution, which became a prerequisite for other social and economic changes, qualitatively repeating the life scenarios and opportunities, and now there is a real choice between work and household duties. However, Hakim pays insufficient attention to differences between women from various social groups and how preferences may change over time. This concept is close to economists' rational choice theory, but its distinctive feature is that it places great importance on the value component, which often turns out to be crucial in decisions about having or not having children.[10]

Preston and Trussell studied the dynamics of childlessness and identified a link between the widespread prevalence of childlessness and the socio-economic level of a country's development. In developing countries, childlessness is primarily involuntary, whereas in

developed countries it tends to be voluntary. According to the authors, low birth rates are related to malnutrition, tuberculosis, malaria, sexually transmitted diseases, as well as genetic and other factors.[11] They believe that socio-economic development, by reducing illness and malnutrition rates, should contribute to a decrease in infertility and involuntary childlessness. Preston and Trussell explain the increase in voluntary childlessness by structural factors such as urbanization, the spread of higher education, and female labor force participation.

The works of these authors are notable because they attempt to reveal historical patterns. R. Simpson's detailed analysis of various studies and identification of factors influencing childlessness allows a better understanding of the complexity and uncertainty in explaining the causes of childlessness. Simpson elaborated on the following factors: the reproductive revolution and the use of contraceptives, expansion of education, parental employment, and economic conditions.

The spread of modern contraceptive methods, increased availability, and legalization of abortion are considered important factors in delaying childbirth. The contraceptive revolution led to the reproductive revolution and gave women control over fertility, which brought feelings of independence, confidence, and personal freedom. For a long time, demographic discussions focused on the conflict between career aspirations and motherhood—that these two "careers" were considered incompatible. However, this argument has been challenged by the "positive shift" observed from the mid to late 1980s in many countries, where higher female employment was accompanied by higher birth rates.[12]

Delaying childbirth and spacing births have been cited by some scholars as key contemporary strategies for maintaining balance between work and family responsibilities.

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