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The factors of formation of a procreative attitude in the context of demographic transition

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Abstract. The study tries to determine the priority of factors affecting the birth rate. The author emphasizes the paramount importance of the stage of the demographic transition in the formation of the procreative attitude as an objective factor, which a woman cannot alter. In addition to the objective factor the research shows the impact of a subjective nature on the formation of the procreative factors, which include age, marriage, interests and values of a woman. It is substantiated that subjective factors can provide a corrective value for the procreative attitude of a woman in the conditions of a specific stage of the demographic transition. The author analyses the process of shift of the birth rate in the older age group of youth, the effect of the stability of marriage on the birth rate. The values of the demographic transition are emphasized not only as an objective prerequisite for the formation of the procreative attitude, but also as a prerequisite for the formation of a human resource in the field of labor activity. The author shows the decisive influence of the stage of the demographic transition on the current state of the institution of the family, on the specifics of the material and spiritual needs of a modern human. Thus, it is emphasized that the demographic transition, as a modern feature of the mortality and fertility rates, is of global importance, influencing the formation of the entire system of vital activity of modern society.

Keywords: demographic transformation, current stage of demographic evolution, materialist approach, pronatalist orientation, fertility norm, late marriage, marital stability, spiritual and moral values

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Факторы формирования прокреативной установки в условиях демографического перехода

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Аннотация. Предпринята попытка определения приоритетности факторов, влияющих на рождаемость. Обосновано первостепенное значение этапа демографического перехода как объективного фактора, на который не может повлиять женщина при формировании прокреативной установки. Этим фактором является современный этап демографического перехода. Кроме объективного фактора, показано влияние на формирование прокреативной установки факторов субъективного характера, к которым относятся возраст, брачность, интересы и ценности женщины. Обосновано, что субъективные факторы могут оказать корректирующее значение на прокреативную установку женщины в условиях конкретного этапа демографического перехода. Подробно рассмотрены процесс сдвига рождаемости в старшую возрастную группу молодежи и влияние стабильности брака на рождаемость. Отмечено значение демографического перехода не только как объективной предпосылки формирования прокреативной установки, но также как предпосылки формирования человеческого ресурса в сфере трудовой активности. Показано определяющее влияние этапа демографического перехода на современное состояние института семьи, специфику материальных и духовных потребностей современного человека. Таким образом, подчеркнуто, что демографический переход как современная особенность соотношения потоков смертности и рождаемости имеет глобальное значение, оказывающее влияние на формирование всей системы жизнедеятельности современного общества.

Ключевые слова: демографическая трансформация, текущий этап демографической эволюции, материалистический метод, установка на деторождение, норма деторождения, поздние браки, стабильность брака, духовно-нравственные потребности

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Introduction

The procreative attitudes of young people of different age groups and the factors influencing their formation are discussed in this article. In modern geopolitical conditions, the issue of increasing the birth rate in the families of Russian citizens is becoming particularly relevant. The Government of the Russian Federation is taking programmatic measures that can influence the motivation of families to have children, stimulating the growth of pro-recreational activity [1]¹. The demographic situation in Russia is increasingly shaping the task of finding prerequisites and factors that can favorably affect the growth of the birth rate. One of the directions of the search for demographic resources, which has become relevant today, is the study of the process of transferring the birth of the first children from the 18–24 age group to the 29–39 age group. Questions also arise in connection with the transformation of the institution of family and marriage itself, since family is the most important condition for the birth of children. Among the demographic problems, the problem of forming a procreative attitude among young people of different age groups occupies an urgent place.

The aim of the study is to examine the influence of factors in the formation of a woman's recreational activity, including the factor of global demographic transition, and local factors associated with changes in the age structure of parents and the transformation of the institution of the family.

Research methods

Sociological studies conducted in the Sverdlovsk region in 2022 and 2023, among young people of all three age groups, are used as material for conclusions and generalizations. Theoretical conclusions and statistical materials provided in the works of Russian sociologists and demographers are used.

The concept of “procreative attitude” defines the personal level of need for children and willingness to have a certain number of children. “Attitude is a fundamental mechanism for the expediency of any behavior” [1. P. 15]. The procreative attitude provides for the activation of activities related to a woman's desire to have a child, and her willingness to direct available resources and

¹ *The concept of demographic policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025.* URL: <http://www.consultant.ru/document/consdocLAW71673/7a46cb13de731db3333fcd77a4f7887e468287e3/> (accessed: 18.06.2024).

opportunities to achieve a result — the realization of her need for children in the amount that was originally planned. The concept of a “procreative attitude” reflects not so much the need for children as the internal obligations that are formed in a woman’s mind and that she plans to fulfill. The concept of “reproductive attitude” is identical in content, which is also defined as “an individual’s readiness for a certain activity and actions in relation to the birth of a certain number of children”².

The formation of a procreative attitude has its own characteristics, determined by a number of factors and conditions. It is these factors and prerequisites that lead to the formation of a desire to have a child or postpone the date of birth, and therefore there is a need to consider them in more detail.

Among all the factors, there are those that are objective in nature and quite definitely determine a woman’s procreative behavior. Other factors are more flexible, have subjective, transformable characteristics and are additional motivators that form a procreative attitude in each historical period, considering social and age characteristics.

The factor that has an objective character, due to the historical stage of development of a particular region, can be attributed to the period of demographic transition, which is characteristic of the historical period, and the geographical location in which a woman lives. Demographic transition is defined as “the historical process of transition from an extensive type of population reproduction with high mortality and fertility rates to an intensive type of population reproduction with low mortality and fertility rates”³. The global impact of the demographic transition on various aspects of public life has been considered by several researchers of demographic processes. The influence of the demographic transition on the population of the planet and the cardinal “change in the reproductive strategy of the species ‘Homo Csapienti’ were noted” [2. P. 6], the features of the development of the demographic transition in different regions of the planet were considered, due to the territorial heterogeneity of demographic development [3. P. 7], different stages of this demographic transition were identified [4; 6], various factors contributing to the demographic transition were identified, such as the level of contraception [6], migration from countries with high birth rates to countries with low birth rates [2].

The demographic transition has an impact on all spheres of society — economic, social, political, and spiritual. However, there is a certain underestimation of the importance of demographic transition as a global process. According to A. Vishnevsky, it is advisable to consider the demographic transition not as a consequence of socio-economic changes, but as a cause that affects society in all its aspects [2]. When considering the

² Korchagina OV. *Fundamentals of demography: fundamentals of theory and practical tasks: a textbook*. Ulyanovsk: UIGU; 2016. (In Russ.).

³ Ibid. P. 63.

causes of various changes in society, they usually turn to the socio-economic and political factors influencing these changes. It is likely that highlighting the prerequisites of a socio-economic nature is related to the traditions of materialistic methodology, which provides for the deterministic importance of economic changes associated with the development of productive forces, and on this basis, social and political changes. In addition, addressing the materialistic method in the analysis of societies is also related to the fact that we can observe the ongoing social and economic processes at any given time and take them into account as influencing factors. This methodology provides an explanation for the changes taking place in society, a social group, and the life of an individual, here and now, and allows you to really feel and see the prerequisites for change. However, if we begin to carefully consider the global dynamics of social processes, then they certainly reveal a demographic component associated with the demographic transition in a particular historical period.

Forming the foundations of the materialistic method of F. Engels emphasizes the importance of human reproduction in economic reproduction [7]. The mode of production is considered in the unity of the production of people and means of production. F. Engels attaches special importance to human production and regards it as an essential element of the productive forces. Productive forces include various elements such as technology, the person himself as a labor subject with experience and competence. All these components are the result of human activity. Without detracting from the importance of material resources as part of the means of labor, it seems that the human factor is the most important in this list. Accordingly, this means that when we deduce the foundations of social development from economic and social prerequisites, we must understand the importance of the human factor in these prerequisites, which in turn was formed as a result of a certain demographic history.

The impact of human reproduction and demographic transition lies, firstly, in the determining role of the human factor in the economic system. At the same time, we are always talking not about an abstract individual, but about the one who was born in specific historical conditions, in accordance with a certain type of procreative relations typical for a given period and a specific region and possessing a certain production resource.

Secondly, the global determining importance of demographic processes in general and demographic transition in particular lies in the determinative effect on the formation of an individual's procreative attitude. Demographic transition determines the type of demographic behavior.

Thirdly, it is only by relying on the methodology of demographic development that one can see the foundations of the transformation of the institution of the family. The dynamics and features of the development of this institution, which is changing along with the demographic revolution, leave no chance to underestimate this influence. Almost all aspects and types

of family transformation are related to demographic processes. Representatives of demographic science periodically come to a dead end with the next transformation of the family and are ready to pronounce a verdict on the collapse of the family, as the changes in this institution seem too global. Nevertheless, in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, demographers, reviewing the features of the transformation of the institution of the family, conclude that the family does not disappear, but changes, acquiring new forms and outlines. However, the role of demographic transition in this process is not always emphasized.

Fourthly, the patterns of the influence of demographic transition on the spiritual sphere of human life are interesting. As always, this issue focuses on the socio-economic foundations of development as a condition for the vital activity and creativity of individuals. “People need to be able to live to be able to make history. But life requires, first, food and drink, shelter, clothing, and something else [8. P. 20]. At the same time, considering the spiritual and material claims of a person, the demographic basis is practically omitted. At the same time, it was the change in the procreative norm, formed over the decades of demographic transition, that largely determined the possibilities for the development and satisfaction of the biological, material, spiritual and moral needs of the population. Increased life expectancy, low income, increased wealth per capita, increased free time — all these factors have greatly contributed to meeting the spiritual needs of the population. On this basis, the demands on the upbringing, education and development of children are increasing. Socio-economic factors are declared paramount, and demographic factors are a consequence of this development. However, in the ratio of demographic and socio-economic grounds, cause and effect change places. The proof can be the fact that, despite the increase in wealth, the birth rate remains low. This means that it is not socio-economic development that determines the birth rate, but something else, and this other thing is rooted in the procreative norm and the procreative attitude formed during the demographic transition.

In the end, there is no contradiction between the materialistic method and the demographic process, and its impact on all aspects of human life. It's just that the interpretation of the materialistic method is addressed to a specific historical period, and the demographic transition is so global in importance that its influence in explaining local historical processes is not always clear. Thus, we obtain a matrix of approaches for analyzing social processes, which is based on the global demographic transition and socio-economic determinants influenced by the global process. Therefore, the analysis of more specific fertility issues in a particular territory. It is necessary to carry out in an organic combination of these methodologies.

Demographic transition, as a factor influencing the formation of a procreative attitude, is objective, and a woman is unable to influence it. The peculiarity of the demographic transition stage, in relation to the

geography of the place of residence, creates that objective basis — the procreative norm, which is assimilated in consciousness as a norm that needs to be implemented and transformed into a procreative attitude. The features of the demographic transition stage are the most important objective basis for the formation of a procreative attitude for a generation or even several generations.

The demographic transition developing in different countries is based on uniform patterns determined by the ratio of birth and death flows, which the social system strives for relative equality in its development. The discrepancy between birth rates and death rates moves the demographic process in the appropriate direction: an increase in the birth rate or a decrease in the birth rate. If death rates decrease, as life expectancy increases, so do birth rates. Conversely, an increase in death rates objectively creates the need for an increase in the birth rate.

At the current stage of demographic transition, most developed countries are experiencing a decrease in the birth rate, which will eventually be typical for countries with a low level of development. According to forecasts, by the end of the 21st century, when global population growth drops to 0.1%, the world will be very close to the end of the demographic transition [9].

The current stage of demographic transition for Russia is also characterized by a decrease in mortality due to an increase in life expectancy. The consequence of this is a decrease in the birth rate, which, at the level of an individual woman, is transformed into an appropriate procreative norm. Some authors even define the specifics of procreative behavior in the context of demographic transition as “a new, modern type of population reproduction with low birth and death rates, low overall population growth rates due to converging fertility and mortality rates”⁴. In Russia, the demographic transition (sometimes called the second stage of the demographic transition) begins in the second half of the twentieth century. Starting from this period, there has been a steady decline in the birth rate.

A woman's procreative attitude is transmitted to her from her mother, or from people around her and living at the same time. Their procreative norm is perceived as generally accepted and desirable. In this sense, a fundamental change in the procreative norm, as opposed to the generally accepted one, is unlikely and occurs as an exception related to some personal circumstances (health, religious beliefs, conditions of marriage). A certain procreative norm prevails in the public consciousness, which is objectively changing as a result of the stage of demographic transition.

Recognizing the leading role in the formation of the procreative attitude of the demographic transition stage, let us turn to another factor that is also important for the formation of the procreative attitude. As already noted, this

⁴ Korchagina OV. *Fundamentals of demography: fundamentals of theory and practical tasks: a textbook*. Ulyanovsk: UIGU; 2016. (In Russ.).

factor is mainly subjective. The influence of this factor is less significant than the first one. If the first factor is related to the stage of demographic transition is of absolute importance, the second factor is relative, precisely because of subjectivity and specificity, and is associated with a number of features of a woman's life activity. Nevertheless, this factor may have a certain impact on the correction of the procreative norm in the direction of an increase or decrease in planned births.

The peculiarity of this factor is that it is multidimensional and influences the formation of a procreative attitude within the framework of the current procreative norm. This factor includes the following aspects:

- the peculiarity of the age group to which the woman belongs;
- marital status and the level of stability of marital relations;
- values, needs and preferences.

The fundamental influence of the procreative norm is corrected by these factors. Some authors attribute the increasing role of subjective personal justification of procreative behavior to the fact that the degree of control over a woman's behavior by public and state institutions is changing. "Control over a person by the state, church or rural community is gradually giving way to self-control, thereby dramatically expanding the freedom of individual choice of a person in everything that concerns his personal life" [10].

The influence of the age group on the procreative attitude is manifested in the correction of the birth dates of children. In recent decades, there has been a shift in the timing of the birth of the first and second child. The prerequisites for this shift are determined by a number of reasons related to a woman's lifestyle, the need to complete education and get a profession; to create conditions for the birth of a child in the form of financial security, housing conditions.

The majority of first-child births previously occurred in the age group of 20–24 years. The birth of the first child "has moved to the next age group — 25–29 year olds, and the birth rate of mothers aged 30–39 years has become higher than two decades ago" [11]. Statistical data indicate that there is a shift in the birth of the first children to the age group of 29–39 years, respectively, and the birth of the second child is also shifting [11]. The question of whether the decline in the birth rate in the 20–24 age group can be offset by an increase in the birth rate in the older 25–39 age group is becoming relevant for demographic policy, as researchers suggest, considering that there is an increase in the proportion of second and subsequent births among women relative to older ages [12].

Let us turn to the results of a survey conducted among the youth of the Sverdlovsk region (Table 1) [13].

The results show that more than 90% of the under-25 age group express a potential willingness to have children. However, the realization of this potential opportunity is delayed for various reasons. Of all the reasons, two factors are the leading ones. The first factor is "just not ready to have children now, but sometime

in the future”. The second factor that turned out to be significant in the desire to postpone the birth of children is the need to “get back on your feet and make a career”. For obvious reasons, this argument has a clear downward trend, as at the age of 26–30 it is only 8%. The argument “We need to live without worries for now” is close in meaning, which is noted by another 13% of young people under 20 and 6% of young people under 25.

Table 1

Plans for young Sverdlovsk residents to have children depending on age

Answer options	Age group up to 20 years	Age group 21–25 years	Age group 26–30 years
Yes, we are already waiting for the child	4	3	14
Yes, in the near future	2	10	28
Yes, in a few years	40	46	29
No, you have to live without worries	13	6	8
Not yet, you have to get on your feet, make a career	36	26	8
No, we will not be able to provide it	1	3	4
No, bad housing conditions	1	2	2
No, we are afraid of the birth of a sick child	1	1	0
No, we suffered with one, we no longer want	0	1	3
No, we are afraid for the future of children	1	1	3
No, we do not plan at all	3	3	1

Source: developed by M.A. Beduleva, based on [13].

Thus, the established mass attitude towards postponing childbearing is obvious. As for the age group of 26–30 years, the birth rate is several times higher. There are 4.5 times more people who have stated that they are already expecting a child, and 2.8 times more who are planning to have a child in the near future than in the age group of 21–24, there is also a significant convergence in procreative attitudes in the age groups under 20 and 21–25. In terms of the number of births, these groups are identical. At the same time, it should be noted that the setting for “having children in the near future” in the age group of 21–25 years is 5 times higher than in the group of young people under 20 years of age. This confirms the conclusion that the understanding of responsibility for the birth of children at this age has already developed, only the conditions that need to be created are needed, and this requires effort and time. “In a few years,” 46% of respondents aged 21–25 say, they plan to have children.

The convergence of the two age groups under 20 and 21–25 is especially evident from the results obtained during a study of the priority values of these groups conducted in the Sverdlovsk Region in 2024 [14]. A comparative analysis of the

ratings of traditional values of youth, depending on the “age” parameter, showed the following. For young people aged 14–17 and 18–24, there are no fundamental differences in the first four ratings of traditional values, while young people aged 25–35 value family more (Table 2).

Table 2

A comparative analysis of the highest ratings of traditional values among youth depending on the parameter “age”, % of the number of respondents

Rating	Age group, age bracket 14–17 years	Age group, age bracket 18–24 years	Age group, age bracket 25–35 years
1	Life 83.03	Life 82.96	Life 76.04
2	Human rights and freedoms 70.84	Human rights and freedoms 72.13	Strong family 63.56
3	Mutual assistance and mutual respect 57.58	Mutual assistance and mutual respect 59.64	Human rights and freedoms 55.69
4	Strong family 53.87	Strong family 54.27	Mutual assistance and mutual respect 52.38
5	Advantages, worth, value, accomplishments 40.58	Humanism 46.03	Advantages, worth, value, accomplishments 37.27

Source: developed by M.A. Beduleva, based on [14].

An analysis of the value system of youth aged 14–24 convincingly shows that shifting the priorities of starting a family from the group of 14–17 years and 18–24 years does not mean giving up fertility. “Family” as a value is in the 3rd place and it is an indicator of a stable orientation towards starting a family and having children. But at the same time, the status of 1st and 2nd places for values such as “life”, “rights and freedoms” indicates their importance, which create opportunities for these age groups to realize significant needs. Shifting the value of “family” to the age group of 25–35 years and taking the honorable 2nd place there, after the value of “life” indicates the absolute priority of family formation. Other researchers also note the preservation of the “high value of parenthood and family” [15].

If the lives of young people are not in danger in the age group of 25–35 years, then the creation of a family begins to act as the most important task. To the extent that a young person takes time out, postponing the creation of a family in the age groups up to 24 years, moving to the age group of 25–35 years, the task of creating a family increases dramatically and becomes more complicated, the deadlines are compressed. It turns out that consciously freeing oneself from starting a family at a younger age turns into a difficult task that needs to be solved in an accelerated way. There is a situation when young people, creating material conditions to provide for their future family

and children, complicate their lives, as starting a family in a short time turns out to be difficult.

Marital status and the level of comfort of family and marital relations is another important aspect that influences the formation of a procreative attitude. It is necessary to create a family that will give a woman a sense of stability. Under these conditions, a woman's procreative attitude is transformed into a desire to have a child. and in case of satisfaction with the level of comfort in the family, we can talk about rebirth. In case of dissatisfaction with the marital relationship, the attitude of having a second child may not appear, but remarriage may actualize this attitude and lead to the appearance of other children. A woman keeps a procreative norm in mind, which motivates her to be active in creating conditions for childbirth. Understanding the shortness of time for her ability to procreate activates willingness to form marital relations. "Among the analyzed reasons why the birth of a child is postponed, the fact of the absence of marriage for women occupies one of the leading places (3rd), for men it is less significant — 7th place" [16].

Starting a family and having children in marriage is especially important for a woman. At the same time, at the age of 25–35, difficulties in starting a family increase for women for the following reasons:

1. Finding a spouse is becoming more difficult. On average, the age difference between the bride and groom is 2 years. If, for example, a woman is looking for a marriage partner at the age of 25–30, then the groom should be between the ages of 27–32 on average. There are already fewer suitors in this age group.
2. For a woman, an important condition for having a child is the well-being and stability of the family, and practice shows that the divorce rate has been quite high in recent years. In 2024, 8 divorces were recorded for 10 marriages [17].
3. With age, not only the requirements for the level of security increase, but also the level of social and emotional comfort. This is evidenced by the analysis of the causes of divorce, where dissatisfaction with the state of spiritual and moral relations between spouses, including: infidelity, antisocial behavior, loss of feelings, conflicts, occupies a leading place in comparison with financial difficulties, which account for up to 20% [18].

At the same time, the general procreative norm for the birth of children has not changed, "according to the survey, a clear formed model has been defined as a two-child model" [16], but the implementation of the procreative norm occurs under specific conditions:

1. The timing of the birth of children has shifted to the older age group of young people.
2. The requirements for the level of material, spiritual and moral comfort, and for the conditions of maintenance and upbringing of children have increased.
3. Considering increased demands for psycho-emotional comfort, divorces are becoming a common tool for correcting families in conditions of dissatisfaction with marital relations.

Conclusion

The dynamics of socio-economic processes in the world and in Russia are taking place against the background of global demographic transformations. In these conditions, there is a significant transformation of the behavioral characteristics of individuals, as well as social institutions, including the family. It is important to understand the unconditional dependence of developing behaviors, including in the field of marital relations, and related recreational activity.

The change in living conditions based on economic, political, social and spiritual transformations explains the peculiarities of the development of the institution of the family. At the same time, the procreative norm formed as a result of the demographic transition is affected by even more dynamic transformations in family and marriage relations. Obviously, we will continue to observe the process of transformation of the family, in concordance with changes in the procreative norm, which is being formed under the influence of the demographic transition.

The implementation of social policy measures should take into account these dynamic changes and identify relevant points of support through regulatory and financial regulation.

The perception of personal priorities as the highest value and the understanding of the development of the institution of the family as an institution that ensures its comfort and well-being is becoming increasingly relevant.

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