

DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF**NGUYEN TRUNG HIEU. *Changes in family structure in the process of population aging in rural areas of the Red River Delta****Major: Sociology**Code: 9310301*

The Red River Delta includes 2 centrally-run cities and 8 provinces. The total fertility rate of the region tends to decrease slightly in the period 2009-2019. The trend of declining fertility and low fertility has been accelerating the aging of the region's population. Against this context, the family structure in rural areas of the Red River Delta has changed a lot in recent times. The aspects of the ongoing change in family structure are related to each other, from the size and structure of the family to the basic functions of the family as well as the relationships between family members and marital relationships. The thesis describes the trend of family structure change and identifies factors affecting the process of family structure change in the context of population aging in rural areas of the Red River Delta today, based on survey results of 1,000 households in two representative areas: rural areas of Hanoi city and of Nam Dinh province in the period 2019-2021.

The thesis is presented in 4 chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 present a literature review, theoretical basis, and research methodology. Chapters 3 and 4 analyze the current situation of family structure change in rural areas of the Red River Delta, and clarify some factors affecting this change. Some outstanding research results of the thesis are as follows.

In the context of population aging, family structure in rural areas of the Red River Delta is changing dramatically, reflected in all aspects including size, structure, and family relationships.

The process of transforming family structure in rural areas of the Red River Delta towards small family size and nuclearization of family is accompanied by a family size reduction, a decrease in the dependency ratio of the young population and an increase in the dependency ratio of the elderly. The average number of people in a rural household in Hanoi city is 3.75 people and in Nam Dinh province is 3.45 people; in both locations it is 3.60 people. The smallest number of people in the households in the survey sample is 1 person and the largest is 10 people. The number of households with 4 people or less accounts for 71.9%, while the number of households with 6 people or more accounts for only 11.3%. Moreover, there is a decrease in the number of generations living together in the family. The number of households with 1-2 generations accounts for 74.5%, while the number of households with 3 generations accounts for only 25.5%. Compared to about 20 years ago, the number of generations living together in households tends to decrease sharply. Notably, in the 1,000 surveyed families, there was no household with 4 generations living together.

Along with the trend of family size becoming smaller, family structure is also becoming simpler. Also, there is the emergence of new types of families, such as unmarried families, broken-generation

families, and single-parent families, which used to be absent or rare, now are quite common. The breakdown of the nuclear family through divorce has significantly increased the proportion of single-parent families where only one parent lives with the children. Further, changes in the concept of marriage, the specific conditions of the age and sex structure of the population lead to the affirmation of women's reproductive rights and the emergence of the defective family. Another prominent indicator of changing family size is the rapid increase in the number of temporarily defective families, as young couples migrate to work in cities and industrial zones, leading to the rise of this family model where only grandparents live with their grandchildren. Family and marital relationships in rural areas of the Red River Delta are also changing dramatically in the context of population aging and the process of accelerating industrialization and urbanization. The traditional parent-child relationship is vertical, characterized by the dominant power of parents over children and the subordination of children to parents. Given that the current size and structure of the family change, these vertical relationships have undergone certain transformations, the "dominance" and "subordination" have more or less faded. The "mother-in-law, daughter-in-law" relationship has also been different than before since the modern generation of fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law have gradually become less strict with their daughters-in-law. The value of children in the parents' view has gradually changed as raising children in the current period is seen as a much larger economic burden than before. Family size is gradually getting smaller in number partly due to couples'

declining fertility rates, they believe that the relationship between the number of children and economic support for parents in old age has changed, which refers that having many children no longer means economic security for them in old age.

The thesis indicates that the change in family structure in the rural areas of the Red River Delta today is related to several factors. First of all, the impacts of urbanization, industrialization, modernization, and socio-economic changes have caused many workers to abandon traditional agriculture to work in large urban and industrial zones, leading to serious impacts on family structure and sustainability. Secondly, changes in family structure are also affected by people's education level and income.

The increasingly rapid changes in family structure are strongly affecting all aspects of family life, especially for the elderly. In the rural areas of the Red River Delta, changes in family structure and population aging are occurring in parallel. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over in Vietnam has tended to increase gradually over the past 20 years: 5.8%, 6.4%, and 7.7% in 1999, 2009, and in 2019, respectively. In which, the Red River Delta has the highest proportion of population aged 65 and over in the country (9.3%). An aging population raises many issues such as a decrease in the number of family members, changes in emotional relationships in the family, etc., which need to be addressed to move towards sustainable social development in the context of the current aging population. The thesis was successfully defended at the Academy-level Thesis Evaluation Council, meeting at the Academy of Social Sciences in 2023.

*Introduced by
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