

## FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY UNDER THE IMPACT OF CURRENT MARKET ECONOMY

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*Family is the basic unit of society and is one of the contributing factors to the development of society. During the Reform process, under the impact of the socialism-oriented market economy, better implementation of functions of Vietnamese families will reinforce and strengthen the position of this important institution. However, two-sided effect of the market economy to the functions of Vietnamese families also poses numeral complex issues that need to be addressed.*

1. In Vietnam, during the Renewal, the Communist Party advocates the development of a socialism-oriented market economy. The market economy has had a positive impact in different aspects of social life, including the impact on family functioning. These positive impacts inspire and promote the potential and the inner-strength of Vietnamese households; facilitate and motivate households to better perform these following functions: biological reproduction; an economic unit; education; and providing the psychological, biological and emotional sheltering for family members. These functions have developed, with qualitative improvement, and enabled families to play its important role and contributed to society in many aspects: reproduce and provide high-quality

human resources; shift the structure of industries, trade, and labor to progressive direction, promote economic growth, preserve and promote the traditional cultural values, effectively prevent social evils and crimes. In other words, under the positive impact of the market economy, better implementation of functions of family reinforces and strengthens the position of this important institution for the development of society.

However, impacts of the negative aspect of market economy along with weaknesses and shortcomings in the socio-economic management have a drawback influence on family functions, creating significant challenges for family

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relationships, threatening to break the traditional family model.

It can be said that the two-sided effect of the market economy to the functions of family in Vietnam is unavoidable and it has raised many new, complex issues that needs to be addressed and resolved by households in particular and society as a whole.

*First, Vietnamese families are facing difficulties in the implementation of reproducing and providing high-quality human resources to meet the requirements of society due to side effects of the market economy.*

In fact, in recent years, there is still a significant gap between the perception and the reality of the number of children among couples. This is reflected in the increasing number of additional 3rd, 4th kids or the gender selection in pregnancy. It is worth to notice that in the current market mechanism, money rises to the top, people are willing to violate ethics to use high-tech to intervene in pregnancy for sex selection..., which leads to an imbalance in the sex ratio at birth. According to Annual Population Change and Family Planning Survey of General Office for Population Family Planning, by 01/4/2012, the sex ratio at birth in Vietnam is 112.3 boys/100 girls, higher than normal level of 103-107. The ratio in many provinces has raised to an alarming rate, such as in Bắc Ninh, Hải Dương, Nam Định..., exceeding 120/100 [4]. The serious imbalance in the sex ratio within the population structure of the country will inevitably lead to

difficulties in economic development and have an enormous effect on society in the future.

In addition, the development of market economy means an increase in labor productivity and intensity. To adapt, workers need to recreate strength, improve skills, work actively, build up creativity to devote and receive adequate returns. Average ages of first marriage with respect to gender in the country are quite high: 26.2 years old for men and 22.7 years old for women [5]. The trend of marrying and giving birth later in life, having fewer and fewer children, is observed more frequently in groups with high education and high income. In contrast, many places in rural, mountainous and remote areas, child marriage and having many children are still quite common practices. Some socio-economic regions still face many difficulties as they are the country's poorest regions but are second to none in the population growth rate. This will be an issue to the quality of the population, while the developed market economy needs high quality labor that are educated and well-trained to achieve standardized skills and workmanship.

*Second, under the impact of the market economy, the economic function of the family Vietnam is changing in a positive way, but the function of education, especially moral education are attenuated.*

The importance of the economic function of the family is essential. However, the problem is that too many families value the economic function

and pay little attention to the function of education and self-education of each family member, with more concentration to knowledge educational than ethical education. This has led to defects in the formation of the personality of children and distorted many traditional relationships in the family.

So, the basic ethical standards such as the respect, gratitude, loyalty, harmony... which dominated sacred ties in the family are now at risk due to overwhelmed power of economic interests; and crisis is witnessed in some cases. Disregard and abusiveness to parents; litigation, and warring between spouses, parents and children, siblings are now taking place in many places, in many families. In fact, "the most sacred traditions of Vietnamese in morality is family, love, spouses relationship is bleed by the cold blade of money" [6, 40-41]. In particular, "among the number of murders studied in recent years, there were one quarter of the cases that the victims were relatives of the perpetrator (the victim's spouse, children, brothers, siblings) [6, 63-64].

Consequently, in our country, situation of spoiled children falling in social evils and committing crime tends to increase. In 2010, there were 12,108 children violating the law [6], of which there were particularly serious crimes such as murder, robbery, rape... In contrast, the situation of children rights violated, physically harmed, and mentally abused are also at an alarming rate. Many children are forced to work at early age, do the hard and insufferable work; many children were tortured, beaten, sexually

abused or even killed, ect. In 2010, the number of children wandering away from home, living in the street were 18,000, and out of which, 854 ones were sexual abused [3].

This inconvenient truth is sounding the alarm to families and society. For families, it is the warning about the declining role of the family in children's education, the family's tradition and discipline are neglected; and moral education is remarkably declining.

*Third, the economic function of Vietnam household is making positive changes, but also reveals many limitations in comparison with the development requirements of the market economy.*

It is said that the potential of households' economic development is not on par with the requirements of the market economy and international integration. Most households have consciously moved to goods production and household sector is now becoming an important part of the economy. However, Vietnamese economy is not large; goods produced by the household sector with low productivity are said to be of low quality and low competitiveness. In particular, in the context of market economy and free trade integration, Vietnam's agricultural sector in general and households sector in particular are under enormous competitive pressure because of small-scale, scattered, low-tech production that failed to meet safety requirement and hygiene standards. Besides, the legal system is not uniform with many articles that are not in line with international practices. In fact, household sector in

Vietnam is facing difficulties in limited funding, small-scale production, slow progress of land accumulation, the lack of ability to apply science and technology as well as the organization, management, and marketing capability. It is also difficult due to the weakness of the infrastructure system, leading to fragmented and separated legal system among regions and the countryside areas. Meanwhile, market risk, especially in international markets as well as ecological risks are increasingly threatening the stability and affecting the opportunity to increase the economic income of the households.

Another difficulty rising is that households have to perform economic function associated with tackling unemployment and poverty. There are 3,055,566 poor households accounted for 14.2% and the nearly-poor ones are 1612381 [1]. Living standards in the remote, disaster-prone areas, in many ethnic minorities such as Dien Bien, Son La ... are more likely to lead to higher poverty rates than the national average. The income inequality has posed many problems that need the attention of the whole society. For example: problems on employment, income, living standards, living conditions, the ability to enjoy the cultural values, education, health care of poor households. The wealth dispersion sometimes reaches to a high degree of contrast with the rise of poor households - vulnerable groups in the market mechanism. Most poor families have many children, lack of jobs, lack of land, or due to health conditions, many people do not know how to work and are eliminated by the

market forces; thus, they are in dire need of support from the State and society.

*Fourth, under the impact of the market economy, gender equality increases, democratic atmosphere in the family expands, but family conflicts are not reduced; and at the same time, the generation gap is also widening.*

In fact, the development of a market economy has had impact in many families, facilitated the movement and changes in all aspects of family life.

First of all, in each family of Vietnam today, due to the impact of the market economy, the division of labor is changing so that there are more opportunities for women to assert their roles in the socio-economic activities, especially in the production sector. However, the fact is that, in many families, especially in rural areas, women still not only carry the burden to do business, generate income for the family but also all household chores, such as cooking, laundering, parenting, taking care of elderly members... It is said that, "the dynamic role of farmers women are now very high but the intensity and duration of their work are now also rising to alarming levels" [7, 369]. To make matters worse, they are mostly victims of violence occurred more and more frequently in families.

The market economy tend to promote democracy, personal liberation, personal freedom with the differences in needs, preferences, interests, about parenting methods; activities economy,... also contain threats against families. Thus, conflicts between husband and wife are not reduced, divorces are increased,

family violence, along with the accompanied consequences remain major challenges to the family itself and the whole society.

At the same time, issues such as the perception of love, marriage, family meaning, responsibility of parents, and duty of children, loyalty and sharing among family members... also contain recession signals. For most of the young, love is no longer spiritually valued, virginity is no longer meaningful, unsafe sex rate and abortion rate in Vietnamese is high, especially among young women. In many families, responsibility of parents and the duty of children are not performed or performed in a perfunctory and misleading way. There are many cases of abuse or using money to replace emotion and care for family members. The relationship of the family, therefore, is facing the risk of increasingly loosing and fading away.

Another thing to concern is that in the context of the market economy, in the Vietnamese family, the democracy within members tends to increase, but at the same time conflicts between generations are also deeper.

Currently, although the multi generation families are reducing and the nuclear family type is increasingly popular, consequently, the number of family members is not high but each member of the family, especially the younger generation, have become less and less dependent on the rank within family and the traditional norms. On the other hand, in a society experiencing market economy with high degree of openness and competitiveness, social value

changes, the materialistic values tend to dominate, the moral values are less respected. Differences have emerged in families with increasing distance between the different generations on selection and preference values orientation, lifestyle and way of life. That fact requires families to adjust in order to adapt to the norms in related to new social conditions, but it should be on the foundation of inheriting and distilling good traditional values of the past to promote stability and continue the development of the family.

2. It can be stated that market economy with fundamental, objective rules has the most direct and powerful impact and is ultimately considered as the most decisive factor in the change of the family institution, causing many changes in the process of implementing the functions of family in Vietnam nowadays. The method of impact of the market economy to family functions can be direct as well as indirect, through a variety of different and complex channels. Therefore, the dual impact of market economy to family function poses many challenges and urgent problems that require both family and society to address, and enable Vietnam families to promote the positive effects as well as prevent and limit the negative impact of the market economy and facilitate the performance of its functions. After all, a family can be the nest of each member, be the healthy cell of the society, and contribute more to the socialism-oriented prosperous nation. To achieve this, we suggest a number of solutions:

*First, propagating and educating* aim at raising awareness of each citizen, each couple, each family and the community about the importance of reproductive function, or human reproduction; new requirements on the number and quality of children to meet the requests of human resources for the socialism-oriented market economy. Besides, propagating to the family so that they can notice the favorable conditions the socialism-oriented market economy brings to the family to support the reproductive function: fewer children but better care; children have better conditions to grow, mature, become useful citizens of the society; no gender discrimination...

Propaganda, on one hand, educates family life, namely education before and after marriage, on the other hand, equips social skills for all members of the family such as fatherhood, motherhood skills, elderly care skills, child nurturing skills, behavioral skills... On the basis of the knowledge and life skills, family members can cope with the negative effects of the market economy and proactively prevent social illness intrusion on family life. At the same time, each family knows how to inherit and develop traditional cultural values and selectively acquire the advanced values of modern families to build relationships, create a cozy atmosphere and happiness.

*The second suggestion is to promote economic development of household towards market oriented* [2, 195]. To adapt this, the state should improve investment climate for the family on the

basis of land accumulation, increasing mechanization, application of modern technologies (particularly biotechnology); rearranging plants and animals' structure and expand production to move into the goods production sector and raise incomes. At the same time, the State should take specific measures to support the economic development of the family in the form of small and medium enterprises or farming, especially in agriculture and rural areas, to meet the requirements of economic development in international markets, and further integrate into international economy, such as technology transfer, loan support, up-scale; stabilize domestic market and expand export markets... Thus, the economic function of the family can be really dynamic, healthily developed as a basis for the implementation of the different functions of the family and contribute to ensuring the stability of society in this market economy conditions.

*Third, continuing to implement the policies of sustainable poverty reduction as well as paying more attention to health, education and social security.* The strategic economic development plan has to orient toward the development and resolution of social issues, including building prosperous, equal, modern, and happy families. Therefore, the State should revise, supplement, and modify in order to implement better policies of hunger eradication, poverty reduction, and other social policies to improve and enhance the quality of life of families falling into in this category. It is also the basis for

stable family life; it effectively prevents the penetration of social evils, the living standard of the members of the economic conditions of the market today.

*The forth thing to do is constructing cultural family*, consolidating and stabilizing on the basis of inheriting and promoting the traditional values of Vietnamese family, acquiring the selective modern, rich values of family in developed society; implementing a model of small-sized family; fully implementing the rights and responsibilities of family members, especially for children, women and elderly people. This is also identified as an important solution to strengthen the sustainability of the family, to better perform functions of family, to be the core content of social policy during the current period, contribute to the goal of building a wealthy society and strong, democratic, fair and civilized country.

*Last but not least, the role of women in Vietnam need to be further enhanced.*

Along with the State's regulations tailored for women to protect their rights, legalize their status in labor relationship and income, it must also create conditions for the realization of it in reality. State and organizations need to facilitate more so that women have access to resources such as capital, human, information on science - technology, land, production tools... or have programs dedicated to women with the support of social policies to address a range of issues that are pressing to limit the development of women, such as the level of education, health, environment and working conditions...

This is also the basis for women so that they can be active in the implementation of family planning, taking care of their children, building harmonious relationships within the family as well as contributing to the development of production to gradually improve the material life and spiritual life of their families.

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