

VIETNAMESE RURAL FAMILIES IN RENEWAL PERIOD

TRỊNH DUY LUÂN, HELLE RYDSTROM, WIL
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THIÊN DUYÊN

The book is one of the results achieved through the Completion Conference Interdisciplinary Study Project on 'Rural families in transitional Vietnam' (code VS-RDE/05), sponsored by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and accomplished by Ministry of Science and Technology during the period of 2004 – 2010, belong to Vietnam – Sweden Research Cooperation Programme. Being influenced by changes through reforms, industrialization, modernization as well as international integration in Vietnam, the book added more colors for the already - multi dimensional picture of rural families throughout diversified topics such as marriage, inhabits, working allocation, generation relationship, immigration, education, sexuality as well as family violence during the two past decades.

Modernization and rural families

Due to the opening trend of economic

growth, industrialization as well as international integration in Vietnam, nowadays, modernization progress, which has changed the economy, society, science and technology, and widened modern cultural value, has been much more convenient to take place. Figures showing that public had clearly realized the existence of modernization, in which 87% of them considered Vietnam has been much more modernized, 73% of them evaluated the progress as 'quite good' and 25% of them believed it as 'basically good'.

In order to evaluate the directions of Vietnam modernization as well as the level of its interaction, the research gave out a list of changing behaviors relating to families' daily life and its relationship. The result showed that 62.8% of public evaluated the positive signal for modernization is women's role improvement; 60.4% of them gave the idea of getting married late, and 74.4% of them considered to the usage of

contraception. Besides, almost 84% of public agreed with having more babies could slow down the modernization.

Two factors have slowed the modernization down at the lower level are transition of husbands' role into housewives (36.2%) and divorces (33.8%). There are only one - fourth viewed factors as voluntary marriage, seclusion between elderly parents and children or the imbalanced care of couples for their kids and their own parents, would speed up modernization. Trinh Duy Luân's conclusion is the changes of modernization are being transitioned between standards of tradition and modern. More traditional views are being replaced by modern ones, but not completely. It needs more time to strongly and completely modernize together with industrialization, economic growth and to renew institutions, reflecting social development model in general and Vietnamese rural families' format in future.

The concept of householder

Surveys conducted in past researches were mostly based on the concept of householder which was assumed as a clearly aware concept, hence, there is not any specific definition explained in those surveys. It was the first research raising a question about householders' characteristic as "According to you, what are the characteristic of a householder?" There are two - third of people defined 'householder is those who make important decisions in the family'. About 46% of people agreed with the viewpoint as "householder is the one who registered as the main individual in hukou book." They are two main answers for the above question in the survey. Besides, a

remarkable point of a householder is: the family's representative in doing communication with others (accounted for 31%), elder male (27%), main income source of the family (20%) and 18% of people view the household should be the most respectful person in family. Age and gender of householder are not important aspects based on public's definition. There are about 8% of viewpoint saw householder, either male or female, should be the eldest one. And only 2% of viewpoint implied about the eldest female. 11% of being asked people have given more opinions. Only 1% of public was unable to answer or not give any response. Hence, householder is a wide-range concept, including economic ability, reputation, ability of making important decision, power of representing family. They also reflect traditional culture such as "trọng xỉ" (respect the elderly) culture and the traditional discrimination between sons and daughters.

Analyzing the real relationship (not the concept) between the main householder and his characteristics such as economy, society as well as demographic, to explain which factors will decide an individual to become the main householder. And there is a big gap between public concept and household's realistic characteristic, Vũ Mạnh Lợi proved. In fact, the main householder normally is the elderly male and most contributes to income of the whole family. He is the one who makes important decisions and represents for his family when handling relationship outside family. But most of people just pay attention to the aspects as the one make significant decisions and register

as the main householder in hukou book. Analyzing variable factors has showed that, basically, elder male is assumed as main householder. And the family which has more than one elder male so one of them will be the main householder. The research also pointed out that there is no evidence to prove “family which has female as main householder will be poorer than the male's one”. Gender should not be the standard to evaluate whether they get financial aid in poverty reduction project.

Family and children's education

Nguyễn Đức Vinh has carried out an analysis to answer will gender and family circumstance are key factors in deciding rural children's education. He focused on the relationship between education circumstance of the age group from 7 to 24 years old and personal index as well as family circumstances such as age, gender, number of siblings, order of birth, age of parents when giving birth, family size, living standard, working force in household and reason of leaving school. From tables, graphs and regression model, there are 7 conclusions pointed out:

First, 96% of children from the age of seven to eleven are going to school, in which 90% of them start school at right age. But the proportion of children from this age range not go to school is not low. These two rates reduced to 10% when going to secondary school, then down to about 50% at high school age. For the age from 20 to 24, the rate was just under 18%. *Second*, there are three main reasons that make students stop school. The biggest one for poor households is economic difficulties.

Low grade and not want to study are quite popular matters for average households. *Third*, the rate of girl student is higher than boy students in primary school but lower than in post-secondary school even the difference is not really remarkable. And there is no proof of gender distinction in parents' behaviors. *Fourth*, parents' education is the most significant factor affecting their children, in which the role of mother is more important than father's. The higher parents' education is, the fewer children leave school and start study at right age. *Fifth*, living standard of household is one of the important factors deciding youth education in rural. If they have low living standard, hence their kids will leave school earlier or start school at late age. *Sixth*, those from households who have more kids, parents' job is doing farm, moms who gave birth before 24 yrs old and early working, normally get negative affects to study's results. And *seventh* is parents' education has influenced on their own kids through relevant factors such as how much care parents take of their kids' study like taking them to extra classes, let them participate in working or education expenditure.

Marriage choice

Marriage format in rural Vietnam was analyzed under four aspects by author Lê Ngọc Văn. Based on *geographical aspect*, the result showed that rural people normally get married to those who come from the same communes: 70.2% of them said they were born in where they are living at current time and 66% of wives or husbands were born in the same communes. 30% of couples,

however, are from different communes or wards. 12% of people said they are from different ward of a town, 7.1% from different towns in a province and 10.6% are from different provinces. These figures have proved the widen trend of geographical factor in marriage choice. Production method, which has changed from self-provided into product-manufacturing, partly help enlarging communication area of people, and giving them more chances in looking for a wife or a husband.

Based on *getting know each other before getting marriage aspect*, 50.3% confirmed they had known each other before marriage: the proportion of couples, who got married from 1987 to 2007, has risen to 55.9% in comparison with those got married from 1942 to 1975 (38.2%) and from 1942 to 1975 (48.4%). Parents and pimps still have important role in arrange partners for others. There is 21% of couples got know each other thanks to their parents, 12.7% were arranged by pimps. Lower rates are from other environments such as same workplace (8.8%), same school or university (6.1%), friend arrangement (7.3%) so on. It found out that youth in rural today live more on their own and less depend on parents. And the number of married couples through parents' introduction or pimps has gradually gone down by time in comparison with married couples who knew each other by themselves.

Standards as job, economy, appearance and love are more expected than ethical ones. This is the result pointed out after researches on marriage standards in new times. Besides, traditional requirements

of a husband as being the head and good example of family, being responsible, healthy, dynamic, assertive, able to feed his own family; while a wife has to be the one who is tender, good at houseworks, care for husband and kid, patient, sacrificed and be able to have a boy baby. People are also quite straightforward in talking about money factor in marriage. "Normally we will choose the one who has financial ability. Rich families will pick up the same condition ones." "Male care about appearance while female care about economy."

Only 6.6% of couples got married based on their parents' decision but the percentage of those who got married with their parents' approval is quite high, up to 66.2%. This showed that the changing trend of who makes decision in marriage, ensure the privacy and freedom in marriage as well as remove the forcing marriage. The research also found out that this marriage format is the most popular model in Vietnamese rural today.

Model of post-marriage residence

To identify the trend of residence after marriage, Nguyễn Hữu Minh has done a survey through 4 communes including Cát Thịnh - Yên Bái, Phước Thanh - Tiền Giang, Phú Đa - Huế and Trịnh Xá - Hà Nam. The research has found out the significant factors in deciding the staying with husband's family and how long it will be.

First, staying with husband's family after marriage is the most popular residence model among 4 communes during more than the past 50 years. Survey was answered by 80% of both male and female in 4 communes. Late marriage,

wife or husband works for government, or wife not doing farm are most important reasons to reduce the possibility of living with husband's family. This model will last long in Vietnamese rural depending on the behaviours as well as the real activity of each family.

Second, the rate of those who stay with husband's family more than 3 years has remarkably gone down in comparison with marriages after 1975 and gradually stable through periods from 1976-1985, 1986-1995, and 1996-2005. This rate and the fact of husband has more siblings are two main factors leading to shorter time of staying together with husband's family. In other words, the effects of urbanization and industrialization in Vietnam have not strong enough to make structural changes in residence arrangement. Staying together with husband's family is a basic standard as well as a reality after marriage, author explained. Thus modernization, industrialization or urbanization does not essentially lead to the structure of a family, from an open into a smaller one. This standard is not simply the heritage of tradition, but also the achievement of modern and rational decisions. This tradition will last until it is still the source of families' spiritual life and financial support.

The book had discussed about issues as effects of modernization and industrialization on family's relationship, public's awareness of the concept 'householder', marriage choice, residence model post-marriage, children's family and education. Besides, authors including Trịnh Duy Luân, Helle

Rydstrom and Wil Burghoorn also pay attention to below issues.

About *divorce and impacts of individual, social and cultural factors*, Trần Thị Minh Thi did a research at Trịnh Xá ward, Bình Lục of Hà Nam. Based on the figures accumulated by this province's Court and through interviews, it found out that main reasons of divorces are love affairs, economic difficulties, alcohol addiction, lifestyle argument, and violence. Divorce in Vietnamese rural families is even not simple, and takes a lot of time with various challenges. Normally families, relatives and governmental officials will try to reconcile, advice, intervene these couples. Other things as living together, in-laws relationship, family conditions also affect to divorce decision. These are specific factors of rural areas where women have stress on traditional customs.

The survey was done at four research points with total 1200 families. The family with two generations living together has accounted for 88.5%, the rate of ones with three generations is 4.9% and with four generation just 2.5%. By these figures, the article, written by Đặng Thị Hoa about *model of residence and the relationship between parents and their children*, has proven the strong development of living into smaller families in rural areas. The most popular format is the elder to live separately and independent with their mature children. 30.7% of people doing survey has expressed they want to live with their children when getting old, while 48.2% of them choose to live with mature son. While the popular format with just-married couples is live separately right after their marriage, so

that they can be independent of finance as well as having long term business plan. It is 99.9% of couples live separately with husband's family after 6 months of marriage. However, the relationship in family still get remained through daily life such as grandparents care for grandchildren and look after house as well as their care for elder parents. The liberty is only relative and basically about finance.

Analyzing the quantitative data of Huế (2006) and Hà Nam (2008), Phạm Thị Huế's article expressed her consideration on *the participation of children in family's housework as well as production*. Girls normally have to do both of these jobs more than boys. Under the age of 10, 29.6% of girls and 24.2% of boys started housework, 5.6% of boys and same rate for girls began doing family's production. Figures showed that the younger parents are, the less their kids have to do housework or production activities and vice versa. Education of parents, living standard as well as residence area hardly affect to daughters' participation in family's work or housework and vice versa for sons. Sons, even have lower education, still do less housework than daughters. In average families, 51.8% of sons have to do housework and 39.1% do not. In contrast to underaverage families, the rate is 23.0% of having to do and 38.5% of not doing any work.

About *migration and income of rural families*, migration is quite popular in rural, Nguyễn Thanh Liêm confirmed. The percentage of families who have their children move to another provinces

is 17%, 30%, 36% and 42%, respectively in Tiền Giang, Yên Bái, Hà Nam, and Huế. There is evidence of more female migration. Among families who have only one children migrate, the rate of female is higher than male in 3 of 4 provinces implemented the survey, it is only opposite in Yên Bái province. The information of sending money back to support family showed that the proportion of families who have money sent back in Yên Bái is 24%, in Tiền Giang is 30%, in Hà Nam is 39% and the highest rate is 49% in Huế.

There is no difference between the amount of money sent back by sons or daughters. In 3 of 4 provinces where the survey was applied, the average income per household or per person who has children migrating is much higher than households do not have. In Huế, there is no big difference between incomes of these two kinds of household. Controlling some other characteristics of household can affect to income such as age of householder, the highest level of education of members in family, and the same result was achieved. The analysis of relationship between migrated children, money sent back and households' income pointed out those rich families in rural are best using chances from migration and it contributed to increase the unfairness in Vietnam. Recommendations here are used for decreasing the unfairness when keep giving priorities and opportunities for the poors. Priority in increase level of education for the poors is a useful method which can help them raise their income up as well.