INVOLVEMENT IN PARENTAL LABOUR AND ITS REMUNERATION AS FACTORS IN SHAPING UNDERSTANDING OF IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN

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Abstract

Russia is witnessing extensive pronatalism measures. Every time the economic measures are reinforced, there comes only a short period of rise in births. The reasons for that lie in the influence of a subjective factor. Our study aims to identify the relationship between opinions on the ideal number of children and parental labour perceptions.

We surveyed more than 600 parents and grandparents, living in the Ural region and people who work with children. We were studying the ideal number of children for respondents and their perceptions about parental labour parameters.

The results are the following: 1) nearly two-thirds of all surveyed reported parental labour should be remunerated; 2) respondents believe parental labour is as much demanding as other types of labour; 3) we identified 6 types of respondents according to their views on parental labour remuneration and on attracting different people to its realization; 4) we identified the correlation between views on the ideal number of children and opinions on the parental labour.

The results show that better parental labour organisation and remuneration may lead to the higher ideal number of children for the Russians. It may contribute to the effectiveness of demographic policy measures currently implemented in Russia.

Key words: parental labour, ideal number of children, involvement in parental labour, remuneration of parental labour.

JEL Code: J13, J18

Introduction

Active measures of pronatalist policy are being implemented in Russia. In general, they are limited to payments for the fact of having children and payments for children until they reach a certain age. Many demographers believe that there is only a short period of birth rate growth after each instance of strengthening of economic measures. This is due to the fact that birth rate is influenced by the subjective factor of lower reproductive norms, which are rooted in Russian society.

The influence of existing societal reproductive norms on fertility often becomes the focus of demographic and sociological studies (Devedzic, Miric & Gligorijevic, 2017; McCabe & Sumerau, 2018; Sahu & Hutter, 2012). In turn, these social norms influence ideas of the ideal number of children – i.e., the number of children, which, according to young people, an "ideal family" should have (Antonov, 2012). However, this ideal number of children is associated not only with social reproductive norms, but also with other common stereotypes regarding families and children. In particular, it can be associated with ideas about the "ideal mother" (which should "have time to do everything") (Mitsyuk, 2015; Martin, Anderson & Martin, 2019) and "ideal children" (which should be obedient and successful) (Willson, 2019; Bradbury, 2019). In our opinion, the ideas about the ideal number of children that society forms among young people are superimposed on their ideas about the difficulties of parenthood, about the great work associated with it and the need for help to realize it.

The labour nature of parenthood has long been studied by various scientists (Bagirova, 2017; Erickson, 2005; Pedersen et al., 2011; Robertson et al., 2019). We consider parenthood as a type of labour. Therefore, we believe that various categories of labour economics are applicable to it – for example, actors of labour (those who actually engage in this type of labour), labour stimulation (remuneration - for example, by the state), delegation of labour functions (for example, from parents to grandparents, nursery maids, etc.).

The goal of our study is to identify the relationship between the population's opinions on the ideal number of children and their ideas about parental labour - in particular, labour actors and the need for labour remuneration.

1   Data and Methods

We surveyed more than 600 people falling into two categories: 1) parents and grandparents, living in the Ural region; 2) people professionally working with children: employees of the Ural kindergartens and schools, social workers, university teachers, etc. We were studying the ideal number of children for respondents and their perceptions about such parental labour parameters as its complexity, necessity for remuneration, possibilities to attract relatives and employees (nursery maids and family tutors) to its realisation. To identify the relationship, we applied a correlation analysis (calculation of Chi-square, Phi and Cramer's coefficients). Analysing cross-tabulations, we compared column proportions (using Z-test).

2   Results

We obtained the following results.

1)   Respondents believe that parents are not the only category that should be engaged in parental labour. Grandparents, employees (nursery maids, tutors, etc.), as well as the "state as a whole" are considered as actors of parental labour (see Table 1).

Tab. 1: Distribution of answers to the question: Who, in your opinion, should be involved in parental labour?

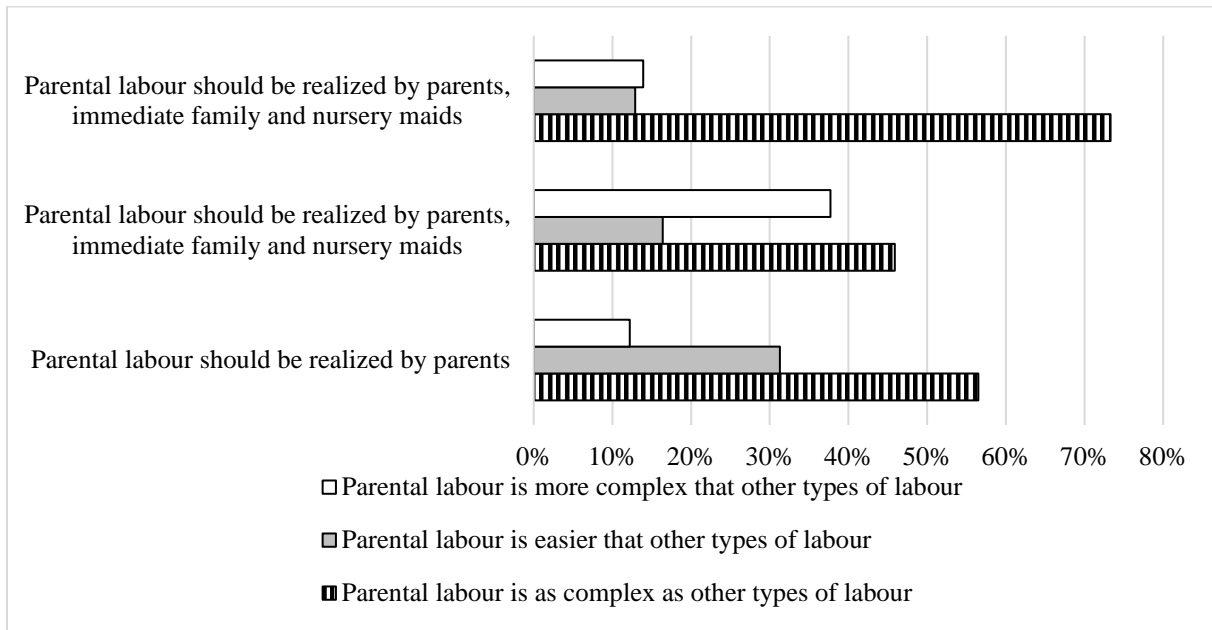| Parental labour should be implemented by...	%
Parents	97.6
Relatives of the child (grandparents, others)	60.2
State as a whole	28.0
Employees (nursery maids, tutors)	20.5
School	7.1
Leisure facilities	2.4
Social protection authorities	1.0
Preschool educational institutions	0.2

Source: data of the survey

2)   The majority of respondents (more than 80%) believe that the complexity of parental labour is higher or comparable to the complexity of other types of labour (Table 2). The proportion of respondents sharing this opinion is higher among those who involve a wide range of participants in parental labour (relatives and nursery maids) and lower among those who engages in parental labour on their own (Fig. 1). Therefore, according to the respondents, the more complex the implementation of parental labour seems, the wider the circle of those who should engage in it.

Tab. 2: Respondents' assessment of the complexity of parental labour in comparison with other types of labour

Assessment of the complexity of parental labour…	%
higher than other types of labor	21.4
about the same as other types of labor	62.0
lower than other types of labor	16.6
Total	100

Source: data of the survey

Fig. 1: Perceptions of the complexity of parental labour in groups of respondents identified by the breadth of the circle of parental labour actors

Source: data of the survey (Cramer's V = .240, p = .000)

3)   Almost two-thirds of respondents believe that parental labour should be remunerated. The proportion of respondents who agree with this opinion is higher among surveyed parents and lower among respondents whose professional activities are related to children. Moreover, the proportion of respondents who believe that parental labour should be remunerated is higher among those who consider close relatives and nursery maids as actors of parental labour (Table 3).
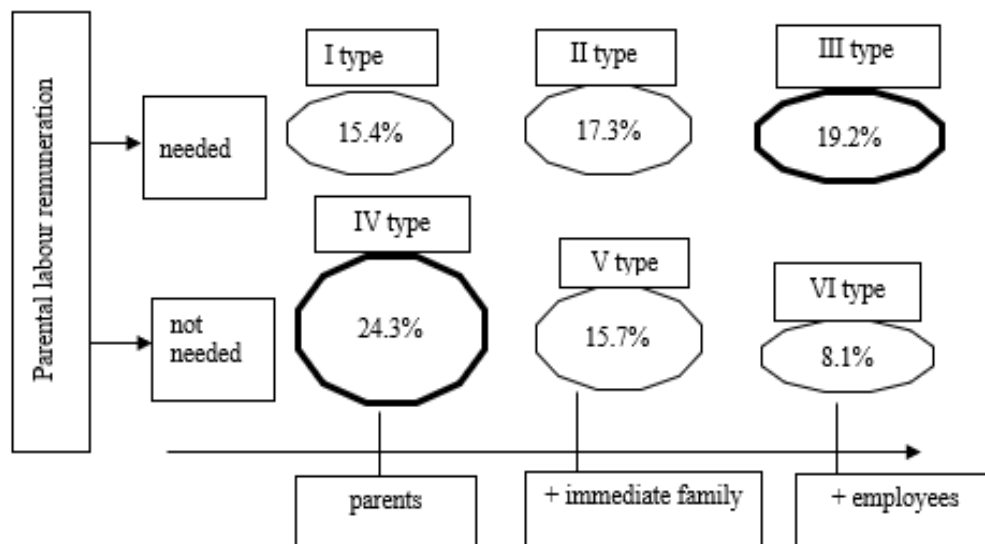
4)   We identified 6 types of respondents according to their opinion on the parental labour remuneration and the inclusion of various people in parental labour (Fig. 2). The most numerous type (almost a quarter of all respondents) is quite conservative – they believe parental labour should not be remunerated, and only parents should engage in it (IV type of respondents). However, almost one in five respondents believes that grandparents and nursery maids should be involved in parental labour, and that parental labour should be remunerated (III type of respondents). The two largest types of respondents were opposed to each other according to their beliefs regarding parental labour. Moreover, they are almost identical in composition: half of them consist of parents and half of them consist of respondents whose professional activities are related to children.

Tab. 3: Respondents' assessment of the complexity of parental labour in comparison with other types of labour

Parental labour…	%	Respondent category		Parental labour should be realized by…		
		Parents	Professional staff	Parents	Parents and immediate family	Parents, immediate family and professional staff
…should be remunerated	61.7	67.7	55.3	38.8	52.5	70.3
…should not be remunerated	38.3	32.3	44.7	61.2	47.5	29.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
phi (φ)		.128		.254		
p-value		.001		.000		

Source: data of the survey

Fig. 2: Types of respondents according to their opinions on the parental labour remuneration and the composition of the parental labour actors

Source: authors's calculation

5)   We revealed a fairly strong correlation between ideas about the complexity of parental labour and the need for its remuneration (Table 4). Among the respondents who believe that parental labour should be remunerated, there are many more who believe that this type of

labour is as complicated as other types – compared to a group of respondents who do not share this opinion on the parental labour remuneration (72,3 % versus 45,4%).

Tab. 4: Perceptions of the complexity of parental labour and the necessity of its remuneration

Assessment of the complexity of parental labour	Opinion on the parental labour remuneration		All respondents
	Should be remunerated	Should not be remunerated	
higher than other types of labor	20.1	23.5	21.4
about the same as other types of labour	72.3	45.4	62.0
Lower than other types of labour	7.6	31.1	16.6
All respondents	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: data of the survey (Cramer's V = .328, p = .000)

6) We revealed a relationship between ideas about the ideal number of children and: opinion on the need to stimulate parental labour; opinion on the possibility of involving close relatives and employees in parental labour (Table 5).

Tab. 5: Ideal numbers of children by type of respondents

Actors of parental labour	Parental labour		All respondents
	Should be remunerated	Should not be remunerated	
Parents	2.632	2.586	2.602
Parents and grandparents	2.562	2.669	2.617
Parents, grandparents and employees	**3.073**	2.633	2.943
All respondents	2.764	2.610	2.700

Source: data of the survey (Cramer's V = .170, p = .003)

The data show that the highest ideal numbers of children are characteristic of those respondents who include the broadest circle of participants in the implementation of parental labour and who believe that this labour should be remunerated.

3   Discussion

The obtained results show that the Russian population's perception of the ideal number of children can change by expanding guarantees for the assistance of relatives and employees in raising children and by improving the understanding that this complex labour should be valued and remunerated by the state.

In January 2020, the Russian state took an unprecedented step in this direction. A new measure of demographic policy - benefits for families with children under 7 years old - was unexpectedly announced in the message of the President of Russia to the Federal Assembly. In 2020, about 70% of families with children (whose income is below a certain threshold value) will receive these new benefits. The amount of the benefit is quite significant, as it is the regional subsistence level for children aged 1.5-3 and half of this amount for children aged 3-7. In 2021, this amount will increase. Therefore, we can argue that the country's leadership recognized, to some extent, the need to remunerate parental labour - especially the category of parents who have children under 7 years old and who do not have a high income.

The results of our research show that organizing the labour of hired workers can be another effective step in demographic policy. In modern Russia, this process is basically unregulated: there are no formal requirements for employees who work with children, the legislation does not define their labour functions (with the exception of inclusive education), the state does not formally intervene in matters of standardization and performance evaluation of such workers. This creates difficulties for parents who want to use the services of an employee: parents often don't know where to find such employees and how to evaluate their competencies; payment of their labour is based only on personal agreements. Creating comprehensive standards for employees' activities, defining their professional responsibilities in all matters of parental substitution, as well as establishing certification systems and a register of employees, will increase the number of actors engaged in parental labour. And the results of our study show that this will increase the motivation for the birth of a larger number of children.

It should be noted that some steps in this direction have already been taken in Russia. Thus, at the beginning of 2020, 7 out of 89 Russian regions started implementing a pilot project "Professional Babysitters for Children", which provided training for 277 childcare professionals. They are employees of government agencies who provide home services for several hours a day. Only special categories of families can use the services of state babysitters: families with many children; families with children aged 3 to 7 years who find themselves in difficult life situations; families with children with disabilities. Today, such "state babysitters"

can only look after the children without development and educating them. However, they must pass mandatory certification, which is not required for private workers. Meanwhile, the state mandatory free certification of private workers can help create a full-fledged institution of professional workers for any family and guarantee quality service at any stage of parental labour, regardless of the child's age. The creation of a self-regulatory organization of such workers may become an alternative to state certification. In this case, according to Russian law, the workers can independently develop and establish standards and rules for professional activity, as well as monitor their compliance . In our opinion, this is also necessary in relation to tutors, governesses and other workers dealing with children.

Conclusion

The results of our study expand the understanding of the determinants of the Russian fertility. They show that the ideas of the Russian population about the ideal number of children can change for the better by improving organization and stimulation of parental labour. Consideration of these results, as well as implementation of concrete steps in areas related to expanding the circle of parental labour actors and remunerating parental labour, can contribute to the increase in the effectiveness of demographic policy measures that are already being realized in Russia.

Acknowledgment

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