

The Qualitative and Methodological Aspects of Recent Increased Fertility Levels and Trends in Georgia

Shorena Tsiklauri

Phd student
Ilia State University

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Abstract

Georgia experience low level of fertility during the dramatic economic, social and political instability since 1990's. In addition, changes reproductive behavior caused decline of fertility level. Most Georgian women have and oriented to have two children. But the recently official statistics observed the fertility "boom" since 2008. The scholars argue that there has not been implemented any measures for stimulating of fertility in Georgia.

This study aims to explored changes in recent fertility trends and current fertility preferences in Georgia. This paper is going to answer the questions: Does the recent increased fertility trend in Georgia is real? Does the two child norm be strong in Georgia or this upward fertility trend actually resulted to the increase in the number of third and next order of children in a family due to the initiative of the Catholicos-Patriarch at the end of 2007, to baptize personally each third and next order of child in a family?

Introduction

The most countries of the world are experiencing a decline in the fertility level. More developed regions have a fertility rates which is not enough even for the population replacement. Fertility decline can occur for many reasons such as fewer children desired, greater access of contraception and abortion, other reason is postponement of childbearing, which leads to decrease both a total fertility and cohort fertility rates. But the most important factor of decrease fertility level is changes in reproductive behavior. In modern society, women have and oriented to have fewer children than their parents had.

Georgia experience low level of fertility during the dramatic economic, social and political instability since 1990's. In addition, changes reproductive behavior caused decline of fertility level since 1960's, crude birth rate (CBR) reduced from 24.7 in 1960 to 12.9 in 2013.

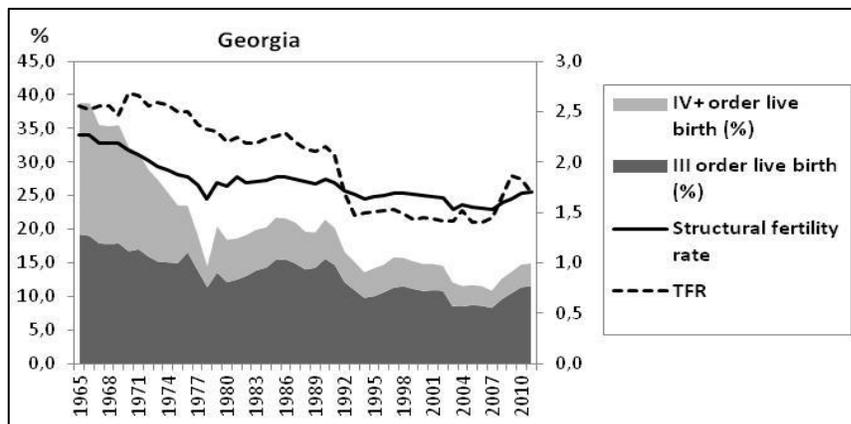
Table 1: Number of live birth and crude birth rate in Georgia

	Number of live births	Crude birth rate (Number of live births per 1,000)
1960	102 866	24.7
1965	94 987	21.2
1970	90 207	19.2
1975	89 712	18.3
1980	89 458	17.6
1985	97 739	18.5
1990	92 815	17.1
1995	56 341	11.9
2000	48 800	11.0
2001	47 589	10.9
2002	46 605	10.7
2003	46 194	10.7
2004	49 572	11.5
2005	46 512	10.7
2006	47 795	10.9
2007	49 287	11.2
2008	56 565	12.9
2009	63 377	14.4
2010	62 585	14.1
2011	58 014	12.9
2012	57 031	12.7
2013	57 878	12.9

Source: National Statistics of Georgia

Recent official statistics observed increased fertility trends in Georgia for the period 2007 to 2009. Only in 2009 the fertility level has increased by 12% and compared with 2005, it has risen by 34%. This new tendency seems very promising at the backdrop of the downward trend in fertility, which had been the case in Georgia during a long period since 1990s. This fertility tendency has caused a big interest and its causes have become a matter of active discussions by Georgian scholars and explain it by the different reasons. Upward fertility trend in Georgia is confirming by the official statistics too, according to which not only the number of live births increases but also the specific fertility indicators.

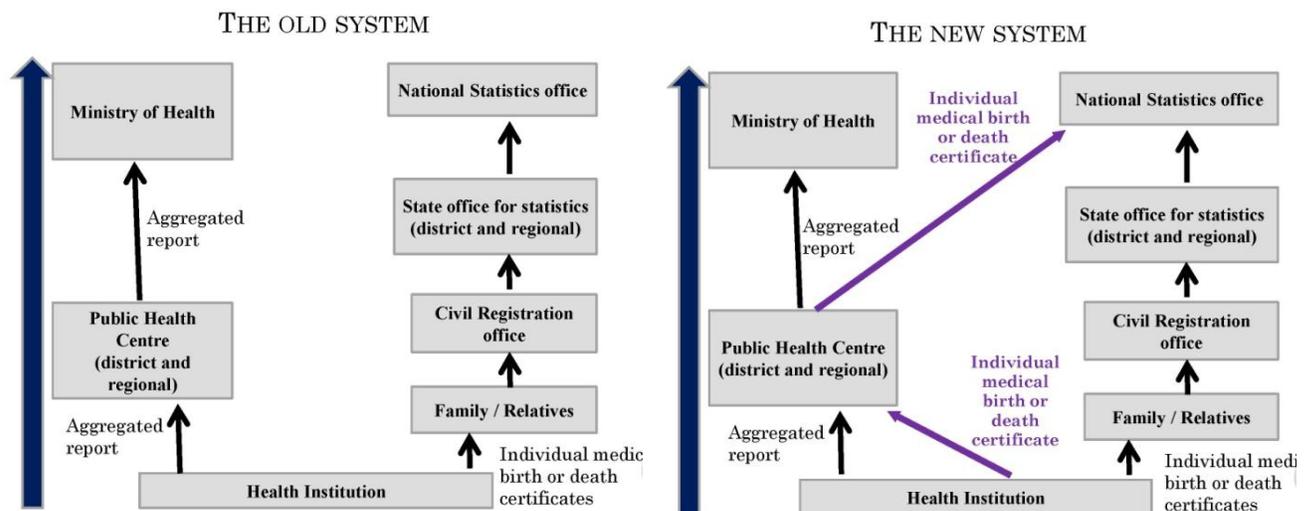
Figure 1: Fertility indicators in Georgia



Source: National Statistics office of Georgia

The recent increasing fertility level can be explained by several reasons. Some experts argue that it is linked to the initiative of Ilia II, the Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia at the end of 2007, to baptize personally each third and next order of child in a family. Georgian scholars ascribed the very first signs of the fertility increase in 2008 to the above mentioned initiative of the Patriarch, a fortiori that according to the official statistics, the proportion of the third and next order of children in the total number of births has increased in Georgia from 10.8% in 2007 to 13.6% in 2009. But others argue that this increase is related only to improving the registration system of vital statistics in Georgia. Hence, statistical data quality always has been at issue but after the independence of the country the problem becomes more acute (Duté, Badurashvili, Kuyumjyan, Meslé, & Vallin, 2010); (Badurashvili & Kapanadze, 2003), population statistics has deteriorated rapidly. In Georgia, the registration system was old and vital statistics seems to be incomplete.

Figure 2: Birth and death registration system in Georgia



Old registration system has placed in Georgia until 2003. According to this system National Statistics Office of Georgia received individual deaths or births certificates from family's or relatives, but it turned out that some people do not take these certificates on time. Especially in village areas, people are not taking birth certificates until the child 6 years old have become and it is obvious that registration was incomplete. For this reason it was necessary to change the birth and death registration system.

In 2003, the health institution was instructed to fill one more copy of birth or death certificates. One for health institution another for family and one for National Statistics Office of Georgia, this so-called "double collection of vital events" system increased registration.

Since 2010, the country introduced a new registration system: Geostat receiving birth and death data-base from Civil Registration Office, which caused increased data quality of vital statistics. In the recent period registration of birth as well as of death is getting better.

Besides improvement of data quality, on the other hand, fertility increase registered by National Statistics Office of Georgia in 2008-2009 may be addressed to the fact that in 2007-2009 more women in Georgia have given a birth to a second child than in previous years. There were women who had before postponed a birth of a second child till better times just like those women, who were intended to have a child definitely in the mentioned period or a little later. Such an effect, as a rule, results the implementation of a fertility stimulation policy. Why has this happened in Georgia,

without any kind of demographic policy in place still is not completely clear? Our hypothesis is that increase in the number of the second births in Georgia aside of postponed before and realized recently second child's projects might be related also to the increased number of unplanned pregnancies among women with one child.

Hence, during recent period in Georgia have taken place an accumulation of the second by order children due to the postponed (occurred later than planned) and early (earlier than planned) births, process, which triggered a short spell of fertility boom in the country. This effect, presumably, won't last long and will be followed by a compensation wave of the fertility decline in Georgia. According to official statistics number of birth in Georgia in 2013 compare with 2009 has already decreased by 8.7%.

This study aims to explored changes in recent fertility trends and current fertility preferences in Georgia. This paper is going to answer the questions: Does the recent increased fertility trend in Georgia is real? Does the two child norm be strong in Georgia? At the same time it must be noted that these questions only answered special social-demographic research, which will scrupulously study the whole range of issues connected with population's reproductive behavior and monitor the changes in this behavior over a considerable period of time.

Data Sources

For our research we are going to use several data sources: Official data which provided by National Statistical Office of Georgia and some recent demographic surveys conducted in Georgia. An example of such kind of research is a large-scale panel study "Generations & Gender Survey", which has been conducted already twice (the first wave in 2006 and second wave in 2009) in the framework of the international program and which, on the basis of the nationally representative sampling, studies the orientations, expectations and intentions of population concerning having of children and factors influencing on realization of their fertility projects.

Results

Three years period between Generations & Gender Survey's waves includes the period of fertility increase in Georgia. Despite of the short period of time if the recent fertility increase in Georgia is a real phenomenon, this must also have been reflected in the respondents' reproductive intentions, which due to the fact, that the mentioned study is a representative survey show the current reproductive intentions of Georgian population.

Table 2: Average number of children per one woman of reproductive age by socio-demographic characteristics

	The actual number of children	The expected number Of children
Woman's age		
20-29	0.49	2.47
30-39	1.35	2.46
40-49	1.91	2.22
Type of settlement		
Urban area	1.45	2.16
Rural area	1.79	2.30
Economic status		
Low	1.72	2.19
Middle	1.47	2.25
High	1.32	2.50
Marital status		
Single	0.38	1.70
Married/ in partnership	2.03	2.42
Divorced or Widowed	1.62	1.98

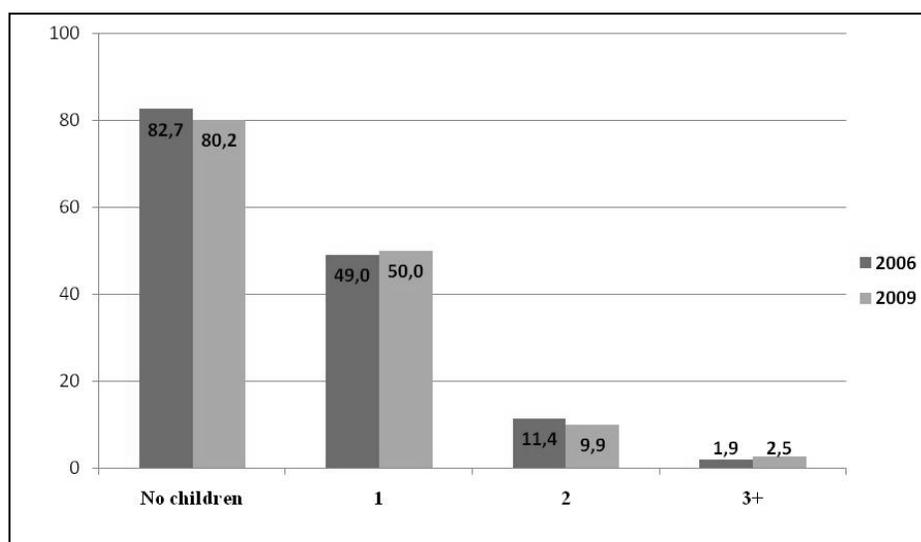
Source: Generations and Gender Survey in Georgia, II wave - 2009

Results of Generations & Gender Survey shows that the average actual number of children per woman is not enough even for replacement level. In Georgia, women living in rural areas have and oriented more children than women living in urban areas, also women with high economic status have less children than who have less economic situation.

The actual number of children in Georgia calculated for one woman in partnership exceeds two, which means that the problem of fertility increase in Georgia is connected with the having by couples the children of the third and next order. In spite of the fact, that the official statistics shows increase in the share of the third and next order of children in the total number of live births (from

10.8 % in 2007 to 13.6% in 2009) this does not imply that the number of families with 3 or more children has increased in Georgia in real terms. Increase of the proportion of the third and next order of children among the newborns during a calendar year, may also be caused by structural changes in the fertility – e.g. decrease of the share of the first children in the total number of live births that has really taken place during the last period: according to the official statistics the share of the first children in the total number of births in Georgia has decreased from 60.5% in 2006 to 53.1% in 2009, while the share of the second children has risen (from 28% in 2006 to 33.3% in 2009).

Figure 3: The share of women- respondents in partnership declared during the survey that they intend to have a child (definitely intend or think they intend) in the next three years, according to the number of children they already have



Source: Generations and Gender Survey in Georgia, II wave - 2009

During three years between the waves no positive changes can be traced in the respondents' plans to have a child. Some positive changes have taken place only among those women, who already have three or more children: the share of those, who still intend to have one more child during next three years, has increased from 1.9% to 2.5%. As we can see, these women are those respondents, who are obviously oriented towards having families with many children. It's possible, that the Patriarch's call for increasing fertility may have been a decisive factor for them, or that they had been intending to have many children as it were. Though one has to take into consideration that the women oriented towards having multi-children families, due to their small number, will not be able to tilt the scale in terms of improving demographic situation in Georgia and only the reproductive behavior of small

families will define the fertility level in the close run. The presented data shows that intention of respondents to have a second child also has increased somewhat during three years period between the waves, but as we have mentioned, the demographic situation in Georgia is basically tied up with having the child of the third and next order. At the same time, the data above shows, that among interviewed respondents the share of women with two children who intend to have the third child during the next three years has decreased between the waves – from 11.4% in 2006 to 9.9% in 2009.

Thus, the results of the conducted study provide us with no basis to assume, that the reproductive intentions of women living in Georgia have increased during three years period between the waves, which implies that increase of fertility in real terms in the nearest future is not expected in Georgia.

Table 3: Estimated parameters for the logit model for non-realization of fertility intentions of female respondents during the period between I and II waves

	Indicator of the impact of independent variable (Exp (B))
The type of residence	
Tbilisi	1.37
Other cities	1
Rural area	1.28
Woman's age	
20-29	1
30-39	3.40***
40-49	5.84***
Woman's education	
Incomplete secondary or lower	1
Secondary	0.53
Secondary-vocational	0.50
Higher	0.44**
Woman's employment	
Employed	2.18*
Unemployed	1
Man's employment	
Employed	0.74
Unemployed	1
How does the household income provides for the family requirements	
With great difficulty	1
With difficulty	0.65
With certain difficulty	0.99
More or less easily	1.05
Easily	0.69

*** $p \leq 0,001$; ** $p \leq 0,05$; * $p \leq 0,1$.

Table below provides with the results of calculations using of method of logistical regression, which enables us to identify, which factors make influence on the fact that women, who in 2006 stated that intend to have a child in the coming three years, did not give a birth to a child during the period between the waves.

It's clear from the table that from the point of view of realization of woman's reproductive intentions statistically important factors are only the age, education and employment of a woman. Other factors incorporated into the model seem to be insignificant - even such factor as an economic status of a respondent's household.

Thus, the conducted statistical analysis has shown that as younger and more educated woman is as the higher is a probability that she will realize her plans for having a child. At the same time, employment of a woman in Georgia is a negative factor from the point of view of probability of realization by woman her fertility projects. This is not surprising if we will take into account the following data collected by survey: only 22.7% of the employed women in Georgia are allowed by the employers to choose flexible time arrangements; only 58% of the employed women in Georgia are entitled to sick leaves currently and 65.6% - the right to use paid-for vacations.

Discussion

- In Georgia fertility level declines;
- Georgian woman have and oriented to have two children;
- Recanted increased fertility trend is mostly related to changing registration system of birth.

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