

**THE PERFORMANCE OF BASIC FUNCTIONS  
IN PRESENT DAY VIETNAMESE FAMILIES**

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## Summary

The results showed that Vietnam's socio-economic system has been significantly changing in the last decade under the fundamental reform of development patterns. With the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, Vietnamese families are changing, too. However, almost of Vietnamese families implement their basic functions, namely: economic function, reproductive function, educational function and function of taking care of elderly people.

**Firstly**, living standards in Vietnam have been considerably increasing over the past few years. This is manifested through the increase in households' income and expenditure. Women are generally decision makers in daily expenses in their families. As regards to other expenses, their husbands play a significant role.

**Secondly**, Vietnamese families follow rather strictly the family planning policies stipulated by the Party and the state. As a result, household size is small, birthrate decreases, and age at first marriage is higher and higher. The proportion of couples using family planning methods is relatively high and is likely to increase year after year. Nonetheless, there remain some limitations related to the reproductive function; that is, the increase of abortion rate.

**Thirdly**, families play an important role in forming and developing children's personalities. The most important people are father, mother, and then followed by other family members such as grandparents and siblings, etc. Parents have various activities to educate their children, get their children involved in socializing and the educational content in families is also varied.

**Fourthly**, the rate of elderly people in Vietnam has risen in recent years. The State's social security system is incapable of taking care of elderly people; therefore, the responsibility of looking after the elderly is taken by their families. Taking care of the elderly at home is for children to pay gratitude towards their parents.



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## **Abbreviations and Equivalents**

### ***Abbreviations***

ADB: Asia Development Bank

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ASFR: Age Specific fertility rate

CEDAW: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CEPEW: Center of Education promotion and Empowerment for Women

CGFED: Research center for Gender, Family and Environment in development

DVR: Democratic Republic of Vietnam

GDP: Gross domestic product

GSO: General Statistical Office

IMF: International Monetary Fund

ILO: International Labor Organization

IUD: The Intrauterine Devise

MOLISA: Ministry of Labor - Invalids and Social Affairs

NCFAW: National Committee for the Advancement of Women

SMAM: The Singulate Mean Age at Marriage

TFR: Total fertility rate

TV: Television

UN: United Nations

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund or United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNESCAP: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

UNFPA: UN Fund for Population Activities

VWU: Vietnam Women's Union

WHO: World Health Organization

WTO: World Trade Organization

### ***Equivalents***

1 USD = 20.900 VND (1.4.2012)



## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1. The necessity of the theme

Over the recent years, the subject of family has drawn the attention not only of social researchers but also of the government and other social organizations. Indeed, “In recent years...the family has become the object of intense public interest” (Engstler, 1999:12); “...family has become an increasingly important question within the political parties, parliament, the feminist movement, and indeed among the public at large” (Sass, 1986:18).

Already Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels<sup>2</sup> asserted that families were a cell of society, took part in every productive process from commodity production to consumption, from being born to foster and educate people.

Rebuilding and recovering from the war is in the Vietnamese political discourse called “*renovation*”<sup>3</sup> (“Doi Moi” in Vietnamese) of the country. In the renovation of the country the Vietnamese communist party and the state always give special attention to the construction of new Vietnamese families (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008). The movement to build a “*new cultured family*”<sup>4</sup> has had remarkable success. Reform process has brought the families in Vietnam new opportunities to develop; the living standard of the greatest part of Vietnamese families is improving, the basic functions of families have changed for the better.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter includes one paper presented at an International Conference: The attainment of Vietnamese education in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation. 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Madrid, Spain; pp. 2258 - 2265.

<sup>2</sup> They spent a lot of pages in their works to talk about family: The German ideology, The Communist Manifesto, etc. In their opinions, family was described as a small society, finding the historical forms of the family, finding it as the private ownership of productive material, dealing with relationship between family and society, studying family in capitalism and in socialism in the future. They saw sexual intercourse as an important matter in marriage and family as one of the productive force factors in history of social development as well.

<sup>3</sup> The policy of Doi Moi consists of three inter-related fundamental thrusts: a) shifting from a bureaucratically centralized planned economy to a multi-sector economy operating under a market mechanism with state management and a socialist orientation; b) democratizing social life and building a legal state of the people, by the people, and for the people; c) implementing an open-door policy and promoting relations between Vietnam and all other countries in the world community for peace, independence, and development.

<sup>4</sup> See details in chapter 2.

Economically, Vietnam is an emerging market, and has been one of the fastest growing countries in the world<sup>5</sup> - becoming a new Asian tiger<sup>6</sup>. Annual GDP growth averaged 6.8 percent in the period 1986 - 2006<sup>7</sup>, with relatively little volatility and moderate inflation. In nominal terms, the economy was 10 times its late-1980s size in 2006, at \$61 billion, making Vietnam the 58<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world in 2006, up from 76<sup>th</sup> in 1986<sup>8</sup>. According to the Deutsche Bank<sup>9</sup> research growth forecast model, Vietnam will remain in the same growth league as China and India until 2020. In this context of market economy with the expansion of cooperation and cultural exchange, Vietnamese families are changing and adjusting to the new conditions.

Appreciating the role of families in social life, it is considered not only the cell of society but also an important factor for solid development. A Resolution adopted by the Tenth Communist Party Congress has affirmed: "...shaping a family of comfort, equality, progress, happiness. The family is home for every person, is an important environment for taking form, nurturing and educating of the people" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2006:103-104), and the nation-wide strategy for the Vietnamese family from 2006 to 2010 states:

"Family is the cell of society where the human race is maintained, and which is an essential environment where human dignity is formed, taught and maintained...Family is one of the important factors determining the solid development of society, the success of industrialization and modernization and the building of socialism. Building a prosperous, progressive, happy and equal Vietnamese family, with a few children (each couple has only one or two children), is the motive power behind the strategy of socio-economic development in this period of industrializing and modernizing the country" (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008:6).

Why families have an impressive attraction? It has its own reason.

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<sup>5</sup> *World Bank report to the Vietnam Consultative Group meeting*. Hanoi, December 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> UN (2008). *Investment Policy Review*. Vietnam.

<sup>7</sup> China was the only Asian country to outpace the 8.4 percent growth of Vietnamese GDP in 2005. Source: [http://www.cfr.org/publication/11846/surging\\_vietnamese\\_economy.html#p2](http://www.cfr.org/publication/11846/surging_vietnamese_economy.html#p2). (accessed in 25.8.2010).

<sup>8</sup> UN (2008). *Investment Policy Review*. Vietnam.

<sup>9</sup> Deutsche Bank research (2007). *Understanding Vietnam. A look beyond the facts and figures*, pp. 4.

*Firstly*, the significant role of families is more and more realized in the social development and progress as well as in the happiness and life of an individual. It can be said that in every nation, in every historical stage and in all economic - social circumstances, families always play a special significant role in the lives of individuals and the development of society. In Bowen's words, families will persist as long as people exist (Hall, 1979:26). As from the date being born and grow up, we all are closely related to our family. Families are the connector between the human being and society. Families try to satisfy all fundamental needs of their members, and serve as reliable support base for their whole life, from infancy to old age and death. In other words, families carried out all the basic function for their members. That is why people used to be so strongly attached to their family (Bich, 1997:87). Actually, apart from territorial and voluntary associations that were established in almost every village and offered some limited mutual help, families and kinship were the main institutions supporting people during all the ups and downs of their life, during the whole cycle of human reproduction, satisfying almost all their needs (Hy, 1992:55-61). The family was traditionally regarded as one of the very key institutions of the Vietnamese society. It could be said that in Vietnam as elsewhere, families are a group of people who are related by blood and marriage ties, often live together, and economically cooperate to satisfy the basic needs of their life: production, consumption as well as those of human reproduction - childbearing, child raising, and caring for the elderly, etc. (Bich, 1997:11).

*Secondly*, it is not easy to explain all what happen in respect of families. The changes in family life have resulted in many deviations from the concept of the traditional family, and even some socio - economic policies made in favor of families, in fact were destructive to the ability of families to perform their function as a special social institution. Families remain an area of intense personal and social significance. Not only are family matters a central concern in many people's life (Scott, 1997), but equally at a political level there has been much debate around the current state of "*the families*" (Allan, 1999:22). In addition, families are understood to be extended families in Vietnam. This is reflected in the fact that if asked about their family, Vietnamese people often mention at least their parents, brothers, sisters, their wife/ husband, and children; they include into their conception of family both "*the family of origin*" and the "*family of procreation*". Only when asked about "*family of their*"

own” they mention their nuclear family. For Vietnamese it is difficult to imagine the families without mentioning their parents’ family (Bich, 1997:10-11).

This study is aiming at a description how families fulfill their basic functions in present day Vietnam, simultaneously, affirming the irreplaceable role of family to the society. It consists of seven chapters. The first one is introduction. The second chapter is about industrialization in Vietnam and the impact it has had on families. Based on real context in Vietnam, many forms of family can be seen. Chapter three focuses on economic function of family. I discuss the problems related to family income as well as expenditure and try to answer the question: whether the husband-breadwinner and wife-caretaker is a popular model in Vietnam. Chapter four addresses the social meanings of family because childbirth, reproduce the labor force are considered sacred duty of the family for the survival of society. In other words, the family is the only official environment to perform the function of maintaining social race. Chapter five examines the mission to nurture and educate children in the family. Why parents should participate actively in their child’s education? What is the content of family education? Chapter six is talking about filial piety and role of it in taking care of Vietnamese elderly people nowadays. The last chapter I put forward some conclusions about all of problems related to perform basic functions in present day Vietnamese families and give suggestions for further studies.

## 1.2. Literature review

Families are not an unfamiliar and new research topic all over the world. As evidence, there are a lot of publications and working papers regarding to this issue. It is possible to list some examinations and investigations relating to aspects of families such as: origin of family (Engels, 1884<sup>10</sup>; Ingoldsby, 1995<sup>11</sup>); definition of family (Goode, 1982<sup>12</sup>; Murdock, 1949<sup>13</sup>; Stephens, 1963<sup>14</sup>; Smelser, 1994<sup>15</sup>; Winch,

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<sup>10</sup> Engels, F. (1972). *The origin of the family, private property and the state*. New York: Pathfinder Press.

<sup>11</sup> Ingoldsby, B.B. (1995). *Family origin and universality*. In: Ingoldsby, B.B. & Smith, S. (Eds). *Families in multicultural perspective*. New York: The Guilford Press.

<sup>12</sup> Goode, W.J. (1982). *The family*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.

<sup>13</sup> Murdock, G.P. (1949). *Social structure*. New York: Free press.

<sup>14</sup> Stephens, W. (1963). *The family in cross-cultural perspective*. New York: Holt, Rinehard & Winston.

<sup>15</sup> Smelser, N.J. (1994). *Sociology. (Third edition)*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

1979<sup>16</sup>); theory in studying family (Graham, 1999<sup>17</sup>; Hall, 1979<sup>18</sup>; Hong, 1991<sup>19</sup>; Hung, 2002<sup>20</sup>; Lee, 1982<sup>21</sup>; Bich, 2003<sup>22</sup>; Parsons, 1955<sup>23</sup>); the family in context of each country in the world (Engstler, 1999<sup>24</sup>; Evans & Lee, 1981<sup>25</sup>; Scott, 1997<sup>26</sup>; Xuyen, 2002<sup>27</sup>; Geiger, 1968<sup>28</sup>; Demos, 1974<sup>29</sup>; Malinowski, 1913<sup>30</sup>); functions of family (Parsons & Bales, 1955<sup>31</sup>; Robersons, 1991<sup>32</sup>; Sigh & Zingg, 1931<sup>33</sup>; Townsend, 1957<sup>34</sup>); the changes of family in the world (Goode, 1963<sup>35</sup>; Thi, 2002<sup>36</sup>; Ogburn, 1955<sup>37</sup>; Hartley, 1995<sup>38</sup>; Skolnick & Skolnick, 1986<sup>39</sup>; Scanzoni, 1975<sup>40</sup>); the future of family (Winch, 1979<sup>41</sup>; Howe, 1972<sup>42</sup>). In those studies, a lot of problems

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<sup>16</sup> Winch, R.F. (1979). *Toward a model of familial organization*. In Burr, W.R., Hill, R., Nye, F.I. & Reiss, I.R. (Eds). *Contemporary theories about the family*. Vol.1, pp. 162-169. New York: Free press.

<sup>17</sup> Graham, A. (Ed). (1999). *The sociology of the family*. Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, C.M. (1979). *Family systems: A developing trend in Family theory*. In: Harris, C., Anderson, M., Chester, R., Morgan, D.H.J. & Leonard, D. (Eds). *The sociology of the family*. University of Keele.

<sup>19</sup> Hong, K.T. (1991). *Overview of sociological research on family in Vietnam*. In: Liljeström, R. & Lai, T. (Eds). *Sociological studies on the Vietnamese families*. Social Sciences Publishing House.

<sup>20</sup> Hung, L.N. (2002). *History and theory of the sociology*. Publishing House of Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

<sup>21</sup> Lee, G. (1982). *Family structure and interaction: A comparative analysis*. Minneapolis: Minnesota press.

<sup>22</sup> Bich, M.H. (2003). *Sociology of family*. Social Sciences Publishing House.

<sup>23</sup> Parsons, T. (1955). *The American family. Its relations to personality and the social structure*. In Parsons, T. & Bales, R.F. *In family socialization and interaction process*. New York: Free press.

<sup>24</sup> Engstler, H. (1999). *Families in Germany - A statistical view*. Bonn: Druckerei Weinmann Fiblerstadt.

<sup>25</sup> Evans, R.J. & Lee, W.R. (Eds). (1981). *The German family*. London: Croom Helm.

<sup>26</sup> Scott, J. (1997). *Changing households in Britain: do families still matter?* Sociological Review, vol. 45, pp. 591 - 620.

<sup>27</sup> Xuyen, T.T.K. (2002). *Families and issues of families today*. Statistical Publishing House.

<sup>28</sup> Geiger, H.K. (1968). *The family in Soviet Russia*. Cambridge. Mass: Harvard University Press.

<sup>29</sup> Demos, J. (1974). *The American family in past time*. American scholar. Vol. 43, pp. 422 - 446.

<sup>30</sup> Malinowski, B. (1913). *The family among the Australia aborigines*. London: University of London press.

<sup>31</sup> Parsons, T. & Bales, R.F. (1955). *Family socialization and interaction process*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.

<sup>32</sup> Robertson, A.F. (1991). *Beyond the family. The social organization of human reproduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>33</sup> Sigh, J.A.L. & Zingg, R.M. (1939). *Wolf children and feral man*. New York: Harper & Row.

<sup>34</sup> Townsend, P. (1957). *Family life of order people: An inquiry in East London*.

<sup>35</sup> Goode, W.J. (1963). *World revolution and family pattern*. New York: The Free press.

<sup>36</sup> Thi, L. (2002). *Vietnamese families in innovation background of the country*. Social Sciences Publishing House

<sup>37</sup> Ogburn, W.F. (1955) *Technology and the changing family*, New York: Houghton/Macmillan.

<sup>38</sup> Hartley, R. (1995). *Families, values and change: Setting the scene*. In Hartley, R. (Ed). *Families and cultural diversity in Australia*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

<sup>39</sup> Skolnick, A.S. & Skolnick, J.H. (1986). *Family in transition*. Fifth edition. University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>40</sup> Scanzoni, J.H. (1975). *Sex roles, life styles, and child bearing: Changing patterns in marriage and the family*. New York: Free Press.

<sup>41</sup> Winch, R.F. (1979). *Toward a model of familial organization*. In Burr, W.R., Hill, R., Nye, F.I. & Reiss, I.R. (Eds). *Contemporary theories about the family*. Vol.1, pp. 162 - 169. New York: Free press.

<sup>42</sup> Howe, L.K. (1972). *The future of family*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

expressed in family are analyzed; they investigated these functions separately, not together, and of course not related to basic functions of Vietnamese families.

Also, family in general and sociology of family in particular become a very common research topic in Vietnam. Many organizations<sup>43</sup> are focused on studying families; many workshops and trainings on families have been held. Family studies have also been included as a subject in training programs of sociology faculties in some universities<sup>44</sup>. Research topics focus on the following basic directions: Vietnamese traditional families (Kiet, 2006<sup>45</sup>; Dong, 1991<sup>46</sup>; Binh, 1992<sup>47</sup>; Huou, 1991<sup>48</sup>; Tuyet, 1991<sup>49</sup>); family changes in industrialization perspective (Bich, 1997<sup>50</sup>; Xuyen, 2002<sup>51</sup>; Hoa, 2008<sup>52</sup>; Que, 1986<sup>53</sup>); family and family education (Thi, 1994<sup>54</sup>; Chuong, 2000<sup>55</sup>; Huou, 1996<sup>56</sup>); division of labor in the family (Teerawichitchainan, Knodel, Loi, Huy, 2008<sup>57</sup>; Thi, 2002<sup>58</sup>; Minh, 2008<sup>59</sup>); divorce (Tam, 2002<sup>60</sup>; Phuong, 1986<sup>61</sup>).

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<sup>43</sup> Example: Institute for Family and Gender studies; CGFED; CEPEW.

<sup>44</sup> Some universities have included families studies as a subject in their training programs; e.g. The Semi-public Open University; Hanoi National University of Education; Faculty of Sociology in the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Vietnam National University, Hanoi; Faculty of Sociology in the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh city; Center of Sociology in National Political Academy of Ho Chi Minh and so on.

<sup>45</sup> Kiet, D.P. (2006). *Vietnamese families - Traditional values and social mental-pathological issues*. Labor Publishing House.

<sup>46</sup> Dong, D.T. (1991). *Modifications of the traditional family in the South of Vietnam*. In: Liljeström, R. & Lai, T. (Eds). *Sociological studies on the Vietnamese families*. Social Sciences Publishing House.

<sup>47</sup> Binh, P.K. (1992). *Vietnamese customs*. Ho Chi Minh Publishing House

<sup>48</sup> Huou, T.D. (1991). *Traditional families in Vietnam and the influence of Confucianism*. In: Liljeström, R. & Lai, T. (Eds). *Sociological studies on the Vietnamese families*. Social Sciences Publishing House.

<sup>49</sup> Tuyet, L.T.N. (1991). *Women and their families in the movement for agricultural collectivization in Vietnam*. In: Afshar, H. (Ed). *Women, development and survival in the Third world*. New York: Longman.

<sup>50</sup> Bich, P.V. (1997). *The changes of the Vietnamese family in the Red River Delta*. Gothenburg: Department of Sociology. University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

<sup>51</sup> Xuyen, T.T.K. (2002). *Families and issues of Vietnamese families today*. Statistical Publishing House.

<sup>52</sup> Hoa, N.T.K. (2008). *The impact of industrialization on labor and employment in family*. Sociological Review. No.1, pp. 39 - 47.

<sup>53</sup> Que, L.T. (1986). *The Vietnamese family: yesterday and today*. Interculture. Vol.19, No.3, Issue 92.

<sup>54</sup> Thi, L. (1994). *Family and family education*. Social Sciences Publishing House

<sup>55</sup> Chuong, P.K. (Chief author) (2000). *Family education*. Publishing House of Education.

<sup>56</sup> Huou, T.D. (1996). *Family and family education*. In: Lai, T. *Some research of Vietnamese families present day*. Social Sciences Publishing House

<sup>57</sup> Teerawichitchainan, B., Knodel, J., Loi, V.M., Huy, V.T. (2008). *Gender division of household labor in Vietnam: Cohort trends and regional variations*. University of Michigan. Institute for social research.

**In sum**, although recently a lot of research about family and functions of families in the world, including Vietnam, has been completed, few studies mention functions of families in Vietnam in a systematic way.

Based on the inheritance of previous documents in combination with the data collected; this study has an ambition to contribute to filling the documentation about performance of basic functions in present day Vietnamese families, in terms of both documented and the analytical approach.

### **1.3. Aims of the dissertation**

The aim of my study is to examine how Vietnamese families fulfill their basic functions in the context of transfer from traditional to modern forms.

To do so, the study is first to describe and analyze the effects of industrialization on families and traditional family values in present day Vietnam.

Second, the study presents the diversity of families in Vietnam now, putting it in wider socio-cultural context. This would be important not only from a theoretical viewpoint, but also from a practical one. Since Vietnamese families are related to the wider social-cultural context, they should be understood in this context.

Third, the study analyzes the basic functions of Vietnamese in present day: economic function, reproductive function, educational function and function of taking care of elderly people. From that, we affirm the irreplaceability of Vietnamese families as a special social institution:

“Families hold a position of special importance and decisive contribution to the success of Vietnamese socio - economic reform because economic growth occurs in household units. They are the most common form in our country today, directly related to the proactive role of each family. Human reproduction, and the need to reduce birth rates are directly related to awareness and activity of each family. Child-rearing, training people in a comprehensive

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<sup>58</sup> Thi, L. (2002). *Vietnamese families in innovation background of the country*. Social Sciences Publishing House.

<sup>59</sup> Minh, N.H. (2008). *Gender in the division of labor in household*. Sociological Review. No.1, pp. 39 - 47.

<sup>60</sup> Tam, N.T. et al. (2002). *Divorce: A case study in Hanoi*. Social Sciences Publishing House.

<sup>61</sup> Phuong, L. (1986). *Divorce and cause of divorce*. Sociological Review. No.2, pp. 39 - 45.

way, protecting health and security for each member is extremely heavy responsibility of families” (Thi, 1994:6).

The purpose of this study is to answer these questions.

#### **1.4. Research sites: Vietnam today**

##### ***1.4.1. Geography and population***

Vietnam, officially the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, is located in Southeast Asia. It is bordered by People’s Republic of China to the north; Laos to the northwest; Cambodia to the southwest; and the East Sea to the east. With a population of 85,846,997 in 2009<sup>62</sup>, Vietnam is the 13<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world<sup>63</sup>. There are 54 ethnic minority groups throughout the country. Of which, Kinh ethnicity has a population of 73,594 millions people (account for 85.7%) and other ethnic groups has a population of 12,253 millions people (account for 14.3%). Ethnic minority groups have population of more than 1 million people including: Tay: 1,626,392 people (occupied 1.9%); Thai: 1,550,423 people (1.8%); Muong: 1,268,963 people (1.5%); Khmer: 1,260,640 people (1.5%) and Mong: 1,068,189 people (1.2%)<sup>64</sup>.

Vietnam is approximately 331,688 km<sup>2</sup> in area (not including Hoang Sa and Truong Sa islands). The topography consists of hills and densely forested mountains, with level land covering no more than 20%. Mountains account for 40% of the area, with smaller hills accounting for 40% and tropical forests for 42%. According to the classification used in official statistics, Vietnam is divided into six geographical regions<sup>65</sup> with 58 provinces, and five centrally controlled municipalities<sup>66</sup> existing at the same level as provinces (see Map 1.1).

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<sup>62</sup> [http://www.gso.gov.vn/default\\_en.aspx?tabid=462&idmid=2&idmid=2&ItemID=9789](http://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=462&idmid=2&idmid=2&ItemID=9789) (accessed in 7.8.2010).

<sup>63</sup> List of the 13 most populous countries in the world: China, India, United States, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Russia, Japan, Mexico, Philippines, Vietnam.

<sup>64</sup> Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee (2010). *Report on completed census results. The 1/4/2009 Population and Housing census*. Hanoi.

<sup>65</sup> They are: Northern midlands and mountain areas (14 provinces), Red River Delta (11 provinces), North Central and Central coastal areas (14 provinces), Central Highlands (five provinces), South East (six provinces), Mekong River Delta (13 provinces).

<sup>66</sup> They are: Ha Noi, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh city, Can Tho



**Map 1.1. Location map of the research area**



*Source: GSO (2006). Vietnam: Population and AIDS indicator survey, 2005, pp. xviii.*

### ***1.4.2. Natural resources***

Vietnam has considerable energy resources such as oil, gas and coal, and its 41,000 km of waterways provide a basis for hydropower. The country is rich in minerals such as bauxite, iron ore, lead, gold, precious stones, tin, chromate, anthracite, granite, marble, clay, white sand and graphite. In addition, Vietnam has considerable fresh and saltwater fauna and dense tropical forestry resources, and possesses great agricultural potential.

### ***1.4.3. Infrastructure***

#### ***1.4.3.1. Highway system***

The road system consists of a 210,000 km network, including 10,372 bridges and 178 ferries. Vietnam has no expressways, and only 26% of national highways have two lanes or more. In recent years, the Government has mobilized a significantly large amount of capital to upgrade the highway system with financial support from international leading agencies. These include a number of the more important highways, such as Highway No.1, which links Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh city, and Highway No.5, which links Ha Noi and Hai Phong.

#### ***1.4.3.2. Railway***

The rail network consists of about 2,600 km of single-track line covering several routes. There are about 260 stations in the network. The longest and most important route is the Ha Noi - Ho Chi Minh city line, which stretches for 1,730 km. This line is now serviced by an express train, which makes the journey in approximately 29.5 hours. The lines connecting Vietnam to China were re-opened a few years ago.

#### ***1.4.3.3. Inland waterways***

The two major inland waterways systems serve as major transportation outlets. The first major inland waterway system is in the Red River area in the north which stretches for approximately 2,500 km. Along this system are five main ports, of which Hanoi is the largest. The second major inland waterway extends 4,500 km

along the Mekong River and its tributaries in the South and boast about 30 ports, including Ho Chi Minh city.

#### *1.4.3.4. Ports*

Vietnam has eleven major seaports, Ho Chi Minh city serves most of the South and now boasts modern container-loading facilities. Just a few hours' drive from Ha Noi, Hai Phong serves much of the North. The Government has decided to build Cai Lan port, 80 km away from Hai Phong, which will play a critical role in the development of the North. Da Nang, at the north of Han River, serves the central highlands and much of the transit traffic to and from Laos.

#### *1.4.3.5. Airport and Civil Aviation*

There are three international airports: Ho Chi Minh city, Ha Noi and Da Nang. Recently, the Government has significantly upgraded international airports to handle the increase in the volume of traffic associated with Vietnam's invigorated economy. Particularly, Noi Bai airport in Ha Noi was upgraded, enlarged and opened for operation in 2002. Four new international airports are planned, to be constructed in Phu Quoc, Dong Nai, Lao Cai and Quang Ninh provinces. In addition, there are 16 other domestic airports around the country.

#### *1.4.4. Telecommunication*

Vietnam has made great strides in upgrading its telecommunications systems, although much remains to be done. Accounting for the last eight months of 2006 only, the number of new phones was twice those of the entire period from 1975 to 2000<sup>67</sup>. The country has achieved more than 24.42 phones per 100 people. The Government's relaxation with regard to international calls made over the internet and the spread of mobile phone subscriptions have further improved the telecommunications landscape, especially in rural areas.

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<sup>67</sup> [www.pwc.com/en\\_VN/vn/publications/assets/vnnov06.pdf](http://www.pwc.com/en_VN/vn/publications/assets/vnnov06.pdf) (accessed in 1.6.2010).

#### ***1.4.5. Economy and foreign relations***

Historically, Vietnam has been an agricultural civilization based on wet rice cultivating. The war in Vietnam destroyed much of the country's economy. Upon taking power, the government created a planned economy for the nation. In 1986, Vietnam introduced significant economic reforms with free market economy and began a path towards international reintegration. As a result, Vietnam is now the largest producer of black pepper accounting for one-third of the world's market and second largest rice exporter in the world after Thailand. Besides rice, key exports are coffee, tea, rubber, and fishery products. By 2007, Vietnam had established diplomatic relations with 172 countries (including the United States, which normalized relations in 1995)<sup>68,69</sup>. Vietnam holds membership of 63 international organizations<sup>70</sup> such as: UN, ASEAN, WTO and 650 non-government organizations.

#### ***1.4.6. Religions***

According to the 2009 Census data<sup>71</sup>, Vietnam has many various religions, of which there were three religions with more than one million of religious people. Those are: the Buddhists have 6,802,318 people, account for 43.5% of total religiously - oriented people; there are 5,677,086 Catholic persons (36.3%) and the Hoa Hao have 1,433,252 persons (9.2%). The religiously - devotional population of 2009 has increased of 932 thousand people as compared to that figure of the 1999 Census. This reflects the religious-faiths freedom policy of the Vietnam Communist Party and State. But, the vast majority of Vietnamese people of Asian religions practice ancestor worship.

#### ***1.4.7. Education***

Vietnam has an extensive state-controlled network of schools, colleges and universities but the number of privately run and mixed public and private institutions is also growing. General education in Vietnam is subdivided in five categories: kindergarten, elementary schools, middle school, high schools, and college/

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<sup>68</sup> [http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/cn\\_vakv#9Lnq3MFZQ3go](http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/cn_vakv#9Lnq3MFZQ3go) (accessed in 7.8.2010).

<sup>69</sup> <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/relations.html> (accessed in 5.4.2010).

<sup>70</sup> [http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/ctc\\_quocte#QWi868iu1503](http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/ctc_quocte#QWi868iu1503) (accessed in 9.9.2010).

<sup>71</sup> Central Population and Housing census Steering committee. (2010). *Report on completed census results. The 1/4/2009 Population and Housing census*. Hanoi.

university. A large number of public schools have been organized across the country. Education from age six to eleven is free and mandatory. Education above these ages is not free; therefore, some poor families have trouble paying tuition for their children without some forms of public or private assistance. Regardless, school enrollment is among the highest in the world and the number of colleges and universities increased dramatically in recent years, from 178 in 2000 to 299 in 2005.

#### **1.4.8. Healthcare**

The overall quality of health in Vietnam is regarded as good as of 2009 life expectancy<sup>72</sup> is 76 for women and 72 for men. Infant mortality is 12 per 1,000 live births<sup>73</sup>. However, malnutrition is still common in the provinces. In 2001, government spending on health care corresponded to just 0.9% of GDP. Government subsidies covered only about 20% of health care expenses, with the remaining 80% coming out of individuals' own pocket<sup>74</sup>.

Following are fundamental healthcare targets of Vietnam people for 2020<sup>75</sup>:

- Elevating average life expectancy to 75
- Reducing under-one-year child mortality to 15 - 18%
- Decreasing the proportion of newborn babies weighting under 2,500g to 5%
- Reducing the proportion of the undernourished children under-one-year to 15%
- Ensuring that no one suffers from serious malnutrition by 2020

#### **1.4.9. Politics and governance**

The Communist Party of Vietnam is the sole party in power. It is one of several organizations within the political system but is the leading force of that system. The Party maps out the development line, policies, strategies and orientation of the country. The Party operates within the framework of the Constitution and the law.

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<sup>72</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam> (accessed in 1.10.2010).

<sup>73</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN> (accessed in 6.7.2010).

<sup>74</sup> Library of Congress - Federal research division (2005). *Country profile: Vietnam*

<sup>75</sup> Vietnam report. (1999). *Report on the State of women in urban local government Vietnam*. Hanoi.

The activities of the Party's commissions are linked to those of the commissions of the National Assembly and the boards of people's councils. The Party leads the National Assembly and people's councils at various levels. It exercises its leadership through its organization system in state bodies and political and social mass organizations and through Party committees and members working in these bodies and organizations (The Communist Party of Vietnam, 1999: 23).

The National Assembly is the highest organ of state power. It is the main body in the exercise of democracy and is based on people's representation (The Communist Party of Vietnam, 1997). The National Assembly meets twice a year<sup>76</sup> for ordinary sessions. Main duties and powers of the National Assembly include: amending the Constitutions and laws, deciding the financial and monetary policies of the state; deciding on the state budget and state budgetary allocations; approving the final balance of the state budget, deciding on fundamental foreign policy by ratifying or nullifying international agreements.

The government is the executive body of the National Assembly and the highest administrative agency of Vietnam. The National Assembly elects, dismisses, and removes the Prime Minister at the request of the President of the Republic. The central government is chaired by the Prime Minister and contains 17 ministries, five ministry-level organizations, and 26 other agencies (Mutz & Klump, 2005:152). Each minister or head of state agency chairman has the power of preparing strategies and development plans to be submitted to the Communist Party and state authorities, develop drafts relating to policies, laws and regulations and adopt regulatory documents for the implementation of state policies. Each minister follows the instructions issued by the Prime Minister. The government and its committees have the power to decide whether a matter is up to the government or not. Everything that must be submitted to the National Assembly or to the Central Party Agency must first pass through the government. The structure of the minister is quite uniform throughout the system. Almost every ministry has within its structure an institute that is responsible for carrying out research relevant to the ministry's field. Institutes also act as think tanks, providing advice to the management of the ministries when it comes to formulating policies and making decisions at the ministry level.

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<sup>76</sup> It is in May and October every year.

There is a system of division of responsibilities between the central and local government.

Local government includes peoples' councils and people's committees at provincial, district, commune, ward and township levels. Following are the functions of people's councils and people's committees (The second National Report on implementation of CEDAW, 1999).

People's councils are bodies exercising state power in localities and are organized at three levels: (i) province and centrally run city; (ii) district, precinct and province - run district town; and (iii) commune, ward and district town. People's councils are bodies representing the people's right to mastery, elected by local people and they are responsible to local people as well as to higher state bodies.

People's committees are elected by people's councils. They are the people's councils' executive bodies, and are the administrative bodies of the state in localities. They are responsible for implementing the constitution, law and other decrees issued by higher state bodies as well as the decisions of people's councils. People's committees are organized at three levels: province, district and commune.

## **1.5. Methods**

As soon as I chose the title of the study, I set to find and read theme-related literature documentation. This documentation is very important and indispensable for every study. Bernard points out that there are three ways of collecting publications relating to a particular topic, that are: "(1) asking people; (2) reading review article; (3) scouring the literature through use of bibliographic search tools" (Bernard, 1988: 126). This is also the way that many researchers apply to find, read and get the initial information. I am not an exception.

From the time periods of the beginning of October 2009 to the end of September 2010 I found and read books and other literatures relating to this study. Afterwards a set of introduction was recorded.

This is not a field study, but an attempt at a synthesis of a number of sources, secondary as well as primary. In other words, it relies on the result of a lot of

research; it is to a large extent a survey of existing literature. That means; I collect, interpret and evaluate different studies' results, which were applied by different researchers and used here as my resources.

Therefore, collecting statistics about Vietnamese families is very important and indispensable for my research. During my study in Berlin, I came back to Vietnam in two different phases. The first phase fell in the beginning of February to April 2011 to collect the data in various sources, the last took place from beginning of January to March 2012.

The rest time is for analysis of data gathered in other various sources. During such time periods brief papers related to this study were also presented in different seminars in order to receive comments and feedbacks of experienced colleagues and researchers.

Some documental sources related to the field of my study:

- The statistics from the statistical agencies, especially from the GSO; General Office for Population Family Planning. It provides an overview statistics about Vietnamese families.

The main statistics to write this dissertation is from result of the survey on Household living standard, which has been conducted regularly by the GSO every two years from 2002 to 2010. The focus of the survey has been household income and expenditures; however other important aspects of living standards such as education, health or employment have been included in various rounds.

- Information on contemporary families from magazines and newspapers in Vietnam is also taken into account to give more concrete imagines on the families.

- Literary works, both written (novels, short stories and so on) and oral ones (tales, folk songs, proverbs, and sayings, etc.) are used as well. They are an indispensable part of the Vietnamese culture. The Vietnamese people tell stories, sing folks songs and take quotations from folk sayings in their everyday life. They use them both as a line of conduct, and as justifications of their real behavior. In this sense, folk literature not only shows the dreams of people as to what things in social life should



be, but also reflects the real state of affairs. There are relatively long traditions of using folk literature to understand Vietnamese families, including functions of the families.

In addition, I did in-depth interviews with experts on family problems such as school-teachers, heads of kindergartens and preschools in some provinces: Thai Binh, Ha Noi, Ha Giang, Nam Dinh, Hai Phong, Hai Duong to collect their opinions about the implementation of basic functions in Vietnamese families. Their opinions have flown into different aspects of the analysis, but they are not interpreted separately.

## **1.6. Hypotheses**

Hypothesis one. In accordance with the socio-economic transformation with a view to industrialization and modernization, Vietnamese families have undergone radical changes. However, Vietnamese families still fully perform their basic functions, namely: economic function, reproductive function, educational function, and function of taking care of elderly people.

Hypothesis two. Living standards in Vietnam have been considerably increasing over the past few years. This is manifested through the increase in households' income and expenditure. Women are generally decision makers in daily expenses in their families. As regards to other expenses, their husbands play a significant role.

Hypothesis three. Vietnamese families follow rather strictly the family planning policies stipulated by the Party and the state. As a result, household size is small, birthrate decreases, and age at first marriage is higher and higher. The proportion of couples using family planning methods is relatively high and is likely to increase year after year. Nonetheless, there remain some limitations related to the reproductive function; that is, the increase of abortion rate.

Hypothesis four. Families play an important role in forming and developing children's personalities. The most important people are father, mother, and then followed by other family members such as grandparents and siblings, etc. Parents have various activities to educate their children, get their children involved in socializing and the educational content in families is also varied.

Hypothesis five. The rate of elderly people in Vietnam has risen in recent years. The State's social security system is incapable of taking care of elderly people; therefore, the responsibility of looking after the elderly is taken by their families. Taking care of the elderly at home is for children to pay gratitude towards their parents.

## Chapter 2: Industrialization and family changes in Vietnam (1986 - 2010)<sup>77</sup>

### 2.1. Industrialization of Vietnam society

After failing to reach economic output targets under the centrally - planned economy in the 1980s the country faced serious financial, economic and social problems. In response to this acute state failure, in 1986<sup>78</sup> (at the Sixth Party Congress) the Vietnamese political leadership formally abandoned the centrally - planned economy and began introducing market - oriented policies (Quang & Kammeier, 2002:373-388). These so-called *Doi Moi* (renovation) reforms<sup>79</sup> initiated a development process, during which Vietnam has not only achieved high economic growth<sup>80</sup> performance but has also made impressive progress in reducing poverty. The country is expected to graduate from the status of a low - income country to a middle - income country by 2010<sup>81</sup> and in the five - year plan it is projected that Vietnam will

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<sup>77</sup> This chapter is comprised of five papers published at International Journals and International Conferences: 1) Industrialization and the changes of Vietnamese families. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences. Vol.1, No.3, October 2011, pp. 347 - 356; 2) Industrialization in Vietnam in the period 1986 - 2010. 2011 International Conference on History and Society Development. 25<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Maldives, pp. 154 - 159; 3) Gender equality in education: the case of Vietnam. 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Education and Development Conference. 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011. Bangkok, Thailand, pp. 324 - 333; 4) Vietnamese families in transition. Journal of Science. Vol.1/2011, pp. 56 - 65; 5) The changes of women's position: The Vietnam case. International Journal of Innovative Interdisciplinary Research. Issue 1, December 2011, pp. 142 - 154.

<sup>78</sup> Since 1954, when the anti-French resistance ended and the DVR was able to begin implementing a program for economic development, the country's economy has operated, broadly speaking, under two different economic systems. In the first instance, for two decades from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, the Communist Party attempted to create a socialist centrally planned economy according to the model essentially laid down in the Soviet Union from the 1930s onwards. Second, following reunification of the northern and southern regions of the country and formation of the Social Republic of Vietnam in 1975, a process of transformation began which ultimately led to the abandonment of central planning and official endorsement, by the same party, of a "*socialist market-oriented economy under state guidance*" (Beresford & Phong, 2000:3).

<sup>79</sup> There are five main areas in which economic reform is taking place:

- The change from a centrally planned and controlled economy to a market economy regulated by the government
- The shift from the policy of giving priority to the state and collective sectors to a policy of legal free enterprise, and promotion of private business
- The change from investment policies which emphasize heavy industries in an autarkic economy to priority for food production, consumer goods and exports in an open economy
- The development and diversification of international economic relations
- The democratization of the society, the reform of public administration and eradication of bureaucracy, smuggling and corruption (Doanh, 1992:1).

<sup>80</sup> With GDP growth rates of 7 to 8% on average Vietnam is one of the star performers in Asia and the world.

<sup>81</sup> According to the World Bank Atlas method economies are divided in three main groups: low income, GDP/capita \$905 or less; middle income, \$906 - \$11,115; and high income, \$11,116 or more.

become a “modern industrial country by 2020<sup>82</sup>”. To do it, Vietnam now is “to stabilize the economy and to construct the prerequisites needed for socialist industrialization” (Cuc, 2010:42).

What is industrialization?

Industrialization is normally interpreted as a process whereby the share of industry in general, and of manufacturing in particular, in total economic activity is increased. A large number of studies have shown a clear tendency for industrialization, defined in this way, to be associated with rising income (Weiss, 2002:3-4).

Goode gives a definition of his own about industrialization. In his view, it is not possible and useful to distinguish clearly between the separate effects of urbanization and industrialization; the effects of industrialization include those of urbanization. Furthermore, he includes the improvements of technology in industrialization (Goode, 1963).

From these two definitions about industrialization, I will check the industrialization process in Vietnam through out three aspects: number and rate of urban population in the country; the growth of GDP; and economic structure shift.

### ***2.1.1. Number and rate of urban population in the country***

Nearly 150 years ago, the trend of urbanization began in the West and then spread to America in the late nineteenth century and to Asia in 60s, 70s of the twentieth century. It is a natural consequence of modern process of the country through the industrial revolution. Goode affirmed that certainly the modern system of industry never occurs without urbanization (Goode, 1963:11). In another place, he also said that since the world is becoming industrialized and urbanized simultaneously, it may not be possible to isolate these two processes as separate sets of causal factors. (Goode, 1963:374). The World Development Report 1999/2000 states that urbanization and economic growth go hand in hand in all parts of the world (World Bank, 1999), and Vietnam is not an exception.

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<sup>82</sup> The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2006). *The five-year socio-economic development plan 2006 - 2010*, pp. 55.

Urbanization is the physical growth of urban areas as a result of industrialization. Urbanization is also defined by the UN as movement of people from rural to urban areas with population growth equating to urban migration. The Vietnamese definition of urbanization excludes those resident in the urban area who are still engaged in rural activities (Smith & Dixon, 1997:24).

In general, urbanization in Vietnam is basically divided into the following stages. Each of the historical stages is clearly identified by distinct and rapid change. The urbanization process in Vietnam reflects the complicated and diverse circumstances of the different periods of development (Luan, Vinh, Wiesman, Leaf, 2000:54).

*The feudal period (from 1858 onwards)*

The city in Vietnam this period was mainly an administrative and commercial center. It was usually an advantageous geographical location for exchange and trade. It could not actually become the economic center in accordance with the nature of urban concept. Basically, urbanization during the feudal era was not derived from the division of labor but from the redistribution of social products by the governance demands and needs of trade exchange. In the framework of an agricultural, self-sufficient and closed economy, the city has no important role for rural areas and the whole country.

Socially, community relations dominated absolutely. Factors necessary for industrial and trade development as well as commodity production in general were very weak. The study of history has shown that, during the sixteenth century, the big cities of Thang Long<sup>83</sup>, Hoi An<sup>84</sup>, Pho Hien<sup>85</sup> had been developed prosperously. There were seeds of producing goods - basic for urban development. However, in the quite strong feudal centralization with the intervention of the feudal class, and due to the policy of “*favoring agriculture and limiting trade*”, the cities did not grow. On the broader scale, this is also the real state of other oriental cities (especially in China). It can be said that the process of urbanization in Vietnam at this stage did not really start.

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<sup>83</sup> Thang Long now is Ha Noi capital.

<sup>84</sup> Hoi An is in Quang Nam province at the moment. It is located in the Central of Vietnam.

<sup>85</sup> Pho Hien belongs to Hung Yen province. It is in Northern of Vietnam.

### *The colonial period (1858 - 1954)*

After establishing the colonial government stably, the French increased exploiting natural resources of Vietnam to move them to their country. To do that, it is necessary to build and broaden roads; to expand the old cities and to build new ones. The commercial ports of Hai Phong, Da Nang, Sai Gon were opened to trade. Hai Phong, in 1872 was a fishing village, turned into a busy port since 1953. The population of Sai Gon - Cho Lon in 1943 was 498,000 people; compared to 1,600,000 people in 1953. Ha Noi included in 119,700 people in 1943; but it was housing 297,000 people in 1953 - so the number of residents was more than two times in 1943 (Luan, 2002). However, the growth rate of urban population for nearly 100 years of colonial domination was still very low. In 1931, the percentage of urban population in Vietnam had reached 7.5%; in 1936 it was 7.9%; 20 years later (1955) only achieved 11%. Meanwhile, the urban population in the world for 20 years has increased by 31% to 48% (i.e. 17%), reflecting a five-fold increase in Vietnam growth (only 3.1%).

In essence, the city of Vietnam this period was only the administrative center and the shelter of the feudal government as well as the last station to collect natural resources of Vietnam to France. The socio - economic status of the cities was too weak to attract more workers and people from rural areas. However, we could say that in 1955, the urbanization process really began in Vietnam with a rate of 11% urban population.

### *The 1955 - 1975 period*

It is a special period in the history of Vietnam in general and in the process of urbanization in particular. The country was divided into two parts with two different political - social modes<sup>86</sup>. These two modes had opposite effects on the development of urban in Vietnam during this period.

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<sup>86</sup> The anti-American resistance war of the Vietnamese people was transformed by the US imperialists and their lackeys into the ideological struggle between two regimes: the “*republic regime*” in the South and the “*communist regime*” in the North, with the partition of the country.

The years 1955 - 1964 was a period of urbanization increasingly in both North and South of Vietnam. Network of the city gradually formed and developed. It began influencing on the development of rural society and the whole country.

The years 1965 - 1975 was a period of war in both parts of Vietnam. Normally, war is a factor hindering the development of technical infrastructure and urban structure, reducing the number of urban residents. However, Vietnam has its own characteristic. In the North, after nearly ten years of peaceful construction in the socialist model, the country had to cope with the sabotage war of the United States Air Force. To limit destruction caused by war, industrial buildings and urban residents temporarily moved to the countryside, especially during the early 1970s, and resulted in a temporary deurbanization process. This means the process of urbanization was slow during this period in Northern Vietnam. In the South, neocolonial economic development was followed by local and special wars with US interference. In contrast to the North, because of “*forced urbanization*” policy of America<sup>87</sup>, millions of Southern farmers were forced to leave their villages to become refugees and pulled into the cities. As a result, the urban population of Southern Vietnam increased from 15% in 1960 to 60% in 1970. The population of Sai Gon increased from 300,000 to 3,000,000 people (10 times). Da Nang’s population increased even higher: from 25,000 to 300,000 people (12 times). The refugees continued flowing to Sai Gon, where at the time it had the highest population density in the world: 34,000 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (Luan, 2002). After the liberation in 1975, a reverse migration from cities to rural areas took place. But the consequences of “*forced urbanization*” during the American war are affecting the social life of the Southern cities until today<sup>88</sup>.

#### *The 1976 - 1985 period*

After a few years to restore what was destroyed by the American war, the process of urbanization gradually regained regular pace in peaceful condition. Many new cities were born; many rural areas became urban ones. An urban network of the country was formed, including more than 500 cities, towns and townships of various sizes.

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<sup>87</sup> The “*forced urbanization*” strategy in Indochina consisted of the saturation bombing of the rural areas, which forced millions of peasants to leave their ancestral homes and move to the cities.

<sup>88</sup> The serious problems of urbanization such as: congestion, pollution, inadequate drainage, water supply, power and communications are emerging.

The two biggest cities are Ha Noi - the capital in the North and Ho Chi Minh city in the South. It is noted that after the war, because of the reverse migration from urban to rural areas, the urban population decreased in five years by 21.5% in 1975 to 18.6% in 1981. Since 1982, the rate of urban population has been increasing (1982:19.2%; 1985:19.3%). However, this growth rate is very slow.

*From 1986 to 2010*

From 1986, urbanization has also accelerated under Doi Moi; the UN estimates that the proportion of the population in urban areas increased by only two percentage points, from 18.3 percent to 20.3 percent between 1970 and 1990; but reached 26.7 percent in 2005, reflecting a three-fold increase in urban growth.

According to the 1989 census, 12.74 million people, or 19.8% of the population, were classified as urban<sup>89</sup>; of these 8.5% (1.08 million) were resident in Hanoi, and 24.9% (3.17 million) in Ho Chi Minh City. Outside of these two centers only three settlements had more than 300,000 inhabitants, Da Nang, Bien Hoa and Hai Phong, the latter two closely linked to Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi respectively. The urban population of Vietnam is heavily concentrated in and around the two major centers, and the southern part of the country remains far more urbanized than the north.

The general impression of the rapid growth of Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City is confirmed by other official figures. Between 1989 and 1994, these centers increased their share of the total urban population to 15.9% and 31.0% respectively. Such an increase in the population of the two centers in the period 1989 - 1994 amounts to 2.25 million (Drakakis-Smith & Dixon, 1997:24).

Over the past decade, Vietnam's urban systems have developed rapidly. Urban population has risen to nearly 26 million people in 1999 with the annual average population growth rate of 3.4%. Urban network has developed widely across the country while the number of urban areas has soared to 754<sup>90</sup> from 629 in 1999.

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<sup>89</sup> From 1970 and 1989, a settlement was regarded as urban if it has a population of at least 2,000 and most of the inhabitants engaged in non-agricultural activities (Thrift & Forbes, 1986). Subsequently, the threshold has been raised to 4,000.

<sup>90</sup> Vietnam now has a total of 754 urban areas, including Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh city, seven first-tier urban areas, 14 second-tier urban areas, 45 third-tier urban areas, 40 fourth-tier urban areas and 646 fifth-tier urban areas.



According to the Ministry of Construction's urban development department, Vietnam's urban population rose to 31.7 million people as of June 2009, accounting for 37% of the national population. Of whom, 25.5 million people are living in the inner city, representing 29.7% of the national population<sup>91</sup>.

#### *Development plan for Vietnam's urban in the future*

The main trend to develop Vietnam's urban areas in the future is focused on developing all resources, attract foreign investment to consolidate existing cities and build large cities - based on economic development. Urban and large urban areas lead positions in growth at national level. It is estimated that by 2015 the number of urban is 847, and by the year 2025 will be 1000. The urban population by 2015 and 2025 will reach 35 million and 52 million respectively with the urbanization rate would be about 50%.

#### **2.1.2. The growth of GDP**

##### *2.1.2.1. Overview of GDP since 1986*

The face of Vietnam's economy and society has changed significantly since the introduction of market - oriented reforms and the opening of the economy in 1986. Vietnam escaped from the crisis in the mid - 1980s and its annual GDP growth rate averaged 3.9 percent in the 1986 - 1990 period<sup>92</sup>.

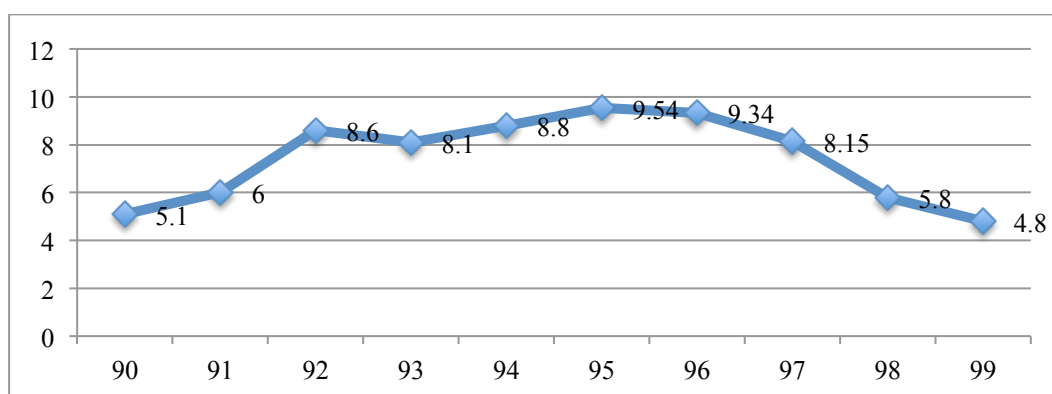
In the mid - 1990s, Vietnam was considered one of the most promising markets and investment locations in East Asia. The GDP growth rate averaged almost 8 percent per year during the period 1990 - 1995, with over 9 percent recorded in 1995 (Hakkala, Kang, Kokko, 2001:2).

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<sup>91</sup> [http://www.uni-bros.com/en/news.php/new\\_vision\\_for\\_urban\\_development\\_in\\_vietnam/id=13106/cid=4](http://www.uni-bros.com/en/news.php/new_vision_for_urban_development_in_vietnam/id=13106/cid=4) (accessed in 4.5.2011).

<sup>92</sup> General Department of Statistics and Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2000.

**Fig. 2.1. GDP growth (1990 - 1999) (in:%)**

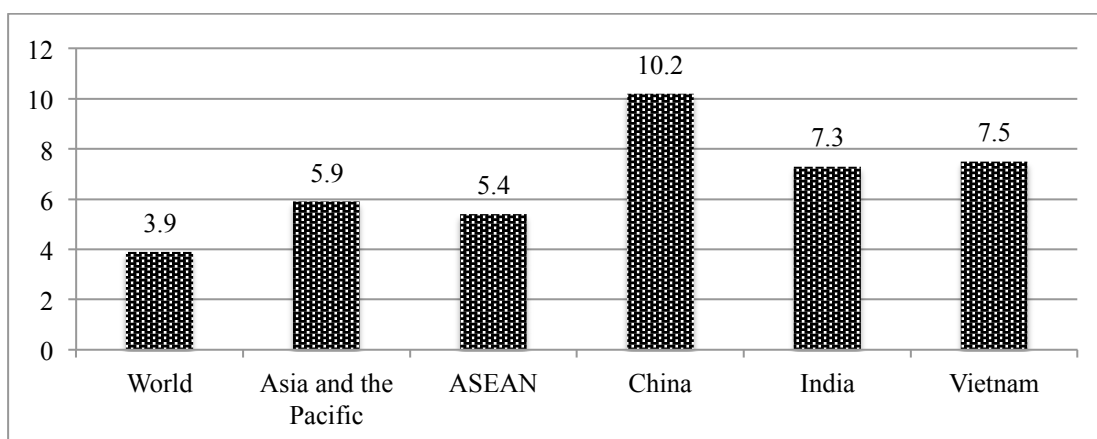


*Source: Institute for Development strategy*

[Quoted in Thong, H.V. *Identification of regional requirements for small reactors without on-site refueling and neutronics calculations of fixed bed nuclear reaction*, pp.7]

Over the present decade, and especially after the acceleration of economic reforms that followed the 9<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, in 2001, Vietnam has experienced high rates of economic growth with an average of 7.5% per year from 2000 to 2008. Annual growth of GDP peaked at 8.5% in 2007 before falling to 6.2% in 2008 as a result of high consumer price inflation and then falling external demand. This was high by both global and regional standards as is evident in fig. 2.2.

**Fig. 2.2. GDP annual average growth (2000 - 2008) (in:%)**



*Source: IMF (2009). World Economic Outlook Database*

[Quoted in MOLISA & ILO (2010). *Labor and social trends in Vietnam 2009/10*, pp.7]

For the first quarter of 2009, GDP grew by only 3.1 per cent compared to 2008 but steadily climbed throughout 2009. By the end of the 2009, growth figure is relatively strong compared to estimates for most of the countries in the Asia region<sup>93</sup>.

According to a study of the Institute of Development strategy of the Ministry of Planning and Investment, a forecast of socio-economic development in accordance with three different scenarios (high scenario, base scenario, and low scenario) is presented in table 2.1.

**Table 2.1. GDP annual average growth rate (in: %)**

Year	2011 - 2020	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030
High scenario	7.5	7.0	6.2
Base scenario	7.1	6.9	6.1
Low scenario	6.3	6.5	5.5

*Source: Institute of Development strategy*

[Quoted in Thong, H.V. *Identification of regional requirements for small reactors without on-site refueling and neutronics calculations of fixed bed nuclear reaction*, pp.8-9]

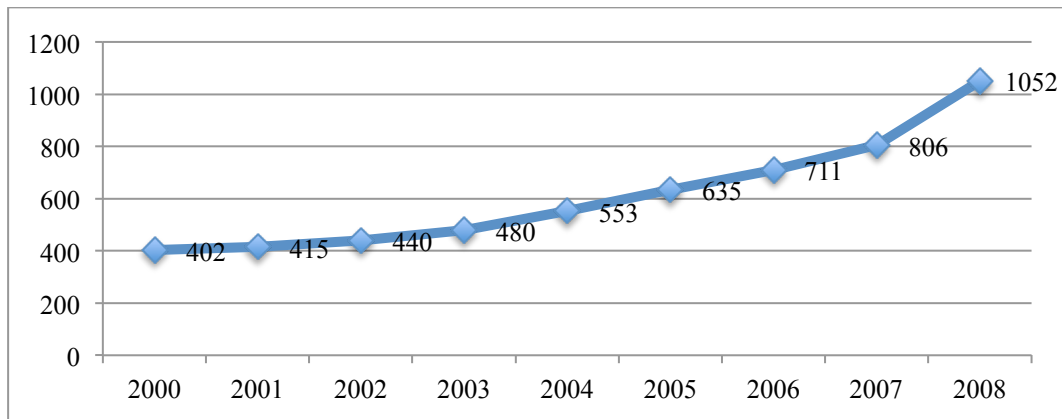
#### 2.1.2.2. *The GDP per person*

Another common way to measure development progress is the GDP per person. From this perspective, Vietnam climbed from a GDP per person of 413 dollars in 2001 to 836 in 2007, and will most likely surpass the 1000 milestone in 2008, a couple of years ahead of the target set by the socio - economic development plan 2006 - 2010. At 12.5% in the period 2001 - 2007, Vietnam ranks the 24<sup>th</sup> among 139 countries<sup>94</sup> in terms of the growth of its GDP per person measured at constant prices (Vietnam Development report, 2009).

<sup>93</sup> IMF. (2009). *World Economic Outlook Database*

<sup>94</sup> The ranking excludes countries and territories with a GDP of less than two billion dollars in 2007

**Fig. 2.3. GDP per capital (2000 - 2008) (current USD)**



*Source: GSO; World Bank (2009). World development indicators*

[Quoted in MOLISA & ILO (2010). *Labor and social trends in Vietnam 2009/10*, pp.68]

**To sum up**, the growth of GDP and GDP per person since renovation reflects the positive significant change, which is occurring in Vietnam. Although the world economy is sometimes at a crisis, Vietnam still has a high growth rate compared to other countries in the world. In other words, Vietnam is on the right way in industrialization.

### **2.1.3. Economic structure shift**

Economic structure shift has always been one of major concerns in the renovation and economic development policy of the Party and government (Phuong, 2009<sup>95</sup>). In the Tenth National Congress of Communist Party (2006), achievements<sup>96</sup> were highly evaluated.

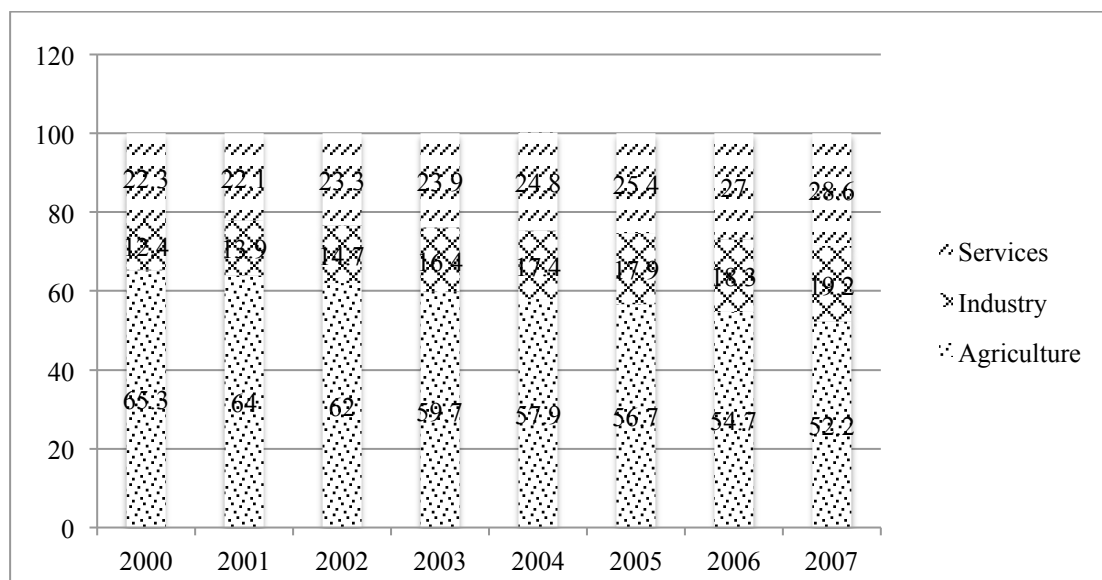
The Vietnam economy has been experiencing a rapid structural transformation, which is reflected in the shifting sectoral composition of employment. In 2000, almost two-thirds (65.3%) of all workers were employed in agriculture (see fig. 2.4).

<sup>95</sup> [http://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/details.asp?Object=4&news\\_ID=8154381](http://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/details.asp?Object=4&news_ID=8154381) (accessed in 7.10.2010).

<sup>96</sup> Economic growth rate is considered higher annually; economic structure continues to be transferred towards industrialization and modernization; social investment increases rapidly; socialist-oriented market economy has been established, macroeconomic is generally stable; international economic integration and foreign company gain significant progress; education and training are fairly developed; science and technology have some advancements; socio-culture is progressive on many facets, connection between economic development and social problems settlement has changed positively, human development index is also increased; national unity for the development cause continues to be consolidated; socio-politic is steady, national defense and security are enhanced, foreign relations are developed, creating favorable conditions for socio-economic development.

However, by 2007 this had declined to 52.2 per cent. The most substantial shift from 2000 to 2007 has been toward the industrial sector, which accounts for nearly one-fifth of the workforce, while services employed remaining 28.6 per cent of all workers in 2007.

**Fig. 2.4. Distribution of employment by sector (2000 - 2007) (in:%)**



*Source: MOLISA. Labor and employment survey in various years*

[Quoted in MOLISA & ILO (2010). *Labor and social trends in Vietnam 2009/10*, pp.12]

According to assessment of the implementation of the five-year socio-economic development plan (2001 - 2005), Vietnam has succeeded in both agriculture, industry and service sector (The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2006:9). The proportion of total GDP accounted for by agriculture declined from 23.3% to 17.6% between 2000 and 2008 although there was a 35.1 per cent increase in the value of agriculture GDP over that period. On the other hand, the industry and construction sector increased its share of the national economy from 35.4% in 2000 to 41.6% in 2008. Meanwhile, the services sector consistently contributed around 40% of GDP during the 2000 - 2008 period.

## **Discussion**

The decision of the Sixth Party Congress in 1986 to undertake a comprehensive restructuring and renovation process is often seen as the main point of departure for

Vietnam's economic reforms. Major institutional and structural reforms were implemented. First of all is the process of urbanization. The environment of urban development is determined by its administrative-political, economic, and cultural-social patterns, each of these with its own historical dimension. Before the colonial period (1954), the urbanization in Vietnam was not developed. It was only an administrative center and had no important role for rural areas and the whole country. From 1954 - 1975, urbanization in the South is faster than in the North because of "forced urbanization" policy of America in the southern part of Vietnam. After reunification in 1975, the process of urbanization gradually regained regular pace in peaceful condition. But the growth of urbanization this period was very slow. The process of urbanization has only been accelerated under Doi Moi. Many cities are born and urban network is developed. We could say that urbanization began in Vietnam before the renovation period, however, the process of urbanization is only intensively occurring paralleled by industrialization.

Urbanization associated with industrialization and modernization has directly contributed to restructuring the economy towards gradually reducing the value of agriculture, forestry and fishery in the total national income of the country (GDP) and increasing the proportion of industry, construction and services in GDP. Agricultural economic structure is transformed in the orientation of industrialization and modernization. Industry is developed along with the line of improving quality, competitiveness and modernization. Service has also been improved rapidly. It made the GDP per person in Vietnam increased substantially. As a result, Vietnam is striving to reach the medium income group in the world.

## **2.2.Social changes affecting Vietnamese families**

### ***2.2.1.Replacing the outdated family values with the new ones***

#### *2.2.1.1.The freedom of spouse choice*

In the past, both men and women were expected to be married at quite young ages (by today's standards with the men being 20 years old and women 18 years old). Marriages were generally arranged by the parents and extended family, with the children having a limited right to say no in the matter (Anh, 1992; Binh, 1992). The

power of parents still can be seen in two typical patterns today: either the parents make themselves arrangements for marrying a son (daughter) to a certain person, or they let the child choose a mate, but approve or disapproval of his/her choice. The former is still likely to be found, particularly on the countryside, while the latter is now more widespread in both rural and urban areas (Bich, 1997:204).

That marriage, is arranged by parents, is one of the traditional customs of Vietnam in the past, due to the influence of Confucianism<sup>97</sup>. Parents will choose a mate for their children when they are old enough to marry (Binh, 1992). In some cases, parents even promise to marry their children to children of other families when they lie in the womb. For example, if a child in the womb is a girl, her parents will promise to marry her to a child of another family in case it will be a boy. In other words, unborn children have become the spouse of each other. Parents of these families will have known each other all their life, such as they are working in the same company, or they have been friends since fighting in the battlefield during the war, etc.

In the second typical situation, children are allowed to select a mate themselves, but their parents will have the final decision. In this situation, children have much more freedom in choosing a mate, they can find a person they love. However, getting married still depends on their parents (Van, 2007).

Whether the marriages were arranged by parents or the parents let their child choose, the final decision belongs to parents, the marriage shall be determined by a number of the following basic elements:

*Firstly*, background of the family must be compatible. A rich, respected family is compatible with a rich, respected family (Insun Yu, 1990; Derhodes, 1994); a family living in an urban area is suitable for a family in urban area; etc. Newspapers every now and then report cases in which parents arrange a marriage for their children, or reject children's choice because the family background of the prospective partner does not meet the expectations of parents. One can pick up by chance some weekly and daily newspapers<sup>98</sup> and easily find some articles about that.

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<sup>97</sup> The Confucian expressed that a child is seated where his/her parent choose the place for him/her, whether willing or not.

<sup>98</sup> Some newspapers such as: Tien phong, Vietnamese women, Family and society, etc.

Yen, a beautiful girl in a rich family, has already had a boyfriend who was her former classmate and is in military service now. A rich, respectable family in the villages asks a go-between to approach her parents, and negotiate about the arranged marriage between her and the only son, although they know she has a boy friend. As a result, Yen's parents suggest she should marry the son. As they put it:

“A girl's youth is short-lived, she can not wait for her boyfriend indefinitely; moreover, what would her boyfriend bring her materially? Love cannot guarantee any good standard of living. Meanwhile the family that wants to have her is rich, respectable”.

However, Yen shows no interest in it. “I will not marry a person whom I do not love”, she insists. Having failed to persuade her, the parents take a strong measure. Their argument is that parents never accept a child to teach them what to do; once they have already made mutual agreement with the counterpart family on the marriage, she has to obey. Although she cries, and asks for not arranging her marriage, the date for it is set and fixed. Having no way to protest, Yen is forced to perform the wedding ceremony (Minh, 1992).

This story tells us two ideas: 1) parents still exert strong power over their children about the mate choice, and 2) the marriage based on the compatibility of the two involved families because of the relative equality between people in terms of wealth, and property.

That is all evidence from press. The scholarly proofs also show the similar stories. The group - interview in the study of Belanger & Hong (1995) reveals that parents still control their children's choice (Bich, 1997). According to a survey in two communes in rural area, 26.0% asked people (the sample's size is unknown) suppose that the criterion of compatibility between two involved families should be maintained (Minh, 1991).

Two more examples tell us the concept of compatibility of background of the two involved families.

“At first I was in love with someone from a capitalist family, my family told me that it was impossible to marry him. At that time, the family background was very important [...]. A similar story happened to my husband's older brother. First, he loved a very beautiful girl



but she is from a capitalist family so his family did not agree. Then someone introduced him to a very ugly girl but her family had an excellent revolutionary history...so his family agreed immediately. Once one is a government cadre so the potential spouse's family background is very important" (Belanger & Hong, 1995).

In this situation, the woman's family of origin in the first case as well as the man's family of origin in the second case opposed her/his love of the son/girl with bourgeois background, because they explain that they were from a capitalist family, access to university was very difficult for them, if they can study, it is only in certain fields such as forestry or agriculture, which did not have much social prestige. Otherwise, the "*revolutionary*" family will bring social prestige since they belong to the country's elite. That is why they opposed the bourgeois family background and supported the revolutionary one (Belanger & Hong, 1995).

"...I was in love with a soldier for four years but we could not marry because my family is traditional and believed his family was not compatible with our family: in my family both my father and mother worked for the government. His father was a professor and his mother was just a housewife. My family strongly disagreed since we did not share same family background..." (Belanger & Hong, 1995).

In this example, the family disapproved of their daughter's choice not for the reason that her lover's family was bourgeois, but because his mother was just a housewife. In other words, his mother was not a state employee like her mother and her father. That meant they were of incompatible background.

The education of two young people must be compatible is one of the criteria for a successful marriage. A lot of stories in Vietnamese newspapers tell us about it. Dung<sup>99</sup> has got a high school education. After leaving high school, she began to work. Starting from the sales staff, she gradually became the leader and manager. She fell in love with a person who was the head of the company. They loved each other sincerely. When his family got to know that she did not get a good education (does not hold an university degree), his family did not agree to the proposed marriage. The reason is that all members of his family have gotten an university

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<sup>99</sup> <http://www.phunuonline.com.vn/honnhan-giadinh/2010/Pages/tra-gia-10-11-2010.aspx> (accessed in 1.11.2010).

degree. Clearly, in this example, the difference in education level has become a marker for keeping up a high education standard for prospective family members.

The different between social spaces of families of origin may affect family life, too. The case of Thanh<sup>100</sup> is an example. She said that she and Tuan fell in love at first sight although he had already got a girlfriend. He immediately broke up with his first love and came to Thanh. There was some anxiety but finally Thanh responded to his emotion. But their love met fierce opposition from Tuan's family. They said that Thanh was born into a poor family in a small town while their family was living in the capital. That is why they are not compatible. They thought that Thanh wanted to get married to Tuan because she just wanted to live in city. After many difficulties, finally, the wedding of two was accepted. She said: "I was extremely happy, but...it lasted only for four months". As the reason Thanh pointing to is the gap between rural and urban life style. "I was very disappointed..." she choked up talking about life after marriage. At the moment she is living with a girl friend and her husband's family does not care about it.

**To sum up**, in traditional families, the marriage is based on the compatibility of family background such as social status, education or social space (urban - rural distinction) and the parents have the final decision.

*Secondly*, the age of two sets of the parents as well as that of young people must be compatible. In a woman's words, "...the ages of the parents of both sides must be the same so that the relationship can be good". Another woman who threatened not to marry anybody else if her family did not agree with her choice for the only reason that "our ages were not compatible" also tells us that (Belanger & Hong, 1995). The question is how Vietnamese people know the compatibility of the age? Their answer is based on the Chinese horoscope.

The Chinese horoscope is made up of 12 animals arranged in order from the rat through to the boar/pig: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, cock, dog, boar/pig. Each year/ age is equivalent to one animal. According to Vietnamese customs some animals are suitable with each other, while others are

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<sup>100</sup> <http://vnexpress.net/GL/Doi-song/2011/01/3BA24FE8/> (accessed in 3.12.2010).

opposed. For example: rat is compatible with monkey and dragon; monkey is opposed to tiger, snake, and boar/pig (Vuong, 2003; Them, 1999). Based on this regularity, the parents will know exactly whether the age of young people are compatible or not.

The case of Thu<sup>101</sup> is an example. She was born in the year of tiger and her boyfriend was born in the year of pig/boar. They fall in love with each other, but her mother and his mother had tried to prevent them to get married because the age of the two people is not compatible. They give an evidence that many husbands had died why the women were still very young if the age of the couple is incompatible. So that, Thu was very sad and confused.

Phuong<sup>102</sup> and her husband have an incompatible age, too. She was born in the year of monkey and her husband was born in the year of snake. Although they are married, they are not happy. She said that she had tried all her best for the family but her husband did not think so. They fight with each other about everything. That is why she now advises the people do not get married if the ages are incompatible.

*Thirdly*, the children must have a stable job providing a good revenue. It is a precondition because almost all Vietnamese parents want their children have a good life when they get married. The criterion “*having a stable job*” was considered to be very important by almost all the respondents (Bich, 1997:218). Many other studies<sup>103</sup> have proven that.

**In conclusion**, the freedom of spouse choice in the past was limited. Almost generally marriages were arranged by the parents. The parents evaluate marriage candidates based on the compatibility of family background, the age of both, parents and children, and a stable job of their children to decide about the marriage.

In modern Vietnam - especially since the industrialization phase of the country, this has changed completely as some choose their own marriage partners based on

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<sup>101</sup> <http://vnexpress.net/GL/Ban-doc-viet/Tam-su/2010/11/3BA237EF/> (accessed in 27.11.2010)

<sup>102</sup> <http://vnexpress.net/GL/Ban-doc-viet/Tam-su/2010/11/3BA239EB/> (accessed in 27.11.2010)

<sup>103</sup> Such as the study of Hong (1991), Belanger & Hong (1995)

love<sup>104</sup>, only considering primarily their own needs and wants. Obviously this procedure is new compared to the traditional family.

“The shifting pattern already observed with the previous generation from one in which the parents introduce the potential spouse to the young adult to one in which the young adult introduces a potential spouse to the parents is now completed” (Belanger & Hong, 1995).

One may say these are an impact of recent social changes especially from 1986 onwards (Bich, 1997). In a woman’s words, “...nowadays because of our society has changed a lot, there is much more freedom in marriage...” (Belanger & Hong, 1995), “the parental power is to some extent also loosened because the chance for young people to make friend outside the family is increasing with the mushrooming of dance halls, clubs, etc.” (Bich, 1997). However, it is necessary to understand that free choice means that children choose spouses themselves, but they still must get parental approval “All the people from the younger groups selected their spouse themselves. In spite of this freedom of choice, parental approval is central to the process” (Belanger & Hong, 1995). This is a compromise between the arranged marriage of the traditional family and modern marriage.

Indeed, according to a survey in 2006, the absolute right of parents to decide about marriage in Vietnamese traditional society has decreased significantly with social change (28.5% respondents aged over 61 vs. 7.3% aged 18 to 60) (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008:19). Where it still does occur, it is mostly among lower-income, rural and/or less educated families. Most common is that prospective spouses and parents make the decision together. Or more specifically, prospective couples consult their parents (70.8% people aged 18 to 60) (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008:19).

Another change of freedom of spouse choice is equality between partners in marriage. It is stipulated in the Constitution, Civil Code and Law on Marriage and the Family. Article 64 of the 1992 Constitution provides that: “Marriage shall conform to the principles of free consent, progressive union, monogamy and equality

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<http://www.tamly.com.vn/home/?act=News-Detail-s-11-390-Dinh-huong-gia-tri-cua-thanh-nien-ve-hon-nhan-o-Viet-Nam-hien-nay.html> (accessed in 4.12.2010)

between husband and wife”. Article 36 of the 1996 Civil Code states that: “The wife and the husband are equal; they have equal rights and obligations in all respects in their family and in civil transactions; together they build a well provided for, strong, harmonious and happy family”. Article nine of the Law on Marriage and the Family (2000) stipulates that: “marriage is decided by both man and woman on the principle of free consent; no one may force or cheat others; no third person may force or prevent them from getting married”. Article 146 of the Penal Code declares that persons who force other persons into marriage against their will through persecution, ill-treatment or intimidation and who have previously been administratively sanctioned for these acts but if they repeat them, shall be subject to warning, on probation for up to three years or to a prison term of between three months and three years.

The Marriage and Family law currently in effect in Vietnam was endorsed by the National Assembly in June 2000 and took effect in January 2001. The law establishes marriage as a right and endorses the principle of monogamous union based on equal relations between a man and a woman. The law also respects and protects marriages between Vietnamese citizens of different ethnicities and/or religion, between religious and nonreligious people; and between Vietnamese citizens and foreigners. Moreover, the law states that the decision to marry must be made voluntarily by both parties and that the use of force, deception or obstruction is strictly prohibited<sup>105</sup>.

Marriage in Vietnam now is forbidden in the following circumstances:

- Between people who are already married,
- Between people who have lost their capacity to act,
- Between family members within three generations,
- Between current of former adoptive parents and their adopted children, and

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<sup>105</sup> Center for Reproductive Rights (2005). *Women of our world: Laws and Policies Affecting their reproductive health: East and Southeast Asia*. Website: <http://www.reproductiverights.org/pdf/Vietnam.pdf> (accessed in 7.11.2011)

- Between people of the same sex<sup>106</sup>.

The 2000 Marriage and Family law also governs divorce in Vietnam. The law recognizes the right of a husband or wife to ask the court to settle a divorce case. Husbands are prohibited from seeking a divorce if the wife is pregnant or nursing a child under one year of age<sup>107</sup>.

According to the law, the court can review an application for divorce “when the situation is serious, the cohabitation can no longer exist, or the goal of the marriage fails”. There are also two types of divorce mentioned:

- Divorce requested by both parties with agreement on the division of property and child custody arrangements. In this instance, the court will review the agreement to ensure that the best interest of the wife and children are protected.

- Divorce by request of one party following failed mandatory reconciliation attempts. In this case, the court determines whether divorce is appropriate<sup>108</sup>.

Obviously in mate selection issues young people are enjoying now some freedom (Chung, 2001:263) that previous generations never have had. This is especially the case for those who are educated, in urban areas, from educated family background or living far away from their family of origin, and got married during the very few last years.

#### *The Vietnamese wedding ceremony*

The Vietnamese wedding is one of the most important of traditional Vietnamese occasions (Them, 1999; Vuong, 2003). Regardless of Westernization, many of the age-old customs practiced in a traditional Vietnamese wedding continue to be celebrated by both Vietnamese in Vietnam and overseas, often combining both Western and Eastern elements.

Depending on habits of specific ethnic groups, marriage includes various steps and related procedures, but generally there are two main ceremonies:

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Le an hoi (betrothal ceremony): Some time before the wedding, the groom and his family visit the bride and her family with round lacquered boxes known as betrothal presents composed of gifts of areca nuts and betel leaves, tea, cake, fruits, wines and other delicacies covered with red cloth and carried by unmarried girls or boys. Both families agree to pick a good day for wedding.

**Picture 2.1. Some popular betrothal presents in betrothal ceremony**



Le cuoi (wedding ceremony): Guests would be invited to come to join a party and celebrate the couple's happiness. The couple should pray before the altar asking the ancestors for a permission for their marriage, then to express their gratitude to both groom's and bride's parents for raising and protecting them. Guests will share their joy at a party later (Anh, 1992).

**Picture 2.2. Wedding ceremony in Vietnam**



*2.2.1.2. The changes of women's position in education, employment and political participation.*

Women issues and gender inequality in Vietnam have been mentioned for a long time in a variety of studies (Anh, Hung, 2000; Hung, Loc, 2000). Communist leader Ho Chi Minh argued: “Women make up half of society. If women are not liberated then society is not free” (Eisen, 1984:85; White, 1989). However, gender inequality had been accepted as the norm in the feudalist society, which is long, and is therefore, deep-rooted in behavior of people, both men and women. Even though gender inequality now contradicts the ideals of modern society and the spirit of the country's legal system, it does not seem to fade away easily (Duc, Trung, Ha, 2005:1). In this part, we will examine the changes of Vietnamese women's position in three aspects: education, employment and political participation to see the endeavor of Vietnamese government as well as Vietnamese people in making equal for women.



#### *2.2.1.2.1. Overview of the changes of Vietnamese women's position*

In pre-revolutionary Vietnam, women enjoyed virtually no rights or privileges (Werner, 1981). Law and society afforded women scant protection in the workplace and the home. In fact, throughout the colonial period, the French continued to recognize law regulating the status of concubines and polygamy. As early as 1917, Pham Quynh said: “Women in our country were treated like “minors” and like “minors” they remained for all their lives, never becoming independent or self-sufficient” (Jamieson, 1993). Moreover, a nearly-thousand-year period of Chinese occupation of the North of Vietnam left a strong effect on gender stance of Vietnamese society (Quy, 2000). According to Confucian doctrines, men are superior and women are inferior (Croll, 1998). Women are subjects to be ruled by their father, husband, eldest son<sup>109</sup> (Bich, 1999; Que, 1996; Tuyet, Thu, 1976; Hy, 1992). This male domination was also reflected in the gender roles and division of labor in the society. Women lived narrowly circumscribed lives, usually confined to the home and the family rice paddies. Often, their lives did not extend far past the family plot (Long, 2000).

In 1930 the Vietnamese Communist Party was established under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh who, in the same year, created the Women's Emancipation Association with the main goal of gender equality (Fahey, 1998). Ho Chi Minh identified gender equality as one of the ten main tasks of the Vietnamese revolution. He called for the Vietnamese to discard “historical prejudices and injustices” against women (Desai, 2001). He stated: “We must respect women. One of the aims of the revolution is to ensure equality of rights for the women” (VWU, 1969).

On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945 in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh declared the independence of Vietnam, and the formation of the DRV. This is a great turning point in Vietnamese history, because Vietnamese society began changing from a half-colonial and half-feudal country to a liberated country.

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<sup>109</sup> Vietnamese women are taught to be observe three basic practices: While they are still under their parents' protection, they must be obedient to their fathers (Tai gia tong phu). When they get married, they have to be submissive to their husbands (Xuat gia tong phu). When their husbands die, they must listen to their grown-up sons (phu tu tong tu).

“It formally concluded more than eighty years of French colonization and marked the end to nearly five years of Japanese occupation. The meaning of this moment-the demise of French Indochina and the emergence of the DRV-was also communicated in symbolic terms” (Pelley, 2002:1).

Since then the Vietnamese society has been undergoing the most fundamental socio-economic transformation in its history. Together with socio-economic changes, the situation of Vietnamese women has been improved, too. In 1946<sup>110</sup>, the VWU (Hoi phu nu Viet Nam) was founded<sup>111</sup>. As a link between the Communist Party and women in Vietnam, the Union has been, and remains concerned about the eradication of any “*backward*”, “*feudal*” (i.e. Confucian), and “*superstitious*” thinking that may negatively influence the ideal of “*equality of men and women*” (Drummond, Rydström, 2004:3). The strong socialist politics led to the enshrinement of gender equality in the first Constitution of Vietnam in 1946, which states: “All power in the country belongs to the Vietnamese people, irrespective of race, sex, fortune, class, religion...and that women are equal to men in all respects” (Article 9). The Constitutions of 1959, 1980 and 1992 further refine and highlight the rights of women in the context of economic and political equality. There are also other policies of government that aim at protecting women, including: 1) legislating gender equality, 2) promoting women’s participation in production, 3) attempts to reduce women’s domestic responsibilities, 4) introducing new ideologies of equality, and 5) organizing women to advance their interests (Croll, 1998; Que, 1996).

By virtue of the influence of the Women’s Union, the National Assembly passed the Law on marriage and the family, on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1959, which aimed to destroy all “*remnants of feudalism*” in sex-related social roles and family structure, and to build “*happy, democratic and egalitarian families*”<sup>112</sup>.

Over three fourths of the last century, Vietnam was in constant wars and their legacy is significant on the way people live today. During war times, most of the male part

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<sup>110</sup> <http://hoilhpn.org.vn/newsdetail.asp?CatId=210&NewsId=14614&lang=VN> (accessed in 3.1.2011)

<sup>111</sup> The predecessor of the VWU, the Women’s Union for Emancipation, was founded in 1930 (Turley, 1972).

<sup>112</sup> It prohibited parental forced and early marriage, the use of property as a betrothal gift, mistreatment of women, concubinage and wife beating (article 3). The law also stressed that females had the right to own property before and after marriage (article 15). Finally, a special section of the law addressed women’s rights to obtain divorce and protection of children (Bergman, 1975; Tu & Tuyet, 1978; Turley, 1972).

of Vietnam's human resources were mobilized to serve in military. Women had to take every responsibility behind the battlefields, but also serve directly or nearly directly in fighting the enemies (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 1998; Pothier, 2003). The situation lasted for decades, and those war-serving women have set samples and strengthened certain features of Vietnamese women such as braveness, independence and responsibility. Wars have left a legacy of energetic, dynamic women, who care for other members of their families. That made it easier for them to participate in public life.

In 1980 Vietnam signed the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women. Also in 1980, the new Constitution of Vietnam was issued, which states: The state and society ensure the development of maternity clinics, crèches, kindergartens, canteens and other social facilities to create favorable conditions for women to work, rest and study (Article 63).

Vietnam ratified the CEDAW convention in 1982, and then in 1984 it established the National Committee for the Women's decade<sup>113</sup>. The Party and the Government, despite the many difficulties they are encountering, try their best to improve the living conditions of laboring women and their children, so as to alleviate the familial burden and ensure women's health. In 1983 paid maternity leave in Vietnam was extended from 60 to 75 days. In December 1984, according to Resolution No.176a, paid maternity leave was extended to 180 days. More crèches and kindergartens have been set up by the state, factories, cooperatives, etc. In many city wards, special groups of babysitters have been set up by the Women's Union for children who for one reason or another cannot go to the crèches or kindergartens (VWU, 1985:2).

Under the Doi Moi policy, launched in 1986, private economy, decollectivized agriculture and liberalized trade was allowed. A series of economic, social and legal reforms have led to market economy, in which competition has replaced the planned allocation by the government. The adoption of market competition is believed to have brought a clear revitalization of the Vietnamese economy, which was performing poorly before the Doi Moi. No doubt, the Doi Moi benefits society at

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<sup>113</sup> In 1993 the government strengthened this committee, with the addition of further ministerial members, and renamed it the NCFAW.

whole, including women as a group “Doi Moi led to change in women’s position in the occupational structure” (Duc, Trung, Ha, 2005:7).

The Vietnamese Constitution of 1992<sup>114</sup> contains emphatic guarantees concerning the equality of men and women. The National Committee for the Advancement of Women is the governmental agency making mechanism for women’s and gender issues. The National Plan of action for the Advancement of Women by the year 2000, signed by the Prime Minister in October 1997, is the national policy on women implemented before 2000. This policy covers eleven critical areas including employment, poverty alleviation and hunger eradication, equal opportunities in education and training, improved health care, the role and position of women in leadership structures and decision making, the protection and promotion of women’s rights, the role of the family, the role of women in environmental issues and sustainable development, information and communication activities on equal rights, women’s contribution to peace, an enhanced national system of public administration, and protection of girls.

The national strategy for the advancement of Vietnamese women to 2010, which was approved by the government in January 2002, plays a crucial role in the government’s overall framework to achieve and sustain gender equality. The strategy reflects the government’s on-going commitment to sustainable and equitable development across all fields. It involves the coordination and support of key line ministries. The strategy includes five key objectives with various targets in each field to be reached by 2010, which were: 1) labor and employment; 2) education; 3) health care; 4) leadership at all levels in all sectors; 5) capacity of the organization for women’s advancement (Duc, Trung, Ha, 2005:9).

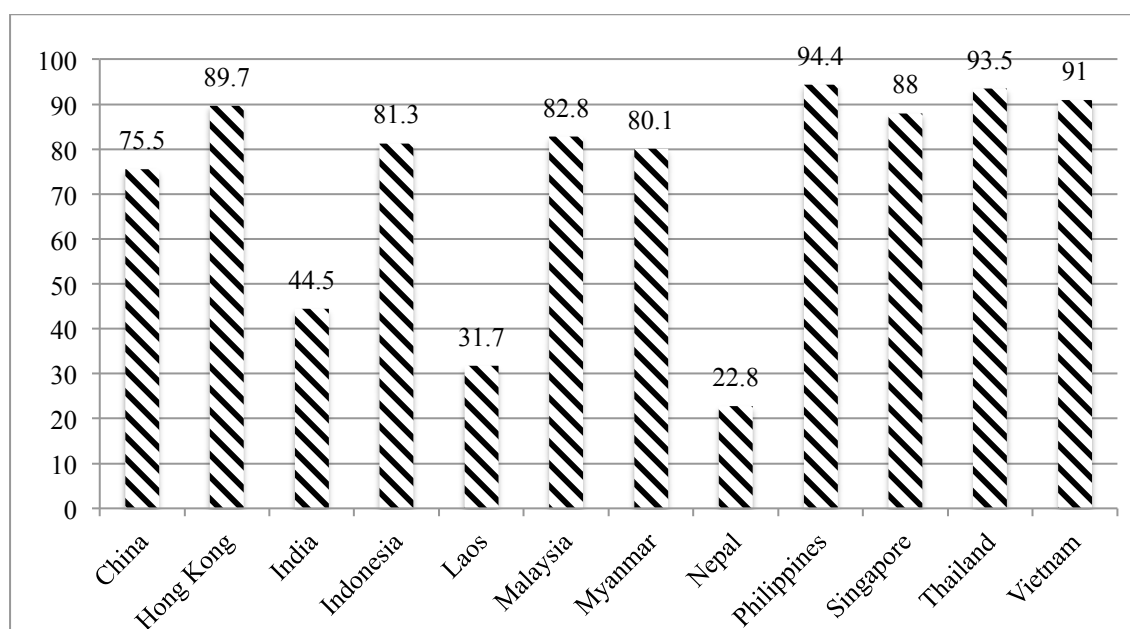
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<sup>114</sup> Article 54 provides that: “Female and male citizens are equal in political, social, cultural, economic and family matters”; Article 63 says that: “Male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields-political, economic, cultural, social and the family, etc. All acts of discrimination against women and all acts damaging to women’s dignity are strictly banned. Men and women shall receive equal pay for equal work. Women workers shall enjoy a regime related to maternity. The State and society shall create all necessary conditions for women to raise their qualifications in all fields and fully play their roles in society”.

### 2.2.1.2.2. Vietnamese women in education

There is now a smaller discrepancy between the education of men and women than in the nineteenth century, and this change is taking place rapidly in other Asian countries as well (Goode, 1963:21). Vietnam is one of the poorest countries in the world and is affected by Confucianism; however, women's literacy rates and educational levels are relatively high compared to that in neighboring countries (World Bank, 1995; Tan & Mingat, 1992)(see fig. 2.5). Because of its remarkable achievements, Vietnam has frequently been cited in the realm of education (Anh, Knodel, Lam, Friedman, 1995; Fraser, 1993).

**Fig. 2.5. Adult females' literacy in Vietnam and neighboring countries (2000) (in:%)**



Source: UNDP (2000). *Human Development report*

[Quoted in ADB (2002). *Women in Vietnam: Country brief paper, pp.1*]

In 1943, approximately 95 percent of the population and 98 percent of women could neither read nor write. The policy of the Vietnamese Communist Party since the 1946 Constitution has been to provide equal access to education for boys and girls to enable them to participate fully in achieving national goals. Based on the 1989 census, the literacy rate was 38% for women aged 60 and over and 92% for girls between 10 and 14 years. Among men, it increased from 78% to 93% between these two age groups (Fraser, 1993; GSO, 1991). The gender gap in literacy went down

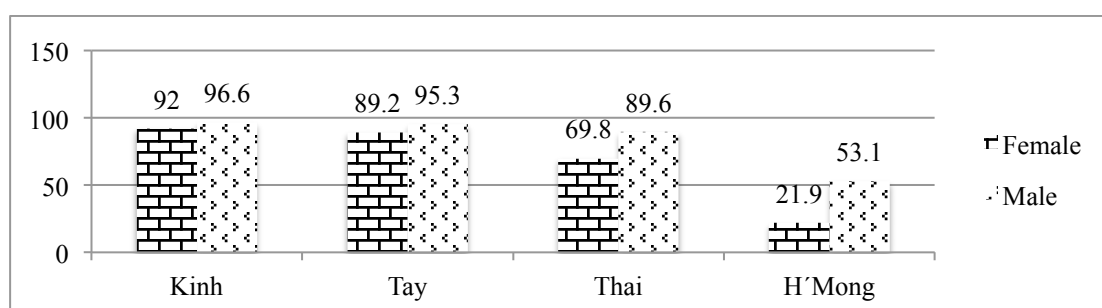
from 40% to 1% between these cohorts. The 1998 Law on education once again provides in its Article 9 that women and girls shall have equal access to educational opportunities. The GSO reported in 1999 that women form 69 percent of the 5.3 million illiterate people in Vietnam. While the rate of female literacy has improved dramatically during the last ten years, there remains a literacy gap between women and men, especially in groups aged over fifty (table 2.2). A huge gender gap is also visible among the poor, ethnic minorities, and in rural areas (NCFAW & GSO, 2005), due to school fees and the opportunity cost of child labor (fig. 2.6). According to the latest statistics in 2008, 96% of adult males and 90.6% of adult females in Vietnam are literate (2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey).

**Table 2.2. Percentage of literate population aged 10 years and over by sex and age group (2002 - 2008)**

	2002			2004			2006			2008		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Whole country	92.1	95.1	89.3	93.0	95.9	90.2	93.1	96.0	90.5	93.2	96.0	90.6
Age group												
10-14	97.4	97.6	97.2	97.9	98.1	97.8	98.3	98.2	98.3	98.1	98.1	98.2
15-19	96.5	96.6	96.5	97.4	97.7	97.0	97.7	98.0	97.4	98.1	98.1	98.0
20-24	94.3	94.9	93.7	95.9	96.3	95.4	96.3	96.6	95.9	96.7	97.1	96.2
25-29	93.7	94.6	92.9	94.2	94.8	93.5	94.5	95.0	93.9	94.7	95.3	94.1
30-34	93.8	94.5	93.1	93.5	94.0	93.0	93.4	94.1	92.8	93.6	94.0	93.3
35-39	94.8	95.8	93.9	94.8	95.7	94.0	93.8	94.6	93.1	93.5	93.8	93.1
40-44	94.7	96.3	93.3	95.1	96.4	94.0	95.4	96.4	94.4	94.6	95.6	93.6
45-49	93.8	96.1	91.8	95.0	97.1	93.2	95.0	97.0	93.3	95.2	96.9	93.7
50-54	92.0	95.8	88.7	93.4	96.0	91.0	94.1	96.7	91.6	93.8	96.6	91.2
55-59	88.7	94.3	84.0	91.7	95.9	88.0	92.1	95.9	88.8	92.5	96.3	89.2
Over 60	75.1	89.7	64.2	77.9	91.8	68.0	74.9	90.7	63.9	76.6	91.3	66.3

Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey.

**Fig. 2.6. Literacy rate of population aged 10 and over by sex and ethnic group (2002) (in:%)**



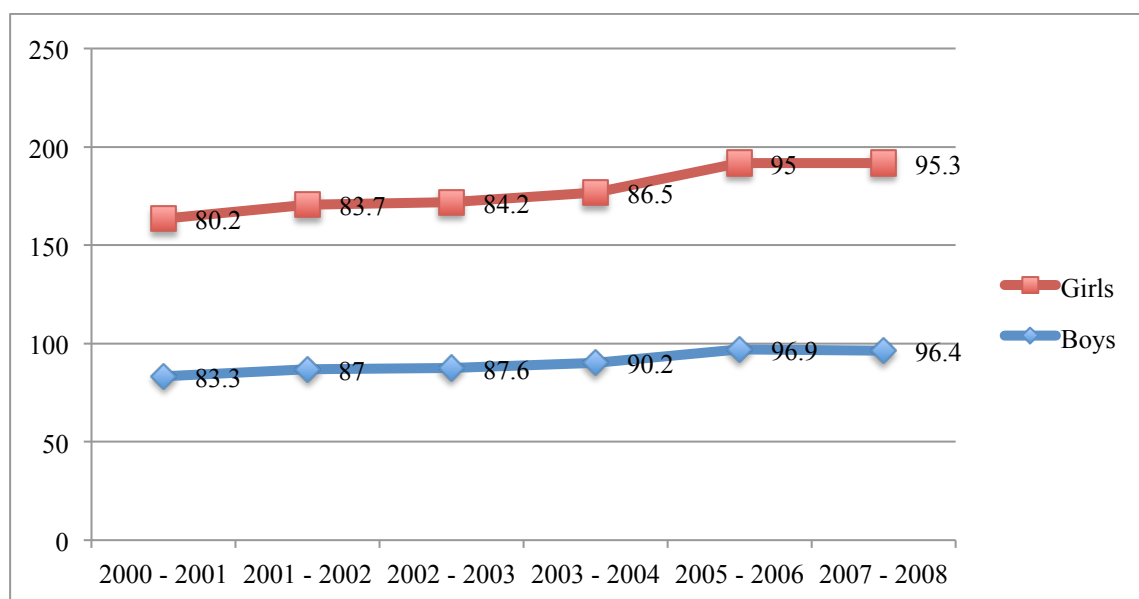
Source: 2002 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.24]

The gross enrolment rate of boys and girls<sup>115</sup> at primary education in the whole country is high and tends to increase in recent years. In the school year 2003 - 2004, it is as high as 102.6% for girls and 107.4% for boys. In 2006, it is 104.7% for girls and 105.2% for boys. According to the update statistics of 2008, it is 103.2% and 105.1% for girls and boys respectively (2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey).

The gross enrolment rate of boys and girls at lower secondary education is also high and keeps increasing. Despite stable growth recently, there is still a gap between boys and girls in term of gross enrolment rate at lower secondary school. The difference is increasing year by year (3.1% in the school year 2000 - 2001; 3.3% in the school year 2001 - 2002; 3.4% in the school year 2002 - 2003; 3.7% in the school year 2003 - 2004).

**Fig. 2.7. Gross enrolment rate of boys and girls at lower secondary school (2000 - 2008) (in:%)**



*Source: - Ministry of Education and Training, GSO periodical reports, [Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, pp.26]*

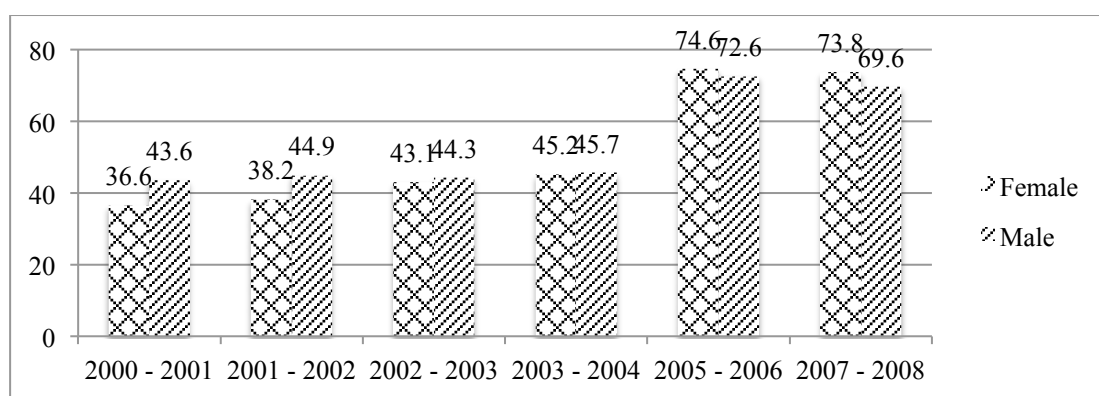
*- 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

<sup>115</sup> Gross enrolment rate of female population at primary education is the percentage of girl pupils attending primary schools to the total population in the primary education age group (6 - 10 years old). It is the same for gross enrolment rate at lower secondary education (11 - 14 years old) and upper secondary education (15 - 17 years old).

According to a survey in 2006 and 2008, the gap between boys and girls in terms of the gross enrolment rate at lower secondary school is decreasing. The difference is 1.9% in 2006 (95.0% in girls and 96.9% in boys), against 1.1% difference in 2008 (95.3% in girls and 96.4% in boys).

The gross enrolment rate of girls at upper secondary education in the school year 2003 - 2004 is 45.2% and 45.7% in girls and boys respectively. This rate has been increasing constantly for recent years, narrowing the gap between boys and girls since 2000 (see fig. 2.8).

**Fig. 2.8. Gross enrolment rate at upper secondary school by sex (2002 - 2008) (in:%)**



Source: - Ministry of Education and Training, GSO periodical reports.

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.26]

- 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey

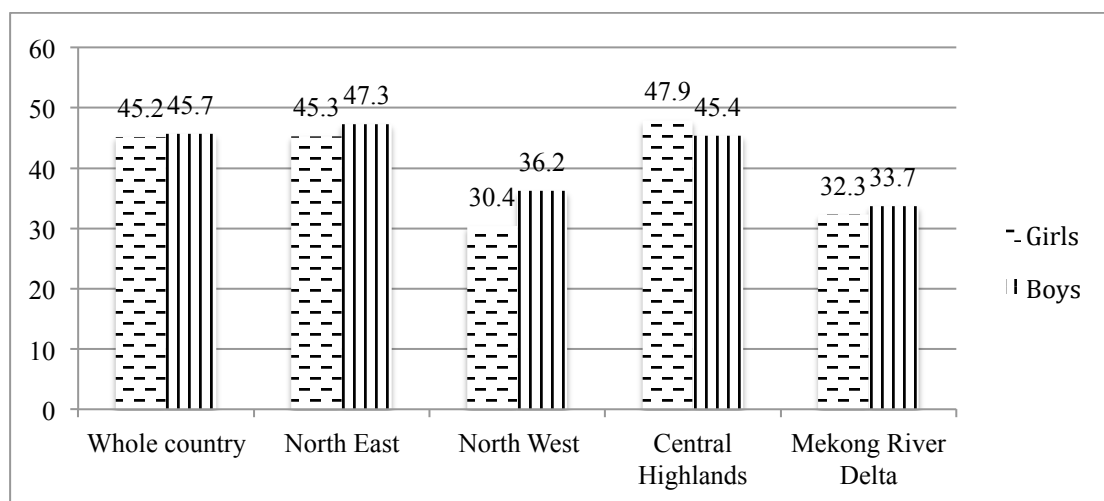
The percentage of gross enrolment rate of both girls and boys at upper secondary education in 2006 is relatively high compared in 2004. It is 72.6% for boys and 74.6% for girls. It is the first time that the proportion of girls enrolling is higher than that of boys. In 2008, it is 69.6% and 78.3% for boys and girls respectively.

There is a difference between some regions in gross enrolment rate of boys and girls at upper secondary school in the school year 2003 - 2004. While the difference in the whole country is 0.5%; it is 2% in the North East, 5.8% in the North West, and 1.4% in the Mekong River Delta. However the rate is 2.5% higher in girls than in boys in Central Highlands. This difference, with the Central Highlands sending more girls



than boys to upper secondary school might stem from the fact that in the Central Highlands ethnic minorities of a matrilineal system - all in all a small proportion of Vietnamese society - are living. These mothers might be aware that education only will be able to provide a way out of poverty for their daughters (see also pp.51).

**Fig. 2.9. Gross enrolment rate at upper secondary school by sex and region in the school year 2003 - 2004 (in:%)**



*Source: Ministry of Education and Training, GSO periodical reports*

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.26]

While the gender gap in schooling has continually narrowing (Knodel & Jones, 1996), the signs of sex segregation in upper secondary and university education are becoming more obvious, with females clustering in pedagogy, social sciences, and linguistics, while males dominate technical and scientific courses. This segregation potentially disadvantages women from fully participating in new industries, such as information technology, biotechnology, and application of new materials (see table 2.3). So Vietnam is showing the same pattern of sex segregation that is dominating nearly anywhere in the world, in Asian countries as well as in industrialized western countries.

**Table 2.3. Gender streaming in higher education: Fields of study selected by men and women (2001) (in:%)**

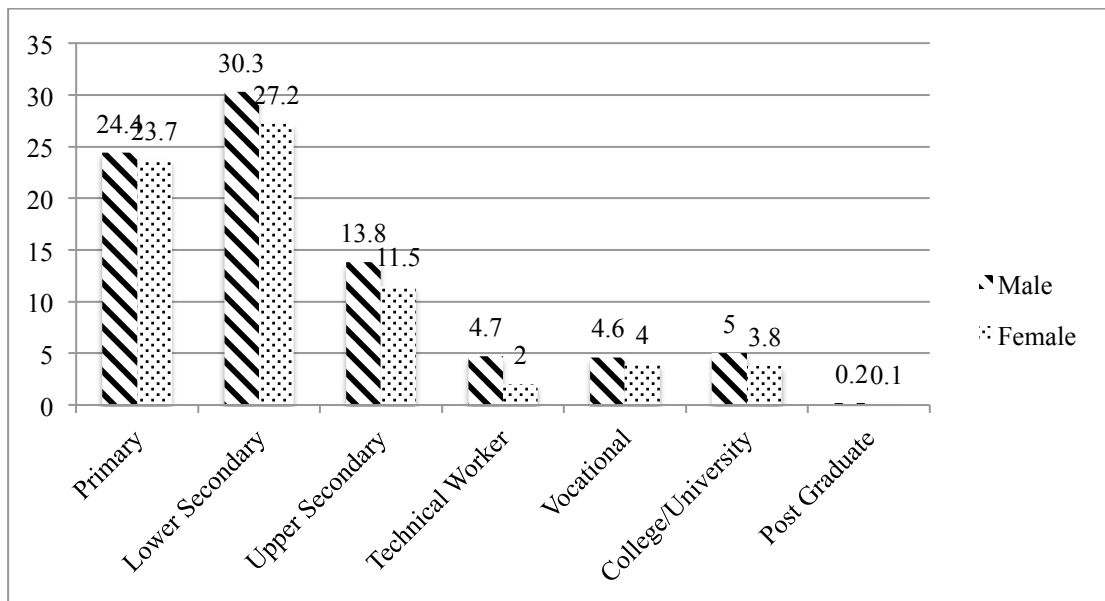
	Age cohorts								
	Under 24 years			25-34 years			Over 34 years		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Mathematics and Physical Sciences	7.1	10.1	8.5	4.5	12.7	8.1	10.1	18.1	12.9
Social Sciences	36.5	38.7	37.6	37.5	27.4	33.1	36.7	26.3	33.1
Geology, Electronics, Mining Technology	19.9	6.0	13.2	13.7	2.1	8.6	10.4	3.6	8.1
Chemistry, Construction, Technology	13.8	4.8	9.5	10.5	7.1	9.0	5.7	4.5	5.3
Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock	1.4	1.2	1.3	3.7	1.2	2.6	8.1	4.7	6.9
Medicine and Pharmacy	3.6	3.3	3.5	5.1	8.5	6.6	6.7	12.4	8.7
Pedagogy and Sports Education	7.2	7.6	7.4	7.2	21.3	13.4	6.5	17.6	10.3
Culture, Fine Arts, Linguistics	6.4	25.5	15.6	12.3	16.0	13.9	8.5	11.2	9.4
Police and Military	2.2	0.0	1.2	5.6	0.0	3.1	5.5	0.0	3.6
Other	1.9	2.9	2.4	0.0	3.8	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of individuals	167	159	326	66	49	115	249	139	388

*Source: Desai (2001). Vietnam through the Lens of gender*

[Quoted in ADB (2002). *Women in Vietnam: Country brief paper*, pp.12]

The percentage of highest educational level achieved by women is fairly good at some education levels. In 2006, for every 100 women age 15 and over, there are 23.7 primary graduates, 27.2 lower secondary graduates and 11.5 upper secondary graduates. The respective figures in the male population are 24.4, 30.3 and 13.8. The difference between men and women is big in technical worker with 2.0 percent in women and 4.7 percent in men. The figure at college and university level is 3.8% in women and 5.0% in men (fig. 2.10). At post-graduate level, the percentage of women is half as many as men (0.1% in women and 0.2% in men).

**Fig. 2.10. Percentage of highest education level achieved by population aged 15 and over by sex (2006)**



*Source: 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey, pp.65*

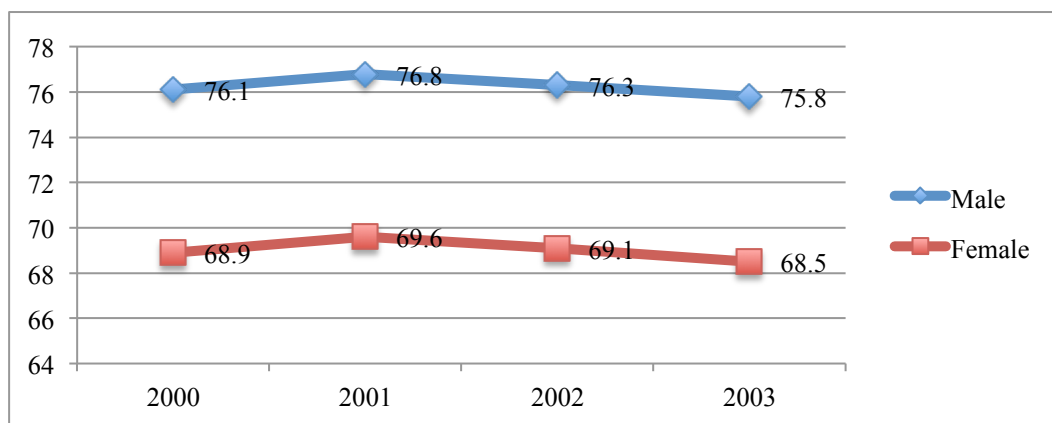
**In conclusion**, impressive achievements have been made in regards to gender equality in education in recent years in Vietnam. The literacy rate of Vietnamese people is high with a very small difference between men and women. However, there are still many problems such as it is more difficult for ethnic minority women and girls in remote and mountainous areas to gain access to education than men and boys (only in Central Highlands more girls are sent to upper secondary school than boy). The percentage of highest educational level achieved by women is fairly good at some education levels, but the signs of sex segregation are becoming more obvious, with females clustering in pedagogy, social sciences, and linguistics, while males dominate technical and scientific courses.

#### *2.2.1.2.3. Vietnamese women in employment*

According to Engels, a woman cannot be equal if she is excluded from social productive labor and restricted to private domestic labor (Pothier, 2003:3). Lenin also advanced a view that if we do not draw women into public activity, into the militia, into political life, if we don't tear women away from the deadening atmosphere of household and kitchen then it is impossible to secure real freedom. By drawing women into process of production, it prepares their way for emancipation

(Pothier, 2003:3). Vietnamese is unique in that Vietnamese women have the highest rate of economic participation among women in the region and constitute a large share of the labor force (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 1998). Indeed, the percentage of economically active women in Vietnam is relatively high. In 2003, it was 68.5% in women and 75.8% in men.

**Fig. 2.11. The percentage of economic activity involvement by sex (2000 - 2003)**

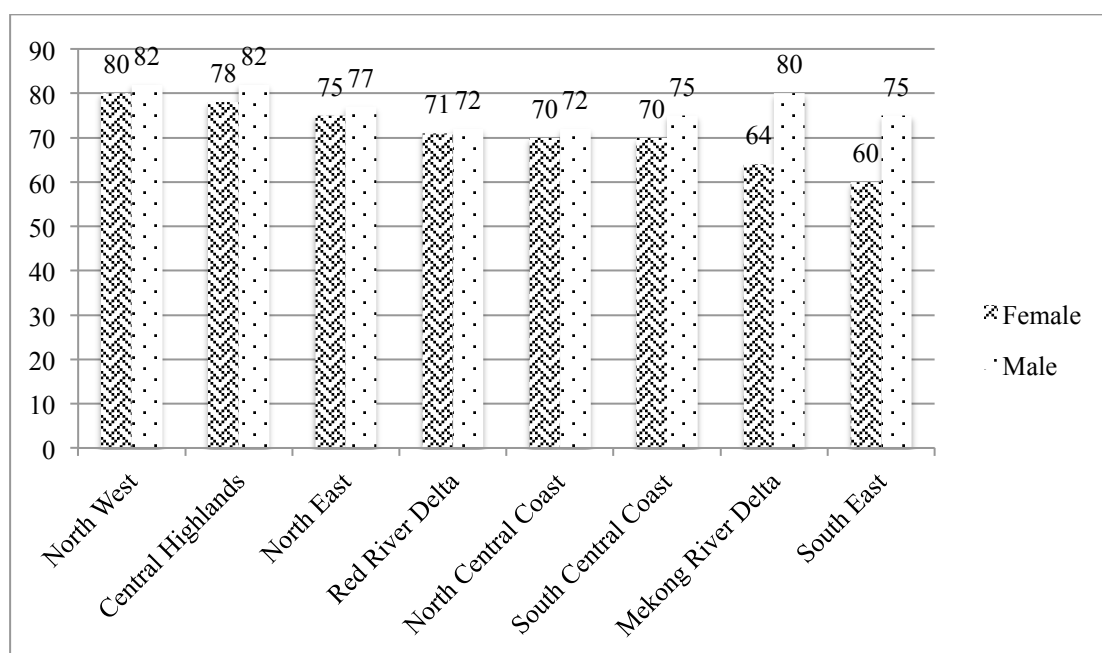


*Source: MOLISA. 2000 - 2003 Labor and Employment surveys*

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.17]

It is noteworthy that the percentage of economically active women varies among the regions. In 2003, the North West and the Central Highlands came first and second in this aspect with the percentage of 80% and 78% respectively. The lowest regions are the South East and the Mekong river delta with the percentage of 60% and 64% respectively. These are the two regions with the biggest gap between men and women in terms of economic participation (fig. 2.12). Thus, it is necessary to improve employment quality of population and female workforce in particular in the North West and Central Highlands. In the mean time, the issue of concern for the South East and Mekong river delta is to improve the percentage of economically active women to reduce the gap between men and women.

**Fig. 2.12. Percentage of economic participation by sex and region (2003)**



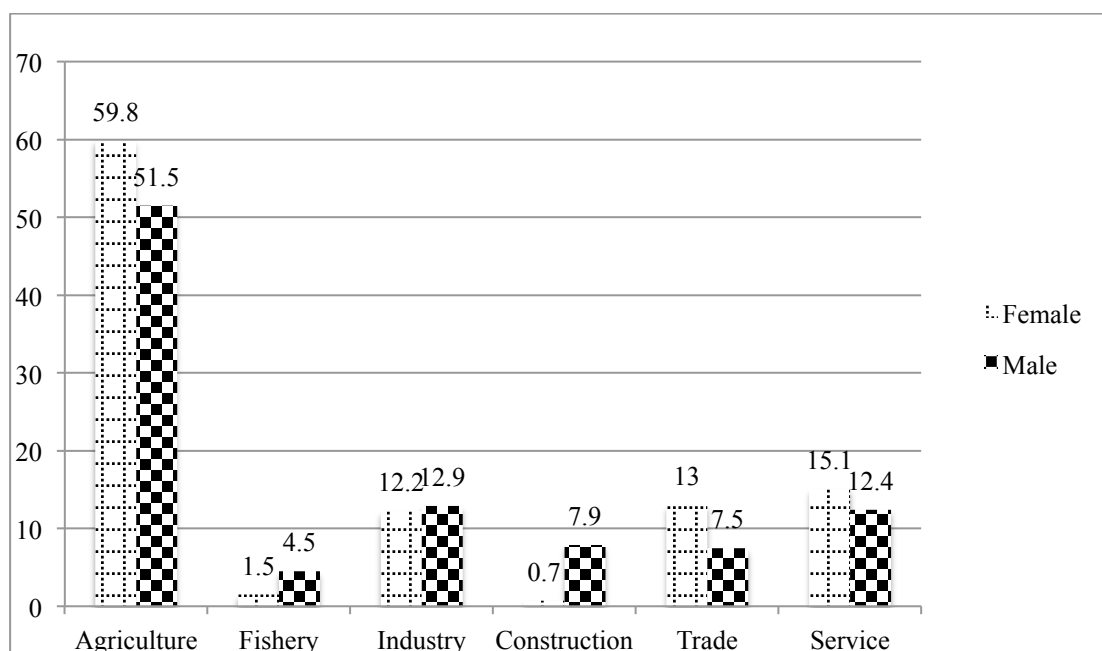
*Source: MOLISA. 2000 - 2003 Labor and Employment surveys*

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.18]

The percentage of women in permanent employment is also high. In 2003, this rate is 95.5% and 96.2% in women and men respectively (compared to 80% in women and 90% in men in 1998). The percentage of women in permanent employments is lower in rural areas. In 2003, it is 94.5% in urban areas and 95.8% in rural areas. The respective percentage in men is 95.8% and 96.3% (NCFAW & GSO, 2005).

The concentration of female workforce is higher in agriculture and trade and male workforce is higher in fishery and construction. In 2002, per 100 female workers, there are nearly 60 women in agriculture; 12.2 in industry; 15.1 in service; 1.5 in fishery; 13 in trade and 0.7 in construction. Meanwhile per 100 male workers, there are 51.5 men in agriculture; 12.9 in industry; 12.4 in service; 4.5 in fishery; 7.5 in trade and 7.9 in construction.

**Fig. 2.13. Population aged 15 and over by sex and key economic sector (2002) (in:%)**



*Source: 2002 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.21]

The gender earnings gap in Vietnam appears to decline rapidly during the course of Doi Moi. According to the 1992 - 1993 Living Standards survey, women's income was 69% of men's (WHO, 1995). By 1998, the wage gap between men and women narrowed to 22 percent (ADB, 2002:19), and according to the latest Living Standards survey in 2002 and the gap fell to only 15 percent (GSO, 2004). Based on the gender gap index 2011, Vietnam ranks the 53<sup>th</sup> out of 135 countries about wage equality for similar work between men and women<sup>116</sup>.

#### *2.2.1.2.4. Vietnamese women's political participation*

Women have a better representation in management and leadership in recent years. It will be checked in these indicators: the percentage of female National Assembly deputies, People's Council deputies, members of Party executive committees, and leaders at various levels.

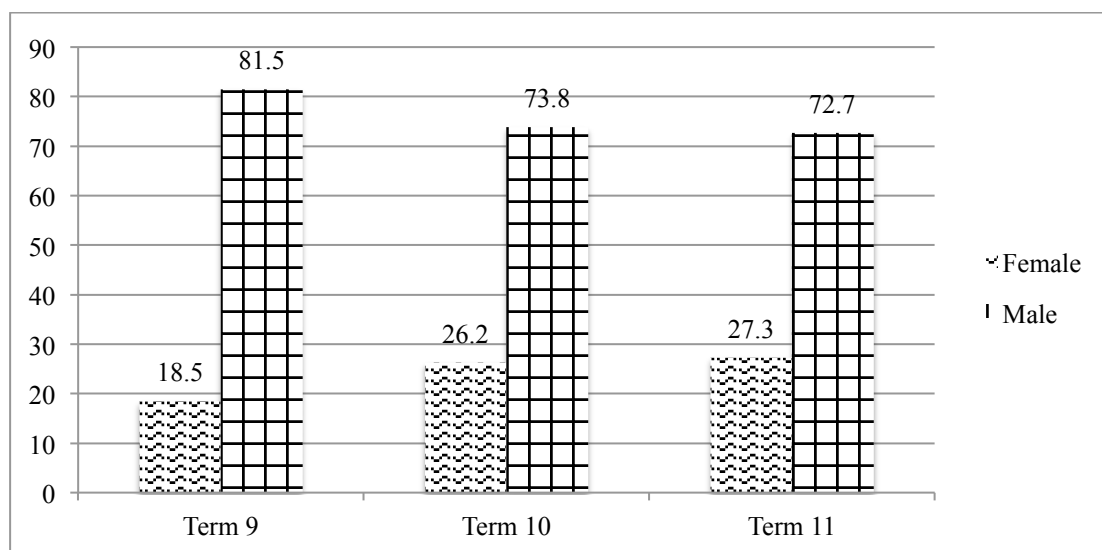
<sup>116</sup> Source: [www.reports.weforum.org](http://www.reports.weforum.org) (accessed in 5.4.2012).

Prominently the male/female structure in leadership has changed recently to be more balanced. The percentage of women in leadership has increased at all levels.

In 1975 women constituted 32 percent of the National Assembly of Vietnam; in 1997, the figure was 18 percent. The 1997 elections resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of women (from 18 percent to over 26 percent) in the National Assembly, the country's highest elected decision-making body. The percentage of female National Assembly deputies has increased continuously for three terms to reach 27.3% in the 11<sup>th</sup> term (2002 - 2007). This makes Vietnam currently the second-highest ranking country in the Asia - Pacific region and the 9<sup>th</sup> among 135 countries in the World Inter-Parliamentary Alliance in the proportion of women in the National Assembly (VWU).

“Firstly we should note an increase in public awareness of gender issues, a change in society's attitude towards women, due to the implementation of many resolutions and instructions of the Party and the State...the leadership of the Party Politburo and levels of the Party, the attention paid by different levels of the Government to create favorable conditions for women, the guidance of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, as well as of electoral committees at various levels” (NCF AW, 1997).

**Fig. 2.14. Percentage of National Assembly deputies in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> terms by sex**

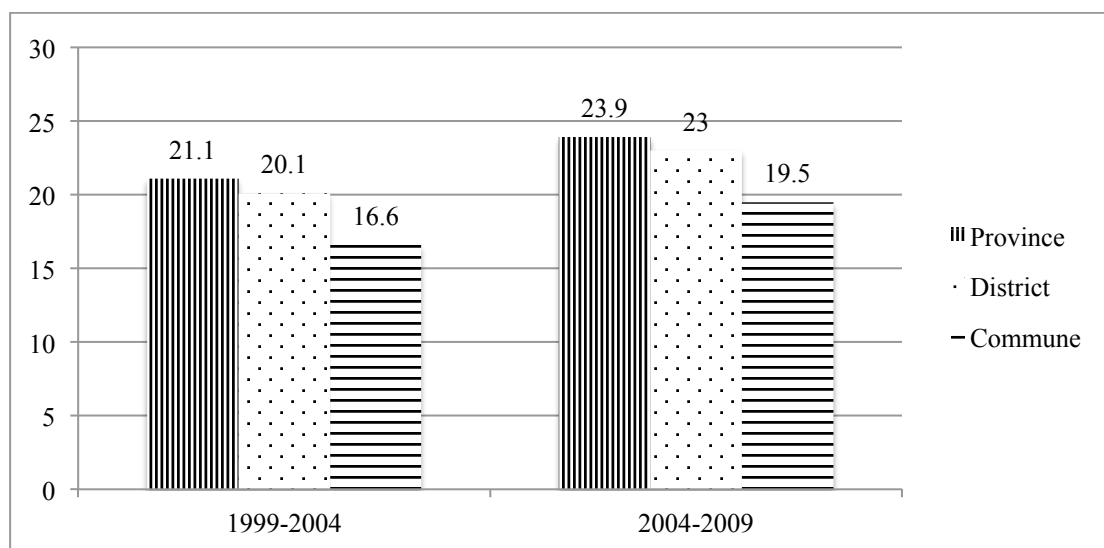


*Source: National Assembly Office administrative reports*

[Quoted in NCF AW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.34]

The percentage of female People’s Council deputies at all three levels has increased in the last two tenures, reaching 19.5% at commune/ward level, 23% at district/quarter level and 23.9% at provincial/municipal level for tenure 2004 - 2009 (NCFAW & GSO, 2005) (fig. 2.15).

**Fig. 2.15. Percentage of female People’s Council deputies in two terms (1999 - 2004) and (2004 - 2009)**



*Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs administrative reports*

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.35]

It is thanks to the guidance and attention by Party committees at all levels to the planning and training of women cadres. In some localities, there have been policies supporting women cadres in education and training. Aware of their positions and responsibilities in the new situations, women have become more self-confident and proactive in overcoming challenges and striving for further progress<sup>117</sup>.

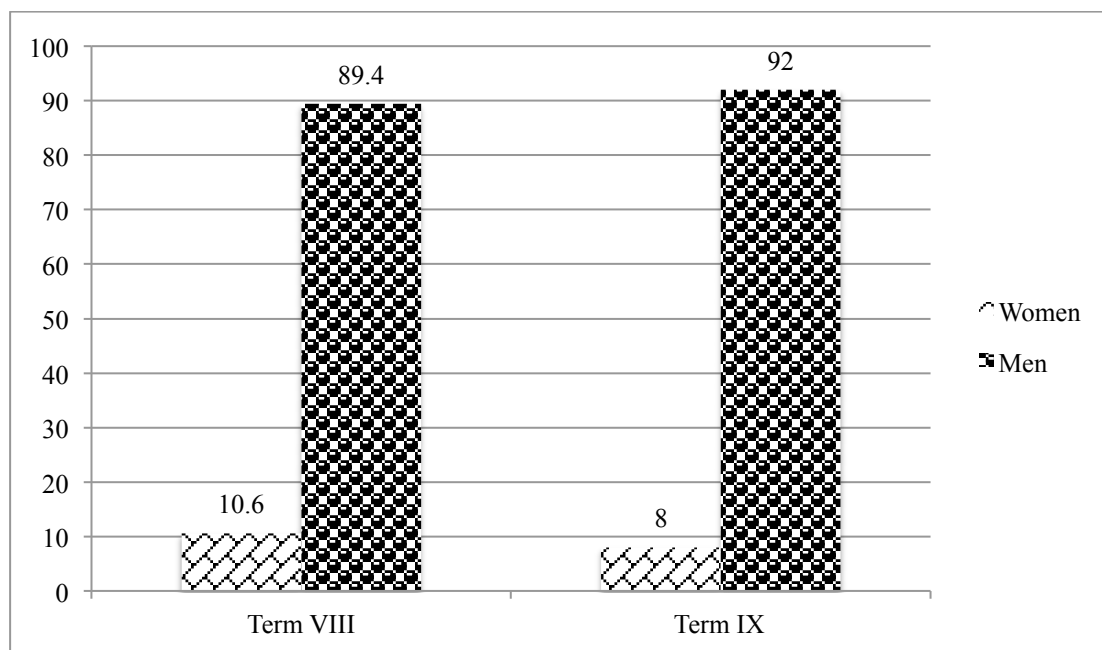
However, women’s participation in leadership increases unevenly in different areas. At the central level, in the last two Party Congresses, women representation in Party Committee has dropped down from 10.6% in 8<sup>th</sup> Congress to 8.0 in 9<sup>th</sup> Congress (NCFAW & GSO, 2005) (fig. 2.16). It remains unchanged in Party executive committees at provincial/municipal level. The rate, however, has slightly increased in Party executive committees at district and commune levels. Specifically at district

<sup>117</sup> VWU (2003). Review report on 10 year’s implementation of directive No.37 by the Party Central Secretariat on women personnel issues.



level, it has increased from 11.3% in term 1996 - 2000 to 12.6% in term 2001 - 2005, and at commune level, it has increased from 10.7% in term 1996 - 2000 to 11.4% in term 2001 - 2005.

**Fig. 2.16. Percentage of Party Central Committee members in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Congresses by sex**



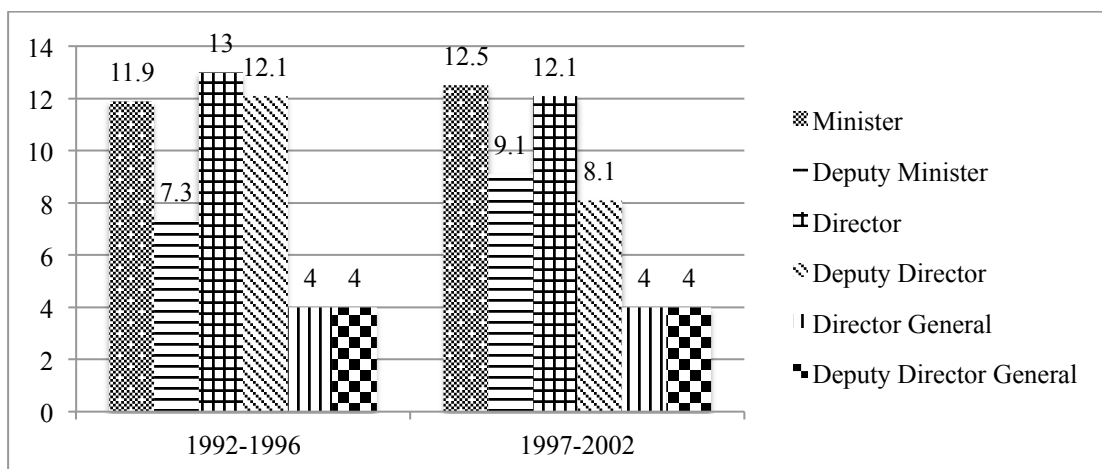
*Source: Party central Commission for Organization and Personnel*

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.35]

It is notable that although the percentage of women in leadership has increased, such as in the National Assembly, People’s Councils and Party executive committees, the growth is very modest, particularly in Party executive committees at approximately 1%. It means that men are still dominant in leadership positions.

The male/female structure also differs at different levels of ministries and sectors. Ministers and deputy ministers are mostly men, though there is a little rise of female representation. The percentage of women as department directors and deputy directors has been falling in the last 10 years. Specifically the percentage of women as department directors has declined from 13% to 12.1% and as department deputy directors from 12.1% to 8.1% (fig. 2.17).

**Fig. 2.17. Percentage of women in leadership positions in ministries and state-owned enterprises (1992 - 2002)**

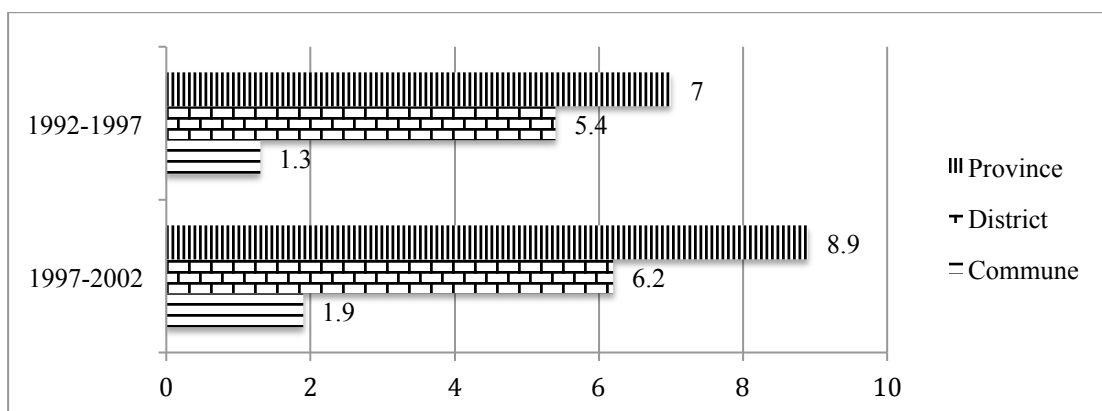


*Source: VNU administrative reports*

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.36]

It is remarkable that in the last two terms, the percentage of women key leaders at all levels remains very low, particularly at the grassroots levels. In the two terms of 1992 - 1997 and 1997 - 2002, the percentage of chairwomen and vice chairwomen of People's Committees is under 10% at provincial level and is under 2% at commune level (fig. 2.18).

**Fig. 2.18. Percentage of women key leaders at different levels (1992 - 2002)**



*Source: Ministry of Home Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, VNU, Party Central Commission for Organization and Personnel*

[Quoted in NCFAW & GSO (2005). *The statistics on gender in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp.36]

**In short**, women have a better representation in management and leadership in recent years. However, the improvement is modest and uneven among different levels and areas. It is noteworthy that the female representation at Party executive committees has declined at central and provincial/municipal levels. The percentage of women key leaders at different levels is generally low in the last two tenures.

The limited participation of women in leadership and management<sup>118</sup>, particularly in key positions, is due to the lack of guidance, monitoring and encouragement by Party executive committees to promote women<sup>119</sup>. Besides, there exist a stereotyped and narrow-minded thinking about women, distrust in their capacity and prejudices against female staff; the situation is also attributed to women's heavy triple roles and inferiority complex.

This requires more effective guidance by Party levels to women cadre work in the coming time. At the same time, there should be consistent cooperation among various agencies and organizations in fostering and introducing women candidates, thus to gradually increase women representation in management and leadership.

### **Comment**

As in many other developing countries, Vietnam is now experiencing far - reaching changes and demographic transitions associated with continued rapid economic and social development. In the case of Vietnam, these have accelerated as an ongoing outcome of the renovation policies instigated since the latter half of the 1980s. These changes have in turn led to changes in gender roles, wherein women have gained better access to offices and positions of power in society. We find positive changes of Vietnamese women's position in education, in employment and a little bit in political participation. Vietnam provides basic education for everybody and asserts that lifelong education is the right and responsibility of each citizen. Since then more and more women got education. Although Vietnam is one of the poorest countries in

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<sup>118</sup> Vietnamese women participate in the social rather than strategic committees including the Committee for education, youth and children (41%), the Ethnic council (40%), and the Committee for social affairs (32%), with less representation in the committees for foreign affairs (16%), science and technology (11%), and economics and budget (3%) (UNDP, 2000).

<sup>119</sup> Report on ten years implementation of Directive 37 of the Party Central Secretariat. Directive 37 was designed to increase women's participation in political leadership (20% of elected positions should be filled by women).

the world and is affected by Confucianism, women's literacy rates and educational levels are relatively high. The gender difference in literacy has been steadily reduced. Today, women have strong representation in the economy. They are significant contributors in agriculture, trade, education and social service. In fact, the important change is that most of women now earn a living independently of their husbands on a nation-wide scale. In Vietnam, women and men have equal rights to vote and stand for elections on all levels. These rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and are implemented in practice. Women's right to participate in positions of leadership and decision-making are stipulated in resolutions and policies, and apply to all levels, sectors and geographic regions.

### ***2.2.2. The "new cultured family" campaign***

The new cultured family campaign was introduced after the American war, led directly by the Party in close cooperation with the ministries of education and culture, the Trade Union, the Women's, and Youth's Union. It particularly emphasises building, restoring harmony between couples and raising well-educated children. In Eisen's words, it is designed to carry out the new family that ideally is based on:

"Unity, equality, on mutual affection and on wife and husband helping each other to work and to study so that both make progress, and share the responsibilities of the family life and the education of the children". (Eisen, 1984: 193).

One of its major objectives is to break down the resistance of husbands to women's participation in social life. To help women to do that, to achieve matrimonial harmony, men should share housework. Another objective is to encourage the family's stability, strengthen it, and more important than that, through the stable family, to quicken the desired social change. Particularly emphasising harmony, the campaign tries to persuade "*disharmonious family*" reunited. Family conflicts are resolved first by the so-called groups for the new cultured family at local level; it is only when the involved parties are determined to split up their families that the conflict is brought up to the divorce courts. In the similar way of granting divorce in the former Soviet Union before 1991, people wishing divorce were faced with substantial ideological, moral, and judicial obstacles (Geiger, 1968:95). A long-term

objective of the campaign is to urge families to socialize their children into roles of prospective citizens who would be successors of the revolutionary cause. It is believed that the children's unformed minds are still suggestible, and they represent the future; therefore the care for, and education of them must not be trusted to the individual family if the family is not given proper instructions. Those activities should be best organized around a collective work: schools, and other social organizations. In 1961 on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the children's Pioneer Organization, Ho Chi Minh addressed all children and asked them: "*1) to love the fatherland and countrymen; 2) to study well and work well; 3) to promote unity and discipline; 4) to observe hygiene; 5) to be modest, frank and courageous*" (Vien, 1971). The new cultured family campaign also aims at encouraging family members to participate actively in production while practicing thrift, to apply correctly the policies and directives of the State and the Communist Party (Molander, 1977). As essential is seen that the new family cannot be good in itself; it must benefit the new society by conforming to what it is supposed to do.

To communicate these objectives to people, the propaganda apparatus often arranges meetings at local levels, informs people about campaign, lets them discuss, then delivers to each family a ready letter, in which they promise to perform the campaign, and to satisfy the criteria of the new cultured family. The media are used to prevent a certain image of the family. If looking at popular literature, we can see those criteria. Moreover, the "*Five good*" emulation movement (1961 - 1965) for women specified those as following: good solidarity, production and thrift; good observation of government policies; good knowledge of politics, culture and techniques; good handling of one's own family and children; and good participation in economic management (Tuyet, 1991).

Women in the new cultured family are always depicted as a working, moreover, hard working, and strong-willed laborers. The official position of the regime is that a good woman will work; it is never quite legitimate for a woman to be just a housewife, particularly in cities. Especially valued are women who perform extremely well both at work and at home - things that are, in fact, well beyond reach of an overwhelming majority of women. Being a good wife, she is able to manage the household, and to help her husband with devoting all his mind, heart and energy to building, and

defending the socialist fatherland. She is also able to bring up children as revolutionary successors of the country. In brief, everything in the family is harmonious, and aimed at getting more and more time and energy for work and study, in the interest of socialist fatherland. Family members are seen not only as relatives, but also comrades in the revolution. So in the eyes of policy-makers, who emphasize the importance of public life, the traditional family with its concentration on the personal sphere must be transformed into the socialist one.

At that time, based on regulation of new cultured family (Article 4 - QĐ 01/2002/QĐ-BVHTT), the new cultured family comprises of many criteria as follow:

1) Families are prosperous, harmonious, progressive, healthy and happy:

- a. Families with economic stability, harmony, and nobody suffers from social evils;
- b. Implementation of a civilized lifestyle and preserve fine traditions, do not use cultural products banned from circulation;
- c. Children at school age are in school; having at least primary education or higher;
- d. Family members improve and protect health care by themselves.

2) Perform the duties of citizens well:

- a. Family members have to implement the Party's guidelines, policies and laws of the State;
- b. Maintaining security, social safety, environmental hygiene and cultured lifestyle in public places;
- c. Protection and restoration of historical and cultural sites;

3) Implementation of family planning policy:

- a. Families do not violate family planning policy;
- b. Having plans for economic development;

- c. Having plans for reasonable consumption and savings;
- 4) Solidarity and mutual assistance in the community:
- a. Solidarity in the community, support and help each other in labor;
  - b. Participate in reconciliation relationships in residential areas;
  - c. Participate in social activities and charity to build a stable and strong residential area as well as mobilize other families participate.

After studying these criteria and signing the letter, families send it back to a group that is responsible for the campaign at local level. According to the Minister of Culture, Sport and Tourism Hoang Anh Tuan, nearly 82% of the households registered to build new cultured family in 2007<sup>120</sup>. The group monitors that, sums up the results of the campaign, and rewards families that deserve the title “*New cultured family*” (Bich, 1997:119-121). In the period of 2002 - 2006, there were 13 million “*new cultured families*”<sup>121</sup>. Their number of new cultured families are increasing every year, and quality of families is raised. So the campaign aiming at propagating a model “cultured families” is contributing to build healthy families, to motivate cultural development, and to eradicate social evils, etc.

### **2.3. Diversity of present day rural and urban Vietnamese families**

According to Goode, industrialization is pressing all the family systems towards what he calls the conjugal family<sup>122</sup>: “They converge toward the conjugal family” (Goode, 1963:25). In previous part, we affirm at that time Vietnam has been undergoing the industrialization process, so in this part we will check whether the Vietnamese family now converge conjugal family as Goode said or not?

To do it, firstly I introduce a brief presentation of Goode’s view about the worldwide trend towards the conjugal family under industrialization. Secondly, we affirm

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<sup>120</sup> <http://vietbao.vn/Xa-hoi/13-trieu-ho-gia-dinh-dat-tieu-chuan-van-hoa/11027108/157/> (accessed in 6.4.2011).

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Industrialization was identified by many as having sounded the death knell for this way of life, destroying extended families and undermining communities (Ogburn, 1955; Thompson, 1963; Wirth, 1938) and nuclear family had evolved as a response to the needs of the modern industrial society (Parsons, 1956).

whether Vietnamese family at present converge conjugal family or diverge many Vietnamese family forms.

In the well - known work “*World revolution and family patterns*”, Goode based on an enormous material given by different original sources on family structure and change in six major world cultures: the West, sub - Sahara Africa, Arabic Islam, China, Japan and India during the fifty year period since about the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 1960s. This book is aimed at examining how the family patterns in these different parts of the world have changed under the impacts of social transformations that he sums up as industrialization. Goode focused on family change in a number of variables: age at marriage, freedom of mate selection, bride price, fertility, divorce, remarriage, etc.

By industrialization Goode means the social transformations that are often associated with urbanization, but also includes the significant improvements in technology, and specially the freedom to achieve mobility, both geographical and social, on the basis of one’s talents and skills.

#### *Industrialization and its effects to family*

Goode affirms: “Wherever the economic system expands through industrialization, family patterns change<sup>123</sup>” (Goode, 1963: 6), and according to him industrialization is pressing towards the conjugal family. He explains that, industrialization sets the requirements of development to which the extended kin network is a definite hindrance. For industrialization,

“What is needed...is that the choice of industrial personnel be made purely on the basis of achievement. But this type of choice runs against deep family values: It is ultimately individual in character, for talents and skills are individual, not family, traits. By contrast, members of the conjugal family are obligated to help one another because they are kin and love one another. A system which sets the goal of a most rapid industrialization, or of a most efficient utilization of its members, would therefore strive to reduce the scope of family ties as much as possible” (Goode, 1963:24).

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<sup>123</sup> Also see Knodel, J., Loi, V.M., Jayakody, R., Huy, V.T. (2004). *Gender roles in the family: Change and stability in Vietnam*. University of Michigan.



The needs of the industrial system are more served by the conjugal family pattern in comparison to the extended kin network, i.e., the conjugal family fits the modern industrial system.

### *The ideology of the conjugal family*

The ideology of the conjugal family is the value placed on this pattern, the attitude towards it as something legitimate, desirable, as an ideal, and for those who have some resentments against and objections to their family systems, as a charming alternative. As Goode puts it:

“The ideology of the conjugal family proclaims the right of the individual to choose his or her spouse, place to live, and even which kin obligations to accept, as against the acceptance of others’ decisions...It encourages love, which in every major civilization has been given a prominent place in fantasy, poetry, art, and legend as a wonderful, perhaps even exalted, experience, even when its reality was guarded against. Finally, it asserts that if one’s family life is unpleasant, one has the right to change it” (Goode, 1963:19).

So the ideology of the conjugal family asserts the worth of individual, and the equality of individuals, as against class, caste, or gender barriers. In the words of Goode, the ideology of the conjugal family is a radical one, destructive of the older traditions in almost every society. The ideology may enter the society through some spokesmen before the material conditions for its existence come into being. Therefore it does prepare individuals for adjustment to the demands of the industrial society. “It is perhaps at this point that the ideology of the family plays an important role by opening the way to the new family behavior as well as to the industrial role pattern” (Goode, 1963:370).

To sum up, Goode’s book makes clear the changes that the family patterns have undergone under the impacts of industrialization by pointing out the movement towards the conjugal family. He affirms:

“Wherever the economic system expands through industrialization, family pattern change. Extended kinship ties weaken, lineage patterns dissolve, and a trend toward some form of the conjugal system generally begins to appear - that is, the nuclear family becomes a more independent kinship unit” (Goode, 1963:6).

He also writes:

“...At the present time a somewhat similar set of influences is affecting all world cultures. All of them are moving toward industrialization, although at varying speeds and from different points. Their family systems are also approaching some variant of the conjugal system. We have stated as an initial point of view, validated throughout by data, that the direction of change for each characteristic of the family might be very different from one culture to another even though the pattern of movement for the system as a whole is towards a variant of the conjugal type” (Goode, 1963:368-369). “We have located precisely the factors in industrialization or urbanization that “cause” the conjugal family to arise” (Goode, 1963:17).

### *The conjugal family as an ideal type*

The most important characteristic of the ideal typical construction of the conjugal family is the relative exclusion of a wide range of affinal and blood relatives from its everyday affairs: There is no great extension of the kin network. The couple cannot count on a large number of kinfolk for help, just as these kin cannot call upon the couple for services. Neither couple nor kinfolk have many rights with respect to the other, and so the reciprocal obligations are few. In turn, by an obvious sociological principle, the couple has few moral controls over their extended kin, and these have few controls over the couple. The locality of the couple’s household will no longer be greatly determined by their kin since kinship ties are weak. The couple will have a “*neolocal*” residence, i.e., they will establish a new household when they marry. This in turn reinforces their relative independence, because it lowers the frequency of social interaction with their kin (Goode, 1963:8).

The choice of mate is freer than in other systems, because the basis upon which marriage is built are different: The kin have no strong rights of financial interest in the matter. Adjustment is primarily between husband and wife, not between the incoming spouse and his or her in-law group. The courtship system is therefore ideally based, and, at the final decision stage, empirically as well, on the mutual attraction between the two youngsters (Goode, 1963:8).

In a conjugal system, the youngsters must now be old enough to take care of themselves, i.e., they must be as old as the economic system forces them to be in order to be independent at marriage (Goode, 1963:8).

Thus, if the economic system changes its base, e.g., from agriculture to industry, the age at marriage may change. The couple decides the number of children they will have on the basis of their own needs, not those of a large kin group, and contraception, abortion, or infanticide may be used to control this number. Whether fertility will be high or low cannot, however, be deduced from these conjugal traits. Under some economic systems—for example, frontier agriculture—the couple may actually need a large number of children (Goode, 1963:8-9).

*The “fit” between the conjugal family and the modern industrial system*

The prime social characteristic of modern industrial enterprise is that the individual is ideally given a job on the basis of his ability to fulfill its demands, and that this achievement is evaluated universalistically; the same standards apply to all person who hold the same job. His link with the job is functionally specific; in other words, the enterprise cannot require behavior of him, which is not relevant to getting the job done (Goode, 1963:11).

Being achievement-based, an industrial society is necessarily open-class (Goode, 1963:11), requiring both geographical and social mobility. Men must be permitted to rise or fall depending on their performance. Moreover, in the industrial system, jobs based on ownership and exploitation of land (and thus on inheritance) become numerically less significant, again permitting considerable geographical mobility so that individuals are free to move about in the labor market. The neolocality of the conjugal system correspondingly frees the individual from ties to the specific geographical location where his parental family lives (Goode, 1963:12).

Current formulations, based on ancient wisdom, assert that by limiting the extensiveness of the kin network, the individual is less hampered by his family in rising upward in the job structure. Presumably, this means that he owes less to his kin and so can allocate his resources of money and time solely to further his career; perhaps he may also more freely change his style of life, his mode of dress and

speech, in order to adjust to a new class position without criticism from his kin. On the other hand, an industrial system pays less attention to what the individual does off the job, so that family and job are structurally somewhat more separated than in other systems. Consequently, one might reason that differential social or occupational mobility (as among siblings or cousins) would not affect kin ties (Goode, 1963:12).

Continuing now with our analysis of the “*fit*” of the conjugal family to industrial needs; the more limited conjugal kin network opens mobility channels somewhat by limiting the “*closure*” of class strata. In general, rigid class boundaries can be maintained partly by the integration of kin bonds against the “*outsider*” through family controls. When the family network of each family is smaller, the families of an upper stratum are less integrated (Goode, 1963:13), the web of kin less tightly woven, and entrance into stratum easier. Since the industrial system requires relatively free mobility, this characteristic of the conjugal pattern fits the needs of that system (Goode, 1963:14).

Since the young adult is ideally expected to make his own choice of spouse and the young couple is expected to be economically independent the conjugal system by extending the adolescent phase of development, permits a long period of tutelage. For example, it is expected that the individual should be grown up before marrying. Note, however, that it is not the family itself that gives this extended tutelage, but public, impersonal agencies, such as schools, military units, and corporations, which ideally ignore family origin and measure the individual by his achievement and talent. This pattern permits the individual to obtain a longer period of training, to make a freer choice of his career, and to avoid the economic encumbrance of marriage until he has fitted himself into the industrial system. Thus, the needs of the industrial system are once more served by conjugal family pattern (Goode, 1963:15).

#### *Vietnamese family forms*

Based on the results of their comparative study, many sociologists said that the form of family life in one country is too colored for them to have a concept of the family. The form of family varies not only from one society to another but also from one class to another within the same society (Bich, 2003; Coltrane & Collins, 2001).

These variations resulted from many economic and organizational factors, accidental aspects of personal and family history, and different rules or customs about who should establish independent households (Dong, 1991:93). For example, at one national territorial unity, Vietnamese author Do Thai Dong clarify that Kinh's family is different from the Thai's one; within in Kinh's ethnic group, rural family differs from urban family. They even are Kinh rural family but living in the North is not the same as in the South (Dong, 1991). In multi - ethnic and religious society, the family diversify further by race, religion, education, occupation, social - economic status, etc.

At that time there are many family forms in Vietnam as follow:

### ***2.3.1. Nuclear family***

It is the smallest family unit, comprise husband and wife, and their unmarried children. This family has two generations: parent generation and children generation.

It is easily to find that there are many relations in this family form:

- Husband - wife relation.

- Parent - children relation.

If they have two children, they will have one relation more that is sibling relations.

The nuclear family has two variants:

- Complete family: in which have husband, wife and their unmarried children.

- Single - parent family (lone - parent family, one - parent family): is the family in which has two generations: parent and their unmarried children, but in the first generation (parent generation) has no husband or wife because of divorce, or death.

Pioneer anthropologist Malinowski stated that the nuclear family had to be universal because it filled a basic biological need - caring for and protecting infants and young children. No culture could survive, he asserted, unless the birth of children was linked to both mother and father in legally based parenthood (Malinowski, 1913).

Anthropologist George Murdock elaborated on the idea that the nuclear family is both universal and essential:

“Whether as the sole prevailing form of the family...or as the basic unit from which more complex families form, [the nuclear family] exists as a distinct and strongly functional group in every known society” (Murdock, 1949:2).

According to Emile Durkheim, the nuclear family members are united by a particular solidarity in accordance with the division of labor (Durkheim 1933:123). There are specific functions of each family member. For instance, the father is responsible for supporting the child and for his upbringing, and he possesses all authority until the child is grown-up. Once the child is at age of marriage, “all these relationships cease” (Simpson, 1965:529), i.e., parents no longer control him, the child has his own separate interests, and he is responsible for himself. For the child, the family of origin then becomes second rank. The own conjugal family is first rank; with regards to relevance, the former “move down a step”. However, this process of independence does not necessarily lead to a termination of family bonds.

Talcott Parsons said that the nuclear family with a clear role differentiation between husband and wife, fewer but more specific functions (such as socialization of children, regulations of balances in the personality of adults) fits the needs of industrial society. Independent of the kin network, “*the isolated*” nuclear family is free to move as the economic demands. Further, the intimate nuclear family can specialize in serving the emotional needs of adults and children in a competitive and impersonal world (Parsons, 1955). It is manifested in the fact that the members of the nuclear family, consisting of parents and their dependent children, ordinarily occupy a separate dwelling not shared with other members of the family of origin, and that this household is in the typical case economically independent, subsisting from the occupational earnings of the husband father (Parsons & Bales, 1956:10).

The nuclear family has the advantage that its members are attached directly to each other, sharing the same interests. Equally important is the intensity of emotionality within the conjugal family unit. This type of family is founded on mutual attraction and love. It is made up of a small number of people in close contact with one another. The emotional ties among members of the large extended family are likely

to be diffuse and less intense. The higher degree of emotionality in the conjugal unit is accentuated by the fact that custom forbids the individual to go anywhere else in the society for solace. In addition, individuals can more easily follow on the opportunities of the labor market, are more likely to focus on the task itself rather than needs of their kinship network, and very likely spend less of their time on kin activities. So, the nuclear family unit is solid and stable in society.

But besides that, if faced great difficulties in life, the nuclear family couldn't be often resolvable itself. Since this type of system contains no large kinship groupings that offer various social welfare services, it has no simple way of taking care of the dependent, the helpless, or the aged. In his paper on age and sex in the social structure of the United States in 1942, Parsons had pointed to the resulting structural isolation of the elderly more explicitly:

“It is impossible to say that with us it is natural for any other group than husband and wife and their dependent children to maintain a common household. Hence, when the children of a couple have become independent through marriage and occupational status the parental couple is left without attachment to any continuous kinship group” (Parsons, 1942:615).

If the children lose their parents, no corporate kinship is responsible for supporting them. When couples divorce, no cooperating kinship unit will automatically take care of them. To meet this problem, complex social security measures have been developed in societies, along with homes for the aged and helpless, and specially organized private or governmental programs for the handicapped.

### ***2.3.2. Extended family***

The family unit, which is larger than nuclear family, being called extended family. Traditionally, the term extended family has been applied to the kinship network of social and economic ties composed of the nuclear family (parents and children) plus other, less close relatives. It could be the expansion of either vertical basic nuclear family, for example including members of the third generation such as parents of husband or wife, or horizontal nuclear family to include members across generation found with the husband or wife particularly brothers or sisters of wife and husband.

A given large extended family grows and declines over the years as it is affected by fertility, marriage and divorce, mortality, residence rules, and alternative socio-economic opportunities open to its members. Under modern industrializing condition, this type of family becomes less common.

Study of the extended family unites two independent concepts: the household and kinship ties. The former refers to co - residence, whereas the later implies relationship. When extended families share a common household, those most likely to be residents are the household head's brothers and sisters, grandparents and grandchildren, and depending on the society, aunts and uncles. The social and economic importance of extended family can most readily be seen when family members are living together; however, this doesn't discount the importance of kinship ties. Even in societies where extended families do not reside together and nuclear family households predominate, the nuclear family may rely on extended kin to assist with the day - to - day activities such as care of elderly or children and may be emotionally and economically codependent on family members outside the household.

Now we are talking about strengths of the extended family.

Firstly is the durability and continuity of the extended family, especially in non - urban and non - industrialized settings. In those settings, it can furnish social services that are typically lacking. When the domestic group is larger, any given individual represents a smaller marginal or extra cost to the group. Consequently, the burden of the aged, the ill, the cripple, and the infirm is less for each member of a large extended family.

Although the extended family loses members through mortality or migration, it is more durable than nuclear family. That is, as in any other large group, the loss of an individual or two doesn't change the basic pattern of the group. Even the loss of the eldest male will not change things fundamentally, since there is typically another mature male to take over when that happens. By contrast, in a small domestic unit, the death or absence of the mother or father seriously impairs or even destroys the effectiveness of that family.



Secondly is the economic strength of the extended family. It is perhaps most important that the extended family is better able to amass the capital for an important economic enterprise, whether that is obtaining enough money for a marriage, buying land or paying for the education of a young man of promise. As long as those who receive the benefit of the investment also continue to feel obligated to share that benefit with their kin, the group as a whole can function as a kind of cooperative, or savings bank. The conjugal family has to apportion its rewards among fewer people, but correspondingly there are fewer people from whom to obtain support when investment capital is needed. Having an extended family, they are better able to put together the necessary capital for new types of enterprise, or help each other to get better jobs.

We can conclude that the extended family has the advantage of focusing on human resources for the production of the family, and the generations can help each other through difficult times in life, which Robertson so called “*reproduction pressures*” (Robertson, 1991). Reproduction pressures are all difficulties or challenges that individuals and families must overcome to survive and exist in the way of their life. To survive, people must have the resources not only for living, but also to support to others in order to receive their support when we are difficult or helpless. However, this type of family easily leads to intergenerational conflicts. In order to maintain it, it needs a huge effort of all members to overcome separation tendencies.

The Vietnamese families now exist in these two major forms: nuclear families (two generations) and extended families (from three generations upwards). The nuclear family is the most common. According to findings of a survey in 2002 of three regions including cities, plain and midland-highland: nuclear families account for 78% (cities: 65%; plain: 81.7% and midland-highland areas: 80.6%). The nuclear family does not stand on its own but always receives support and assistance from wider family (parents, brothers and wider kin). Three - generation families account for a small percentage: 18.2% (cities: 35%; plain: 13%; and midland-highland: 18%). Meanwhile, four-generation families are very few (0.5%)<sup>124</sup>. Three - generation households became less common, and are decreasing, possibly due to

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<sup>124</sup> See: <http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/news/story.php?d=20020701005532> (accessed in 7.9.2011).

industrialization (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008:14). The proportion of three-generation households was higher in urban areas, particularly in the inner city, which may be due to a lack of housing in urban areas and the increasing trend among young people to migrate to the city for work and then get married.

### ***2.3.3. Family at husband's home (Patrilocal)***

This kind of family means that the woman after getting married will move from her original home to husband's home or around his home. Under this rule, the new family unit is likely to become part of the groom's father's household.

In both northern and southern Vietnam, newly - married couples often start their material life in the husbands' families for many reasons (Bich, 1999; Hai, 2004; Van, 2004).

Firstly, a crucial factor that constitutes a necessary condition for the dissolution of the household is the ability of the children to create households of their own. To do this, it is necessary for them to be able to command economic resources such that they can acquire a separate dwelling. However, the first stage of the family cycle is likely to be associated with poverty; most of them are not able to establish their own household. Lan (1994) has shown that a great deal of young people starts family life under the same roof as husbands' parents<sup>125</sup>, then gradually separate, with some help of parents and other close relatives.

Secondly, since what is important for Vietnamese people is the continuance of lineage through marriage, the newly - married couple is not isolated from the kinship system; by contrast, they are a part of it. They have to be able to perform the tasks allotted to them by the kinship system in which they participate. In order to do this, they need to live with the husbands' parents, and get at least some ideas about the

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<sup>125</sup> In her survey, the overwhelming majority among 206 married women (93,7%) said that they started married life in their husband's family, so only the rest of 6,3% established separate households immediately after marriage. After some period of time many couples started the fission often in this way: by first continuing to live under the same roof as the husband's parents, but cooking separately, then built their own houses (frequently after the first child) (Lan, 1994:31).

system of which they are parts. Some period of time later, both sides agree on dividing the household.

In Vietnamese traditional families, village endogamy was common. There was even a saying in some localities: “*Lay cho trong lang hon lay nguoi sang thien ha*” (Better get married to your villager, who might be lowly like a dog than to person of high social status, who does not belong to your village) (Toan Anh, 202). Other studies reveal the same thing. According to Hy (1992:57), the rate of village endogamy in the pre-1945 rural communities for which data were available reached at least 80%. The survey in Thai Binh province in 1992 has shown similar results. Almost two thirds of 206 women married to men from the same communes; one third was born in nearby communes then moved to their husbands’communes; only 2% women married to men from other districts (Tuyet et al., 1994:60). According to a recent survey more than 80% of respondents, both male and female, live with husband’s parents after being married. This is a stable trend during the last half century (Minh, 2000). Finally, according to a survey in 2006, respondents aged 18 - 60 years moved in with the husband’s family as newly-weds (64.8%). Yet new trends, such as living with the husband’s family while eating separately (1.3% of couples), have emerged (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008:20), and probably show that there is a wish for more intimacy and privacy.

#### ***2.3.4. Family at wife’s home (Matrilocal)***

In matrilocal families, the husband after getting married, will live at the wife’s home or near her home.

It can be said that the rules of residence determine in part who associates with whom after marriage. If a man moves to take up residence near his wife and her lineage, the likelihood increases that he would have frequent social interaction with her kin, and of course with her uncle or brother, who are the dominant figures in her matrilineage. Residence rules also affect another set of relation. In any society where the economy depends partly on hunting, trapping, lumbering, quarrying or fishing, the man who moved far would thereby render less useful some of his localized, geographical knowledge. In most societies residence is patrilocal, but where it is matrilocal, the

man is likely to move just to a different part of the village, near his wife's relatives. In a few instances, by contrast, the group was migratory anyway, in a territory that the man knew well. In many societies, the wife's contribution to the food supply was very important, since much of it was simply gathering from hour to hour, for example: fruits, nuts, roots, small animals, etc. while wandering over a specific territory. As long as her residence was not changed greatly, those skills would still be valuable. In societies in which the woman did move, there was more likelihood that a bride price would be paid because her group lost a producer. By contrast, in a matrilineal society a substantial bride price was not usual. In that case, her skills would not be lost to her family (as her children were not), and thus no payment would be required.

In Vietnam, to start a family at the wife's home is not popular. In anthropological jargon, this is known as uxorilocal marriage<sup>126</sup>, and in Vietnamese as "*lam re*" or "*o re*". People around the young man often sneer at him if he lives with his wife's family. There was a popular saying like this: "*O re nhu cho chui gam chan*" (To live and work as a bridegroom is to lead the life of a dog that has to make do with the limited space under the low cupboard). Men, who are willing to forsake their own filial duties by accepting an uxorilocal marriage, are generally looked down upon, and most men marrying this way are poor (Gammeltoft, 1999). The stigma is presumably less, however, in southern Vietnam, as co-residence with the wife's parents is common among the southern Vietnamese cultures (Bryant, 2002:115). In 2006, only 8.4% of couples live and eat with the new wife's family (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008:20).

### ***2.3.5. Making a separate home (Neolocal)***

The new family will live at neither husband's home nor wife's home. This family form is creating more space for the couple relationships and individual freedom than living at husband's home or at wife's home. However, it requires of the couple a very high degree of self-reliance to ensure a normal family life.

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<sup>126</sup> Bryant, J. (2002). *Patrilineal, patrilocal and fertility decline in Vietnam*. Asia-Pacific population Journal. Vol.17. No.2.

The 2006 survey found that 23.7% couples live separately, and it was more common for urban newlyweds aged 18 - 60 years to have their own home (36.5% of urban newlyweds vs. 19.2% of those in rural area). The Kinh majority has the highest rate of newlyweds living separate from their families, at 25.3% compared to the Ede at 0% (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008:20).

**In conclusion**, to say that the family is the same everywhere is in some sense true. But we can see the different Vietnamese families forms are more interesting, just as a portrait of an individual is interesting because of the person's uniqueness rather than because faces usually have eyes, ears, and a mouth. Families possess even more dissimilar traits than do faces. They vary in organization, membership, life cycles, emotional environments, ideologies, social and kin networks, and economic and other functions. Although anthropologists have tried to come up with a single definition of family that would hold across time and place, they generally have concluded that doing so is not useful (Geertz, 1965; Stephens, 1963). It is really true in Vietnam, because we can clarify the Vietnamese families forms<sup>127</sup> according to: the number of generation in the family, the division of power in the family, resident of new family, etc. Goode's thesis on the industrialization pressing necessarily towards the conjugal family does not hold for Vietnam.

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<sup>127</sup> Each family has their morphological characteristics, advantages and difficulties for its own members.

## Chapter 3: Economic function in Vietnamese families<sup>128</sup>

### 3.1. Introduction

Up to now, the family has always been regarded as a unit of economic production and consumption of society (Thi, 1996). There is no known society in which the family doesn't play a major economic role (Smelser, 1988; Chuong, 2000). According to Marxism - Leninism, people born and raised in the family first of all need something to eat, to wear for survival and development, need homes or shelters for shade, need in daily supplies, medicine to treat the sick, and so on. It is process of economic organization that the couple must overcome by their own labor to build. They feed not only themselves but also nurture and care their children in early childhood and the responsibility for elderly parents who don't have any longer working capacity. Speaking of the economic function of the family, we must first talk about how to ensure that all members reach subsistence level; that means that they have enough food, accommodation, cloth - the essential needs of humans. Of course, the needs of people are also increasingly growing, enhanced by the process of social development. They would want delicious meals, well - dressed cloth, fully furnished home, full cultural activities, rest and leisure. So parents need to organize economic activities suitably in order to increase family income through their professional activity; mobilizing and using labor of each member of family rationally; arranging highly effective labor in family; including an achievement oriented education of feelings and attitude of labor for children and other family members, to promote self - discipline, creativity in working to make the family economy more and more independent.

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<sup>128</sup> There are four papers published at an International Journal and an International Conference in this chapter: 1) The expenditure of Vietnamese families in recent years. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol.2, No.3, September 2011, pp. 363 - 372; 2) Household income in present day Vietnam. 2011 International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences. 21<sup>st</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011. Cairo, Egypt, pp. 14 - 19; 3) The implementation of economic function in Vietnamese families at present time. *International Review of Social sciences and Humanities*. Vol.3, No.1, April 2012, pp. 188 - 199; 4) The division of household labor in Vietnamese families at present time. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* (ISSN 2222 - 6990). Vol.2, No.5, May 2012. Page 59 - 68.

Labor productivity can generate high income for all members; most families have also to concentrate on spending not too much money; there should be a reasonable spending plan.

In this part, we will examine the Vietnamese families income and expenditures in turn.

### **3.2. Household income in Vietnam**

#### ***3.2.1. Average household income***

Over the past years, along with the development of socio-economic conditions, the living conditions of Vietnamese households have been markedly improved (Thi, 1990; Van, 2004). An overwhelming majority of the people think their living standards are now better than before. According to the nationwide survey by Anh & Mai <sup>129</sup> (2007:152) on households' self-evaluation of living standards, poor households account for 15.4%, medium 58.3%, above-medium 23.8% and wealthy 2.6%.

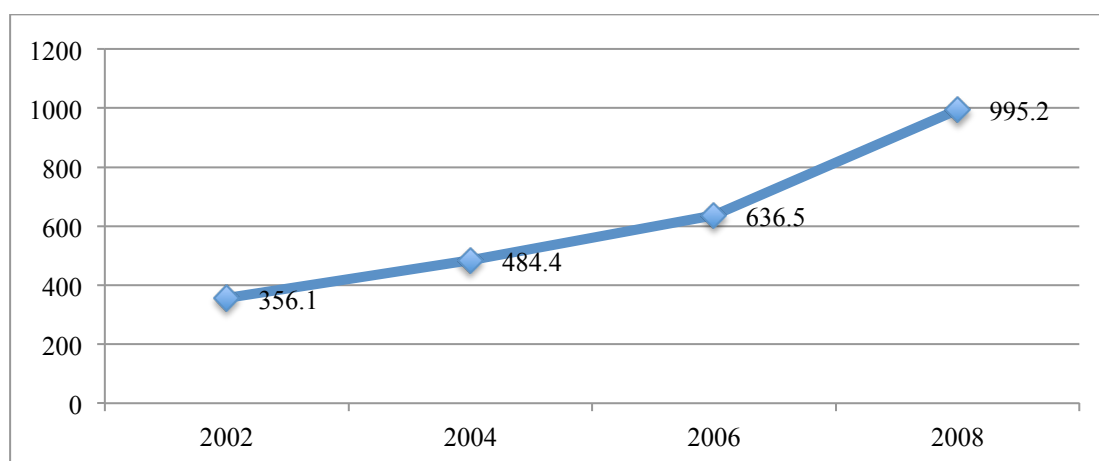
Asked about the change in living standard during the last five years, more than 87% of the households said their life in 2008 was improved, 8% said there was no change and only 5% said it was worse (GSO, 2008:3-4).

Households' living standards were improved firstly because of their considerably increased incomes. GSO (2008) defines household income as the total amount of money received (usually monthly), including salaries, revenues from agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, industry, construction, trade, services, etc.

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<sup>129</sup> The survey using quantitative method to investigate the household is the primary method. The questionnaires are separately designed for rural and urban households. The household was chosen by the method of stratified sampling. Each province or city selected two communes or wards, which represents the typical residential communities in its province and city to survey. In each province or city, about 100 households was interviewed. It was chosen by simple random method. Of the total 64 provinces and cities, there was 109 communes in 60 provinces surveyed in rural areas, 22 wards of 17 cities surveyed in urban areas. Total number of households surveyed is 16,453 (14,050 rural households and 2403 urban households) with 64,923 inhabitants.

**Fig. 3.1. Monthly household income per capita (2002 - 2008) (Unit: 1000 dong)**



*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

In 2008, monthly household income per head was 995.2 thousand dong, 2.8 times of that in 2002 (at 356.1 thousand), and 1.6 times of that in 2006.

When comparing the growth rate of per capita income over a period of two years, we can see that the acceleration rate of the latter period is higher than that of the previous. In 2006 - 2008, monthly per capita income increased by 358.7 thousand, higher than the 152.1 thousand increase in 2004 - 2006 and the 128.3 thousand increase in 2002 - 2004.

Monthly per capita income increase is attributed to the following factors. Firstly, Vietnam has shifted its economic structure to industrialisation at a high and stable growth rate. Besides it, the structure of labor changes positively. The proportion of labor in industry, construction and services are increasing while the proportion of labor in agriculture is decreasing<sup>130</sup>. Secondly, Vietnam has always created new jobs over the past years. Employment rate is quite high and increases each year. In July 2007, a total of 45.6 million people were employed, up 10 million compared to 1997, showing the yearly increase was fastest in 2006 (MOLISA, 2009). Accordingly, unemployment rate across the country decreased gradually from 5.31% in 2005 to 4.64% in 2007 and to 4.65% in 2008 (Statistical Year book, 2010). Thirdly, in the early 2008, the minimum monthly wages for public sector workers was raised from 450 thousand to 540 thousand. Wages for employees in businesses also rised, leading to an increase in public money. Moreover, production in this period kept rising. In

<sup>130</sup> See details in chapter 2.



2008, agricultural production enjoyed a record increase, higher than 2006 and 2007. Rice yield<sup>131</sup> saw the biggest increase in 11 years (Statistical Year book, 2008). Prices of agricultural and aquatic products such as paddy rice, live pig, coffee, rubber, cashew, shrimp, fish increased considerably compared to 2006.

Incomes in both rural and urban areas increased each year. Monthly income per head in 2008 in urban areas was 1,605.2 thousand, much higher than in rural areas at 762.2 thousand dong. Monthly income per head in urban areas in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 was 2.26, 2.16, 2.09, 2.11 times as high as in rural areas respectively

Monthly income per head of the poorest households<sup>132</sup> (quintile 1) in 2008 was 275 thousand dong, increasing by 49.2%; that of the richest group (quintile 5) was 2,458.2 thousand dong, increasing by 59.4% compared to 2006. The difference of monthly income per head between quintile 5 and quintile 1 in 2006 was 8.4 times, 8.9 times in 2008, increasing in comparison with 2006. Therefore, the gap between wealth and poverty in Vietnam has had an increasing trend. In other words, inequality and social stratification have become bigger and bigger. This requires Vietnam's more effort to reduce this gap.

The difference of income between quintile 5 and quintile 1 in urban areas increased from 8% in 2002 to 8.1% in 2004, 8.2% in 2006 to 8.3% in 2008. At the same time, the difference between quintile 5 and quintile 1 in rural areas is lower than in urban areas, only at the rate of 6.0; 6.4; 6.5 and 6.9 times in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008, respectively. If considered in eight geographical areas, the difference of income between quintile 5 and quintile 1 in 2008 in the Southeast area is highest (the difference rate of 8.7 times), and the lowest rate was in the North Central, 6.5 times, the Northwest 6.8 times. This proves that the more the market economy develops, the more the stratification between the wealthiest and the poorest is accelerated.

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<sup>131</sup> Rice yield hit 38,725.1 thousand tons in 2008; 35,849.5 thousand tons in 2006; 35,942.7 thousand tons in 2007 (Statistical Year book, 2008).

<sup>132</sup> Income quintile means all surveyed individuals are ascending sorted by income per capita, then divided into 5 groups, each has the same number of individuals (20% of all surveyed individuals).

Quintile 1: Lowest income per capital group (Poorest).

Quintile 2: Near poorest.

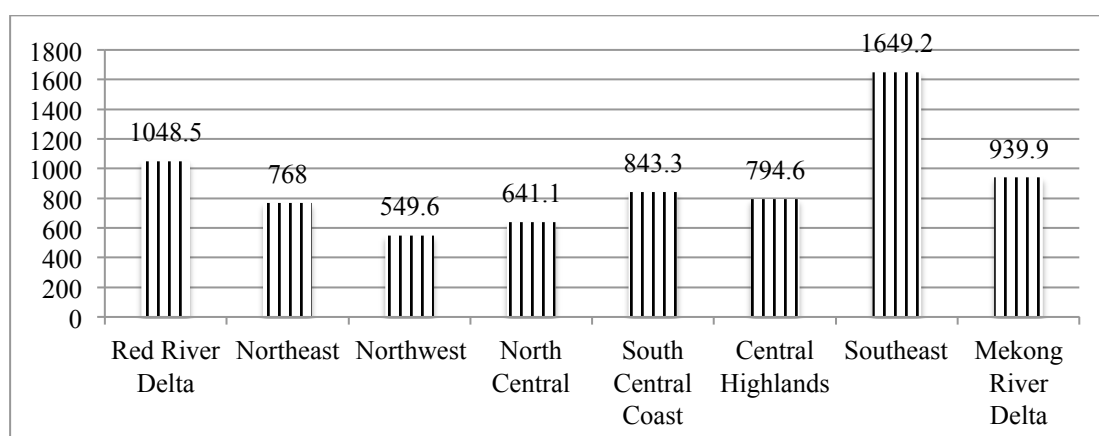
Quintile 3: Middle.

Quintile 4: Near richest.

Quintile 5: Highest income per capital group (Richest).  
(GSO, 2008).

Monthly income per head in 2008 according to current prices of geographical areas relatively increased compared to 2006. Poor households in the Central Highlands<sup>133</sup> and some particularly poor provinces in the Northern mountain area<sup>134</sup> had relatively increasing income due to the influence of nation's supporting policies for poor areas, districts such as solving the problem of production land for ethnic minority on the spot, providing accommodation, materials for building houses, supplying with plants, fertilizers, subsidy of health care and education, etc. However, income of different areas still has a big difference. If the area of lowest income - the Northwest is considered as 1, so the Red River Delta is 1.91, the Northeast 1.4, the North Central 1.17, the South Central Coast 1.53, the Central Highlands 1.45, the Southeast 3.0, the Mekong River Delta 1.71 (fig 3.2). Thus, the gap between the highest income area (Southeast) and the lowest income area (Northwest) was 3 times.

**Fig. 3.2. Monthly income per capita by regions (2008) (Thousand dong)**



*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

The reason why the Southeast area has the highest average income is possibly that this area has an early-developed goods economy; its economic structure of industry, agriculture and service develops better than other areas in the country. The Southeast area has a very favorable geographic position for socio-economic development. This area is situated next to the Mekong River Delta - the country's biggest area of food and food- stuff, the communication is easier due to a system of canals and roads. The good natural condition and fertile resources facilitate the development of perennial industrial plants (coffee, rubber, cashew, and pepper), fruit and other industrial plants

<sup>133</sup> Consisting of: Gia Lai, Kontum, Dak Lak, Dak Nong and Lam Dong.

<sup>134</sup> For example: Ha Giang, Cao Bang, Lai Chau.

(soybean, sugar cane, tobacco, etc.) on a grand scale. The Southeast is located near big fishing areas with ideal conditions to build fishing ports. By the coast, there are saline forests, which are favorable places to raise salt-water and brackish-water fishes. The outstanding mineral resource of the area is oil on the continental shelf. The socio-economic condition of the Southeast area strongly attracts sources of from highly professional laborers, skilled workers to engineers, professors, and businesses. The active development of economy facilitates this area to have a big source of gray matter. Ho Chi Minh city is the country's biggest city in terms of area and population, also the biggest center of industry, transportation and services. In the Southeast, fund and technology have been accumulated, and the area has also been attracting domestic and international investment. The infrastructure is well-developed, especially transportation and communication. All the above condition bring a lot of advantages to the Southeast in the socio-economic development progress.

On the contrary, the Northwest is an inconvenient geographical area with high mountains, separation and a system of rough transportation. The system of roads has not been synchronously developed; the system of railroads is old and out of date. The ability of goods and passenger transportation is limited. Now, goods transportation is mainly by railway and road due to the limitation of waterways and airports. The above inadequacies of transportation infrastructure are an obstacle to an investment environment of the area, which contributes to the increase of product cost and decrease of businesses' competitive ability. Also, the planning of population layout, as well as the building of concentrated industrial areas and large scale urban areas have faced a lot of difficulties; due to the condition of rather rough terrain, it is also difficult for the area to enlarge agricultural production in order to create the areas of specialized production towards the trend of industrialization and modernization. The climate of the Northwest is relatively severe, cold and dry winters greatly affect the structure of crops and the growth of plants. The Northwest is an area with a low starting point in our country; most provinces are in the area of especially difficult socio-economic condition, ethnic minorities<sup>135</sup> have a big proportion so people's life is very hard, the rate of poverty is high compared to other areas in the country (24%

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<sup>135</sup> The Northwest is home of more than 30/52 ethnics: Tay, Nung, Dao, H' mong, etc, in which 63% are ethnic minorities.

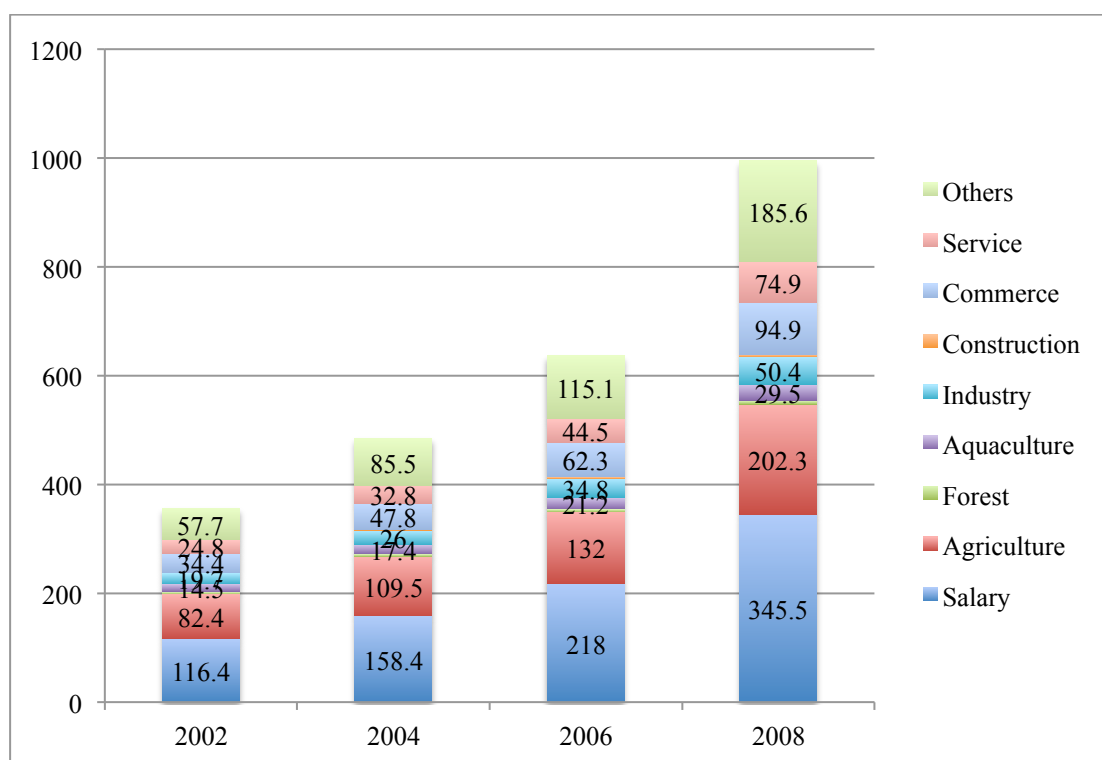
in 2009), leading to a low purchasing power. In the area, there is a serious shortage of trained laborers and the quality of labor in terms of both low and high skills is lower than that of other areas in the nation.

The above analysis partly demonstrates the reason why average income per capita of the Northwest is lowest and that of the Southeast is highest. This naturally leads to a big inequality in households' income of the above areas, as we have seen before (pp. 86-88).

### 3.2.2. Structure of Vietnamese households' income sources

Vietnamese households' income sources can be defined as the income consisting of the follow: salaries; wages; agriculture, forestry, aquaculture activities; industry, construction, commerce, service and other activities yielding income sources (GSO, 2008).

**Fig. 3.3. Monthly income per capita by source of income (2002 - 2008)  
(1000 dong)**



Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey

On a nationwide scale, it can be realized that the main income of households is from salaries and wages. This accounts for about 1/3 of the total income of households and has been a stable trend over the years. Specifically, income from salaries and wages was 32.7% in 2002, 32.7% in 2004, 34.2% in 2006 and 34.7% in 2008. In 2008, this source of income was 345.5 thousand dong per head monthly. The second income source is from production activities in agriculture. This source of income was 82.4 thousand dong per head monthly in 2002 and grew up to 202.3 thousand in 2008. It is the main income source after salaries and wages due to the feature that Vietnam is an agricultural country with 70.4% of population living in the countryside (in 2009). It is agricultural activities bringing remarkable income source to Vietnamese households. Construction is the field yielding the least income source to households with the amount of 1.6 thousand, 2.1 thousand, 3.5 thousand and 5.3 thousand over the years 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008, respectively. Income from services has had a considerable rise over the past years. This increased from 24.8 thousand in 2002 to 74.9 thousand in 2008. This growth is partly because Vietnam has been aware of how to exploit and use the tourism potentials with many famous beaches and resorts as Halong Bay<sup>136</sup>, Vung Tau, Nha Trang, Phu Quoc, etc.

#### *Comparison of the income sources' structure between rural and urban households*

In rural areas, the main income of households is from agricultural activities with 99.0 thousands dong in 2002 (28.2% of total income) and 257.4 thousand dong (equal to 25.8% of monthly total income of households). The income sources from agricultural activities always ranks at the top of the structure of income sources of rural households through the years. Besides this are other income sources from activities closely connected to agricultural activities as forestry and aquaculture.

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<sup>136</sup> Now, Halong Bay is one of the world's seven new wonders

**Table 3.1. Monthly income per capita by sources of income and rural or urban areas (2008) (Unit: 1000 dong)**

		Salaries	Agriculture	Forestry	Aquaculture	Industry	Construction	Commerce	Services	Others
2002	Rural	68.2	99.0	5.6	14.8	14.8	0.6	21.5	12.2	39.5
	Urban	274.7	28.0	1.0	13.7	35.8	4.8	79.6	66.4	120.7
2004	Rural	98.1	132.5	6.1	20.0	20.4	1.5	30.5	14.5	54.6
	Urban	346.1	37.8	0.7	9.5	43.4	4.3	101.9	90.0	181.8
2006	Rural	140.0	167.1	6.8	25.8	25.6	2.0	40.3	20.6	77.6
	Urban	453.8	46.7	0.8	10.6	63.6	8.0	129.2	116.0	229.6
2008	Rural	216.4	257.4	9.1	33.8	39.6	3.7	58.2	34.0	110.1
	Urban	683.5	58.1	1.1	18.5	78.8	9.5	191.0	181.7	383.1

*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

In agricultural activities of rural households, planting is the main sector. Up to 72.5% of households plant rice, and the Red River Delta has the highest rate with nearly 94% of households and the Central Highlands<sup>137</sup> with the lowest rate of 39% (Anh & Mai, 2007:74).

Food plants have the proportion of 66.8% in the total revenue of planting sector, in which rice plants account for 60%. The next are industrial plants such as coffee, cacao, rubber, etc. with 23.7% of the revenue, the lowest revenue of planting sector is from food plants as beans, peanut, sesame, vegetables, etc. with 3.2% (Anh & Mai, 2007:74). The main cause is that food planting can only be done on a small scale in order to meet the demand of households, so the income from this source is very little.

Accordingly, income from agriculture plays an essential role in rural households. This source is 3.53 times higher than in urban areas in 2002; 3.5 times in 2004; 3.58 times in 2006; 4.43 times in 2008.

On the contrary, income from industry and construction in rural households is much lower than that of urban households (table 3.1). The biggest difference in the structure of households' income between rural and urban areas is the income from

<sup>137</sup> The Central Highlands has the lowest rate of households planting rice because it has two acres of fertile basalt soil (60% of the country's basalt soil), which is suitable for industrial plants like coffee, cacao, pepper, and mulberry. Of these plants, coffee is the most important plant in the Central Highlands.

services and commerce. In 2008, urban households' income from services is 5.34 times higher than rural households', with income from commerce; the difference rate is 3.28 times. This difference of income brings us to a conclusion that activities concerning commerce and services have not been developed intensely in rural areas. This will restrict this area from the socio-economic development. In contrast, urban areas have conditions to improve income from these activities. But, as we can see in highly industrialized countries the opportunity costs of pollution and irreparable destruction of nature or damage done to the environment which the society will have to pay for may easily transcend the advantage of rising incomes within a relatively short time.

In urban areas, the biggest and main income of households is from salaries and wages. In 2008, salaries accounted for 42.6% of households' total income, with 638.5 thousand dong.

According to the survey results of Anh & Mai (2007), the proportion of people having income from public sector was 41.4%, from non - state sector was 60% (table 3.2). The trend of people with income from non - state sector is going to grow in the next period in the process of international economic integration, quickly fostering the process of industrialization and modernization in urban area.

The phenomenon of a part of public sector workers having extra jobs (with the proportion of the nation's urban households' income is 2.3%, particularly in the Red River Delta, the North Central and the South Central Coast this rate is higher with around 4%), which indicates that salaries in public sector need to be adjusted to meet basic demands of urban households.

**Table 3.2. Structure of monthly income per capita by sources of income and regions (2007) (in:%)**

	Nationwide	Red River Delta	Northeast	Northwest	North Central	South Central Coast	Central Highlands	Southeast	Mekong River Delta
Structure of income (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Salaries and allowances of public sector workers	29.9	32.6	40.2	52.2	28.3	35.5	27.4	20.4	29.2
Pensions, social subsidies	9.2	17.4	14.7	27.9	13.1	7.6	3.7	4.1	3.2
Income of public sector workers from extra jobs	2.3	4.2	1.9	1.5	3.6	4.1	1.3	1.2	1.8
Income of workers in co-operate companies with foreign investment fund	5.3	3.2	1.0	0.5	0.4	0.8	1.9	13.5	1.9
Income from private businesses, cooperative society, production combination, business, services	12.1	15.7	6.5	2.5	10.5	7.5	7.7	16.1	14.9
Income from production, business, services of households or individuals	33.5	19.5	33.6	12.7	33.8	35.9	55.1	34.5	37.4
Interest of bank deposit, interest of equity contribution	1.1	4.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.0	0.1	1.0	0.0
Frequent support from Relatives	2.6	1.2	0.7	0.6	6.2	5.2	1.2	3.4	2.4
Other sources of income	4.0	2.0	1.3	1.9	4.0	2.3	1.6	5.8	9.2

*Source: Anh, V.T. & Mai, N.X. (2007). The socio-economic transformation of households, pp. 219-220*



The structure of households' income varies from area to area. The proportion of income sources from public sector is high in the Northwest urban area - with the main role of administrative cities (52.2%). For cities with developed market economy as the Southeast, this rate is only 20.4%, 2.5 times lower than that of the Northwest.

However, income sources from households' production business occupies a high proportion (33.5%) in the structure of urban households' income all over the nation. This shows that the feature of small-scale economy is still popular in cities, even in the region considered the most active and developed economic area - the Southeast also has the proportion of 34.7%.

Private sector in cities is still small, when income from this sector is only 12.1%. Also, the sector with foreign investment fund only brings income to a small part of urban people (5.3%), mainly concentrating in big cities as Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh city, Vung Tau.

The role of urban households' income sources from public sector has been decreasing and that of non - state sector has seen a gradual growth in accordance with the urban scale, in other words, the bigger the urban scale is - the more the market economy develops, the more the role of urban households' income from public sector increases and the more that of income from non-state sector is.

#### *The difference in the structure of 5 quintiles income source*

The main income source of quintile 5 (the richest) is from salaries and other sources. In 2002, quintile 5 income source from salaries accounted for 36.6%, 34.3% in 2004, 35.1 % in 2006 and 35.4% in 2008. The second income source in this group is from other sources. In 2008, this income source was 22.9% of quintile 5 total income. Other income sources of quintile 5 can be from activities as interest of bank deposit, interest of business equity contribution, etc. This group consists of wealthy households and they own a lot of money and business capital so the fact that they have many opportunities to earn high income is completely reasonable. Income from agricultural activities of quintile 5 only takes a small proportion of the income structure. In 2002, this rate is 10.9% of total income and 12% in 2008.

Meanwhile, the biggest source of quintile 1 income (the poorest households) is from agricultural activities, accounts for about more than 50% of households' total income. Specifically, agricultural activities of quintile 1 was 52.4% of households' total income and tends to decrease with the rate of 49.3% in 2004; 47.3% in 2006 and 48.4% in 2008. Quintile 1 income from agricultural activities has a reducing trend, along with this, this group's income from salaries has had the tendency of rising through each year (increasing from 19.2% in 2002 to 23.8% in 2008), proving that there exists the shift of profession from agricultural activities to profession with income from salaries: the number of workers and employees of quintile 1 has been going up.

Agricultural activities of quintile 1 occupies a high proportion because often quintile 1 are people living in rural areas with a little capital, without high education level, etc. so they mainly do farming. Production depends much on conditions of nature and weather. These people have very few chances to have extra jobs to make income sources for households. It is not a surprise when income of quintile 1 from industry, construction, trade and services is very low. It is only equal to 1/3 of quintile 5's income from these sources.

## **Conclusion**

Through the analysis of income and the structure of Vietnamese households' income over the past years, we can see that households' income has had a rising and stable tendency, this demonstrates that households' living standard has been improved. Nevertheless, there still exists a quite big difference in the income of rural and urban households, as well as between the richest and poorest household groups. The Southeast is the region with households' highest income, whereas the Northeast has the lowest income of households.

As for the structure of income source, the biggest source is from salaries, the next is from agricultural activities. Meanwhile, the source from construction and forestry is lowest. There is a certain difference in the structure of income source of rural and urban households. Rural households get the biggest source of income from agricultural activities (50%), the next is the source from salaries. On the contrary, income source from salaries is the main income of urban households. Income from

agricultural activities only takes a small proportion in the structure of urban households' income.

Quintile 5 (the richest group) has the biggest income source from salaries and others while the poorest group (quintile 1) has the main income source from agricultural activities.

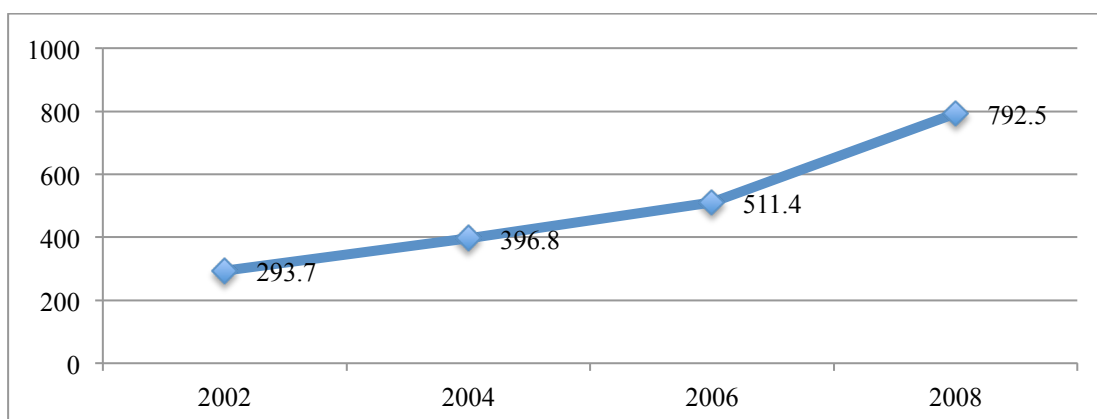
### **3.3. Household expenditures**

In our daily life, we need certain expenses to ensure the survival and development of ourselves. These expenses can consist of daily food buying, medicine or education, etc., as well as direct investment into production to create income sources for individuals and families, other expenses on creating and maintaining social relationships as expenses on special ceremonies like weddings or funerals, etc. In addition, there are expenses on buying houses, equipment and household facilities. Thus, how is the reality of Vietnamese households' expenses at current time? We are going to investigate and analyze the three following basic issues: the rate of expenses in Vietnamese households, the structure of households' expenses and the role of men and women in managing and determining kinds of expenses in Vietnamese households currently.

#### ***3.3.1. The expense rate of Vietnamese households currently***

According to the survey results of households' living standard through the years from 2002 to 2008, it is nationally estimated at current prices that in 2008 the average monthly expenses per head was 792.5 thousand dong, increasing up to 55% compared with 2006, rising by 27.5% yearly, higher than other previous years (17.6% in the period of 2002 - 2004, 14.4% during 2004 - 2006). During the period 2004 - 2006, the expenses rate of Vietnamese households had a little reduce in comparison with the previous period because in this period, we were affected by worldwide economic recession.

**Fig. 3.4. Monthly total consumption expenditures per capita (2002 - 2008)  
(1000 dong)**



*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

In 2008, average monthly expenses per capita in rural area was 619.5 thousands dong, increasing by 54.2% compared to 2006; increasing by 97.1% compared to 2004 and 266.9% to 2002. Also in 2008, the expenses rate of average monthly expenses per capita in urban areas reached 1,245.3 thousand dong, increasing by 53.9% compared with 2006. This is the highest increase during this period in urban areas (from 2002 - 2004, the growth rate was 31.1% and 24.5% during 2004 - 2006).

The average expenses rate in 2008 in urban areas was 2.01 times higher than in rural areas and it has had a slight tendency of closing the gap (while the rate from 2.14 in 2002, and 2.07 in 2004, it was only 2.02 in 2008).

**Table 3.3. Monthly total consumption expenditures per capita by urban - rural regions (2002 - 2008) (Unit: 1000 VND)**

		2002	2004	2006	2008
Rural - Urban	Urban	497.5	652.0	811.8	1,245.3
	Rural	232.1	314.3	401.7	619.5
8 regions	Red River Delta	300.2	417.7	531.8	813.9
	Northeast	240.8	324.9	414.6	630.8
	Northwest	192.4	250.8	324.7	496.8
	North Central	210.2	275.7	350.0	560.2
	South Central Coast	267.0	366.4	453.3	706.5
	Central Highlands	216.3	321.3	431.0	670.9
	Southeast	482.1	624.4	818.1	1,292.6
	Mekong River Delta	284.8	376.1	485.5	709.3

*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

If considered in terms of geographic regions, in all expense areas, average monthly expenses per head in 2008 relatively increased compared with 2006. The North Central had the highest increase rate (1.6 times), and the Mekong River Delta had the slowest growth rate (1.46 times)

There is a huge difference in daily expenses in the nation's regions. The highest expenses rate was in the Southeast in 2008, at 1292.6 thousand dong. This is considered the rich region in Vietnam with many industrial zones and is a metropolitan area of many big cities like Ho Chi Minh city, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, Ba Ria - Vung Tau. Therefore, the demand of expenses is very big. The lowest expenses rate in 2008 was in the Northwest area, at 469.8 thousands dong. The Northwest has a limitation in households' expenses due to difficult economic and social conditions, and under developed economy in accordance with the general development of the nation. Moreover, households in this area do not have high demands of shopping because households' production partly meets most daily demands. Thus, that the average expenses of these households are low is reasonable.

If the 2008 expenses rate of households in the Southeast - the region with the highest rate of expenses is compared with that of households in the Northwest - the region with the lowest rate of expense, it can be seen that the gap is 2.6 times.

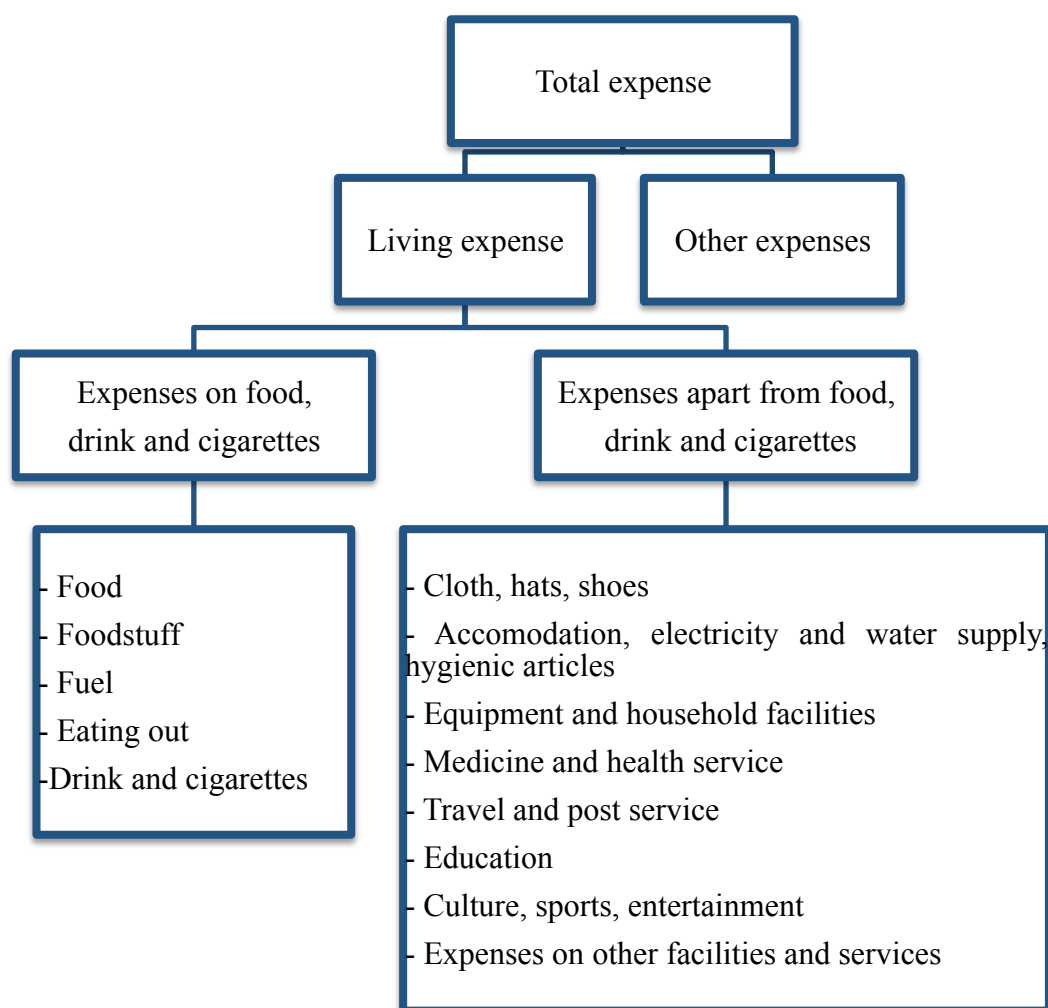
The difference in expenses rate can be recognized in households mastered by women or men. Specifically, average monthly expenses per head of households mastered by women are higher than that of households mastered by men. Living expenses in households mastered by women in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008 was 343.4, 432.3, 545.1 and 875.1 thousand dong, respectively compared to that of households mastered by men at 250.0, 339.9, 436.3, 656.9 thousand dong. This can be attributed to the fact that women care more about looking after and nutrition of family members or personal expenses of women are lower so they spend more on family's expenses.

**In conclusion**, average expenses of Vietnamese households have significantly improved in recent years. Average monthly expenses of households headed by women are higher than that of households headed by men. The average expenses gap between urban and rural areas has decreased slightly but remained large difference in spending.

### ***3.3.2. The structure of Vietnamese households expenditures***

According to the definition of GSO in 2008, the structure of Vietnamese households' expenses is generalized in the following diagram.

**Diagram 3.1. The structure of household expenditures**



The expense structure is one of important indicators for the real living standard of families (Van, 2004). The comparison of expense structure from 2002 to 2008 shows a positive change in people's living standard (table 3.4).

**Table 3.4. Share of total consumption expenditures by consumption expenditure items and rural - urban areas (2002 - 2008) (in:%)**

	Total expense	Categories			
		Living Expense	Subcategories		Other expenses
			Expenses on food, drink and cigarettes	Expenses apart from food, drink and cigarettes	
Nationwide					
2002	100.0	91.6	51.9	39.7	8.4
2004	100.0	90.6	48.5	42.1	9.4
2006	100.0	90.0	47.5	42.5	10.0
2008	100.0	88.9	47.1	41.8	11.1
Urban					
2002	100.0	92.6	47.8	44.9	7.4
2004	100.0	91.3	44.6	46.7	8.7
2006	100.0	91.0	43.9	47.1	9.1
2008	100.0	89.5	43.5	46.1	10.5
Rural					
2002	100.0	91.0	54.6	36.4	9.0
2004	100.0	90.2	51.1	39.1	9.8
2006	100.0	89.3	50.2	39.2	10.7
2008	100.0	87.6	49.9	38.6	11.5

*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

Nationally, the biggest expense of all households is living expenses with the rate of 91.6% in 2002 tending to decrease in the following years to 91.6% in 2004, 90% in 2006 and 88.9% in 2008. This proves that the living standard has been improved more and more because the households do not have to spend too many expenses on daily life but on other purposes in order to lead a satisfying live.

The rate of living expenses in urban areas was always higher than rural areas from 2002 to 2008 (see table 3.4). The main reason is perhaps due to the fact that the demands of urban households are bigger and more various than those of rural households. In addition, the prices in urban areas are always higher than in rural areas. This makes urban households have to spend more on living expenses than rural households. The rate of expenses spent on food, drink, and cigarettes of urban households is much lower than rural households (in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, urban



households spent 47.8%, 44.6%, 43.9%, 43.5 % of total living expense whereas these rates in rural households were 54.6%, 51.1%, 50.2%, 49.9%). On the contrary, the rate of expenses on other purposes apart from food, drink, cigarettes of urban households is higher than rural households (in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 these rates in urban areas were 44.9%, 46.7%, 47.1%, 46.1% whereas these rates were 36.4%, 39.1%, 39.2%, 38.6% in rural areas). The rate of expenses on food, drink, cigarettes of urban and rural households as above shows that rural households are still poor and their production mainly satisfies their demands at least on food and drink. Meanwhile, urban households have better lives so they spend more on other purposes.

The inequality of quintile 5 (the richest) and quintile 1 (the poorest) in monthly per capita average living expenses is clearly shown. The living expenses of the richest group are 4.2 times higher than that of the poorest group (this rate in 2006, 2004 and 2002 was 4.5 times). In comparison with 2006, the living expense of the poorest group increased by 63.1% (higher than the increasing rate of 30.1% from 2002 - 2004 and 26.3% from 2004 - 2006); this rate of the richest group increases 51.7% (from 2002 - 2004, the rate was 30.4%, 2004 - 2006, it was 28.3%).

We are going to analyze the expenses of households to recognize the changes in the structures of expenses and find out the difference in the structures of expenses between rural and urban households; between the richest and poorest group in Vietnam in current situation as well.

#### *Expenses on food, drink, cigarettes*

It can be said that depending on certain situations and the demands of each person, each family, people have different expenses on food, drink, cigarettes. The expenses on food, drink, cigarettes in family consist of the following: food, foodstuff, fuel, eating out, drink and cigarettes (see the diagram 3.1).

Rural households spend more on food and foodstuff than urban households, especially expenses on food (table 3.5). The main food Vietnamese people use is rice. 28% of expense budget on food and foodstuff of rural households was spent on rice, whereas this rate was only 14.8% to urban households (in 2008). This can be

explained as follow: rural households are often larger so their demands are bigger. Moreover, they do not have many chances to eat out like urban households so the expenses on such food as rice is much higher than that of urban households. It can be seen that the living standard of rural households has not been improved much, thus they have to spend their expenses on meeting the daily demands of their own.

**Table 3.5. Share of living expenses according to urban and rural areas  
(2002 - 2008) (in:%)**

	Urban areas				Rural areas			
	2002	2004	2006	2008	2002	2004	2006	2008
Food	16.1	14.9	14.4	16.5	31.6	28.9	27.2	29.1
Foodstuff	51.5	51.9	54.4	52.7	49.5	50.9	52.0	50.9
Fuel	4.5	4.7	5.3	5.3	5.7	5.5	5.9	5.6
Eating out	20.5	22.6	19.5	19.9	8.0	9.5	9.4	9.4
Drinks and cigarettes	7.4	5.9	6.4	5.6	5.2	5.2	5.5	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source: Calculation based on the results of 2008 Household Living Standard Survey*

The expenses on fuel in rural areas is also higher than that of urban areas, the main reason is that the infrastructure system especially electricity system is often overloaded so rural people have to buy petroleum to light up when electric power breaks down. This happens more regularly in summer<sup>138</sup> - the season of the highest consumption of electricity of Vietnamese people.

The expenses on eating out in urban areas were double that of rural households from 2002 to 2008 (for instance, in 2008, this distance is 2.11 times). Clearly, the life of urban people is better and a convenient system of restaurants helps them to easily access to this service. That is the reason why the expenses on eating out in urban areas are higher than in rural areas. However, in rural areas the expenses on eating out are also likely to rise (from 8% in 2002 to 9.5% in 2004 and 2006, 9.4% in 2008), showing that the life of rural households has been partly improved so that they have a better financial condition for eating out.

<sup>138</sup> Summer often begins from June to September. The weather is very hot; the average temperature is about 32 to 37 Celsius degree.

For the expenses on drink and cigarettes, there is only a slight difference between rural and urban households. Urban households spend a bit more on drinks and cigarettes than rural households.

**Table 3.6. The structure of living expenses according to income quintile and kinds of expenses (2002 - 2008) (in:%)**

	Income quintile				
	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
Food					
2002	43.6	36.2	30.9	24.2	15.1
2004	40.4	33.2	27.4	21.8	13.7
2006	38.6	31.0	25.2	19.3	13.6
2008	39.6	31.8	27.7	21.8	15.3
Foodstuff					
2002	42.5	47.9	50.3	52.2	52.3
2004	44.7	49.6	51.7	53.0	52.9
2006	46.3	51.4	52.9	53.9	55.2
2008	46.2	50.0	51.6	52.6	53.5
Fuel					
2002	7.1	5.9	5.3	5.1	4.4
2004	6.8	5.7	5.3	5.1	4.7
2006	6.9	5.8	5.4	5.7	5.0
2008	6.1	5.6	5.5	5.7	5.0
Eating out					
2002	2.6	5.3	8.4	12.9	20.3
2004	3.9	7.1	10.6	14.8	22.1
2006	3.8	6.9	11.2	15.2	19.2
2008	4.3	8.2	10.4	14.5	20.1
Drink and cigarettes					
2002	4.1	4.7	5.1	5.6	7.9
2004	4.2	4.4	5.0	5.3	6.6
2006	4.4	4.9	5.3	5.9	7.0
2008	3.8	4.4	4.8	5.4	6.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source: Calculation based on the results of 2008 Household Living Standard Survey*

The poorest group (quintile 1) spends most of their expenses on food (39.6% of the expenses in 2008) and this expense tends to decrease depending on the better

financial condition of households, whereas quintile 5 (the richest) the expenses on food is only 15.3% (in 2008). Obviously, the demand for food of the richest group is not high because they have a better life so they spend much money on other purposes as buying good food, eating out, etc.

The biggest difference in expenses on food, drink, cigarettes of households at different levels of living standard is that, the richest group spends much more on eating out than the poorest group; however, that distance tends to be narrowed (this difference rate was 7.8 times in 2002, 5.7 times in 2004 and 4.7 times in 2008). It is clear that the bad financial condition of the poorest group makes them unable to eat out.

If it is only considered about the poorest group, the expenses on food has a tendency of gradually decreasing, and the expenses on foodstuff is increasing, and the expenses on eating out is going up as well. This helps us to assert that the living standard of the poorest has been partly improved.

Of all the expenses on food, drink, cigarettes, the expense on fuel is the most stable to all the groups though the years (from 2002 to 2008).

#### *Other expenses apart from food, drink, cigarettes*

Expenses apart from food, drink, cigarettes consists of: group 1) cloth, hats, shoes; group 2) accommodation, electricity and water supply, hygienic articles; group 3) equipment and household facilities; group 4) medicine and health service, group 5) travel and post service; group 6) education; group 7) culture, sports, entertainment; and group 8) expenses on other facilities and services.

Among the above expenses, Vietnamese families spend most on travel and post office, then equipment and household facilities, education; and least on culture, sports and entertainment. In reality, the living standard of Vietnamese people is not very high so the fact that demands and financial condition for expenses on culture, sports and entertainment activities is not much is easy to be explained. There is almost no big difference of these expenses between geographic areas.

The great difference of the above expenses is clearly shown in households of different income levels. In details, the richest group (quintile 5) spends more on culture, sports and entertainment. The richest group spent 21 times as high as the poorest group in 2002, 24 times in 2004, 14.5 times in 2006, 16 times in 2008. The next big difference in expenses of the richest and poorest groups is on travel and post service. Obviously with the higher living standard, the richest group (quintile 5) has more various and diversified demands for enjoying culture, entertainment and sports activities. Besides, the demand for travel and information exchange of this group is relatively big so the expenses on these purposes are no doubt more than the poorest group (quintile 1).

One thing that should be noted is that in the expenses on education, almost no difference between groups at different living standards is found. The reason may be due to Vietnamese people are possessed of traditional fondness for learning so however rich or poor, all families want to invest into their children's education. Furthermore, in people's awareness as well as the Vietnamese Communist Party and Vietnamese government, investing into education means investing for the development. Hence, in spite of richness or poverty, households pay much attention to investing into their children's study. This leads to the unremarkable difference between the rich group and the poor group in expenses on education.

### ***3.3.3. Roles of women and men in managing and determining expenses in Vietnamese families at current time***

As analyzed in chapter 2, the position and roles of Vietnamese women have been changed remarkably in the process of economic and social development of the nation in the direction of industrialization and modernization. They have actively taken part in economic, social, educational, politic activities, etc. That change is outside the range of family. Inside their home, how has the role of women changed? Perhaps there are many means to recognize that change. Nevertheless, due to the limit of the subject, we focus on analyzing the role of women in determining expenses in family.

Most of all, it can be asserted that from traditional to modern life, regardless of the North or the South, most of Vietnamese women are the ones who manage the fund of their households, it means that they are in charge of "*family's fund keeping*" (Hue,

2007; Minh, 2009). In other words, the management of finance in family is considered the responsibility of women “the role of fund keeping of women has still been the same since the old times”, “no men manage family’s fund” (Chi, 1989; Huou, 1991). Results of sociology survey indicate that in three areas: urban, lowland and highland and mountain, the rate of women managing family’s fund is remarkably higher than that of men (66.2% compared to 5.3%; 68.5% to 3.7%; 9.6% to 10.3%) (Van, 2004). According to a result of another study, in Ho Chi Minh city, wives manage family’s fund in 63.3% of households, this rate of men is only 9.7% (Hoa, 1998). For many husbands, their wives are thought to be a safe keeper of money. If wives keep money, it will be lost less and they spend more for family than husbands do.

Therefore, it can be concluded that almost all Vietnamese women are keepers of family’s fund. Do they have the right to decide expenses of their family?

In a family, there are a variety of expenses; normally women decide expense on daily-meals. This is common in both urban and rural areas (84.3% of urban women decide expense on daily meals and this rate of rural women is 85.6%). Mostly, husbands of both rural and urban families do not have the right of determining or do not care about this expense, especially in rural areas; there is no husband who decides daily expenses in his family. With other necessary expenses such as education, disease treatment for children and other members of family, women also have more rights to decide. However, the sharing of responsibility in order to gain the agreement of both wives and husbands in deciding expenses is common in both urban and rural families.

If the position of urban women and that of rural women in deciding family’s expenses is compared, we can realize that the rate of urban women making decisions themselves is higher than that of rural women possibly due to higher levels of social awareness and profession (see table 3.7).

**Table 3.7. Who is the person deciding the following duties? (in:%)**

	Urban areas			Rural areas		
	Wife	Husband	Both	Wife	Husband	Both
Expense on daily meals	84.3	0.5	11.6	85.6	--	14.5
Expense on disease treatment	57.9	4.5	40.4	31.4	0.3	67.9
Expense on children's education	45.9	2.0	49.5	25.4	1.7	68.2
Buying expensive things	12.6	12.6	73.7	2.3	9.1	88.3

*Source: Huy, V.T. (1998). Transformation in structure of family and roles of women. [Quoted in Van, L.N. (2004). The situation and the problems posed for the Vietnamese families today, pp. 53]*

The above data show the more progressive and equal transformation in the role of making decisions of wives and husbands in most of family's expenses. In fact, the rate of families in which husbands decide expenses is not remarkable in both rural and urban areas. Moreover, the high rate of families in which both wives and husbands decide not only demonstrates that women have had a remarkable progress on the way to sex equality but also asserts that the democratic relationship has been forming in Vietnamese families.

In buying expensive things, it can be realized that the rate of both wives and husbands discussing on this expense is the highest in both rural and urban areas (these rates are 88.3% and 73.7% respectively), the next highest rate of who makes decisions is husbands; the lowest rate is wives. This is most clearly shown in rural areas.

It can be concluded that with daily expenses, women have the highest right of deciding, most men do not take part in this duty. With other expenses like children's education and disease treatment, men play higher role in deciding. This is common in all the households in spite of rural or urban families. Nevertheless, in buying expensive things, the rate of both wives and husbands discussing on making decisions ranks highest. Meanwhile, this rate of only women deciding this expense is not high, especially in rural areas.

Results of some studies show that the role of husbands in poor families is much higher than in rich ones. The rate of both husbands and wives in poor families making decisions is lower than in rich families (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; GSO; UNICEF; Institute for Family and Gender studies, 2008:22). In addition, the right of decision making of wives or husbands in buying expensive things rises when their financial contribution increases (Hue, 2007). About age, husbands at young age (under 30) and old age (above 60) have higher right of buying expensive things than husbands at other ages. Meanwhile, the right of decision making of wives rises according to their aging but the level of increase is not remarkable. The sex gap in decision making between husbands and wives is shown clearly in illiterate families (Hue, 2007). If regarding the influence of minority factor, the studies indicate that there is almost no difference between men and women in decision-making on family expenses (Van, Khieu, Binh, 2002; Hue, 2007; Lan & Thao, 2006).

#### **3.4. Is the husband - breadwinner and wife - caretaker a popular model in Vietnam?**

According to Hareven when industrialization took place, the roles of husbands and wives became gradually segregated; a clear division of labor replaced the old economic partnership, with the husband now responsible for economic support and the wife's efforts directed toward homemaking and childrearing (Hareven, 1986: 47). Is it true in Vietnam? We will examine in this part. To do it, firstly I will introduce his point of view about changing family functions and values under industrialization; secondly I will analyze the case of Vietnamese families.

##### *Changing family functions and values*

By comparing families in preindustrial society and industrial one, Hareven affirmed that industrialization did effect major changes in family functions:

“Under the impact of industrialization, many of these functions were transferred to agencies and institutions outside the family. The work place was separated from the home, and functions of social welfare were transferred from the family to asylums and reformatories” (Hareven, 1986: 45).



In preindustrial society, most of work took place in the household (Thi, 2004). However, there was clear separation between family life and work life in industrial society. It involved a more rigorous segregation in the tasks and the work responsibilities of family members. The new ideology of domesticity that developed in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century relegated women to the home and glorified their domestic role<sup>139</sup> (Hareven, 1986:47). The glorification of motherhood as a full-time career served both to enshrine the family as a domestic retreat from the world of work and to make families child-centered. The gradual separation of the home from the work place that had started with industrialization reached its peak in the designation of the home as a therapeutic refuge from the outside world. As custodians of this retreat, women were expected to have attributes distinctly different from those of the working wife who had been an economic partner in the family. Tenderness, gentleness, affection, sweetness, and a comforting demeanor were all considered ideal characteristics for the domestic wife. Sentiment<sup>140</sup> began to replace instrumental relationship (Hareven, 1986:47). Men left the home to work and were responsible for economic support in families. Time invested in fatherhood occurred primarily during leisure hours. Thus, the separation of husbands from wives and parents from children for major parts of the day came about.

Although the process of industrialization offered women opportunities for independent work<sup>141</sup> outside their homes, but a lot of women did not assume gainful employment, because ideological barriers placed women's domestic and work roles in conflict (Kenniston & Kenniston, 1964; Smuts, 1959; Sweet, 1973; Tilly & Scott, 1978) and women continued to function as an integral part of the productive and reproductive work to restore the labor-power of family member, to effort of the family unit, even when they worked in factories (Hareven, 1986: 46). Working women were bound by family obligations and contributed most of their earnings to their parents - a woman's work was considered part of family's work, not an independent career. Even during periods of large-scale industrial development,

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<sup>139</sup> On the cult of domesticity, see Jeffrey, 1972; Sennett, 1971; Welter, 1966; Young & Wilmott, 1973.

<sup>140</sup> On family sentiment, see Aries, 1962, 1981.

<sup>141</sup> Expanded industrial and commercial facilities made easily accessible by new transportation systems, provided increased employment opportunities for women.

families continued to function as collective economic units, in which the husbands, wives and children were all responsible for the well-being of the family unit.

### *Discussion and analyze the case of Vietnam*

Through the analysis of document sources (Anh & Hung, 2000; Hung & Loc, 2000; Thinh, 2008; Huy, 1996) and through research in Vietnam's different areas at current times, it is realized that the above family model: the husband-breadwinner and the wife-caretaker has not been popular and suitable with the industrialization and modernization in Vietnam. First, the market economy along with the industrialization in Vietnam in recent years have drawn women out of housework to participate into social production forces due to rising demands of production or of family's living expenses and for equality between men and women in all fields. In other words, the activity range of women is not only limited in their families but also outside in the society. Many women have gained high positions<sup>142</sup> in the society. Of special importance is that women have actively taken part in economic activities to making income for themselves and their families. Due to their independent finance, modern women are less dependent on men.

Although women are participating in many economic activities outside their family, they still have to be responsible for most of the housework. This causes considerable inequality between men and women. In the content of this part, the above issues will be clarified.

### *Women's participation into family's finance*

Women play a particularly important role in family life, they are not only the one who completes all the housework but also play their part in contributing to their family's finance. In traditional as well as in industrial societies decades ago, income sources of families were mainly earned by men (Thi, 1996; Khieu, 2003; Van, 2004). At that time, men used to go far away to earn to support their family and women stayed at home doing housework, having babies and taking care of children and the old, the ill. Nowadays, working assignment has changed a lot and although the role

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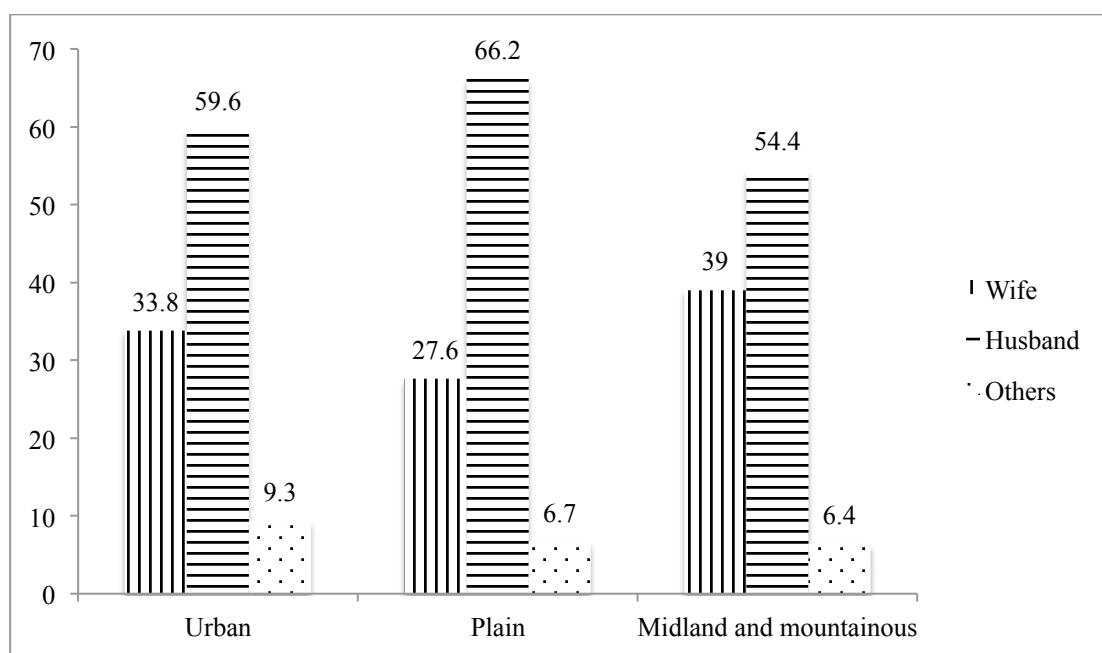
<sup>142</sup> For example: one current vice president of the nation is a woman, the minister of the ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social affairs is also a woman. Many women are directors or headmistresses of schools, etc.

of men is still very important in earning income for families, women with their new role and position, is also one of two main “*characters*” who make income for their families (Thinh, 2008; Anh, 1993).

In modern Vietnamese families, due to undeveloped production level, the purpose of production mainly satisfies the most necessary demands of family members. The income sources of families are products made by themselves, which are not exchanged in the market. It can be said that finance of most families is still self-supported in order to ensure enough food and foodstuff for everybody. In this situation, cash factor is especially important, it will contribute to push the investment in production development or in buying facilities for family’s life; besides, cash factor shows us the transformation of working assignment and the structure of income sources in families. In addition, money factor appears in the structure of income source of family demonstrates the integration of household finance into the market mechanism and production. In family, how is the role of women in cash contribution shown?

In this role, men in both urban and rural areas contribute more than women. Because men often have positions, which can bring higher income such as leaders, managers, engineers, high-skilled workers. Results of basic research about Vietnamese families in 2002 shows that the rate of men who most contribute to family’s finance in urban, plain, midland and mountainous areas are respectively 56.9%, 66.2%, 54.4%. Meanwhile, the financial contribution of women to their family is lower than that of men. The rate of women contributing to family’s finance is 33.8% in urban area, 27.6% in plain and midland, 39% in mountainous areas. Other members also play a certain part in family’s finance, for example children or grandparents.

**Fig. 3.5. The person who contributes most to family's finance (2004) (in:%)**



*Source: Van, L.N. (2004). The situation and the problems posed for the Vietnamese families today, pp. 41.*

In rural areas, men contribute cash to family's finance more than women. The reason is that beside sharing hard work of production with their wives and children, men are not busy looking after children, the old or doing housework, which are traditionally assigned to women (details will be analyzed in the next part). Hence, during months free from farm work, men can go to cities or other places to have extra jobs to earn money, they do whatever work they know such as carpenters, brick layers. Who does not have any skills can do any work as long as they can earn money. These activities can always yield money. Thus, men often have more cash contribution to family's fund than women. Rural women often do farm work such as rice planting, vegetables planting, gardening or livestock raising. Besides, they can do extra work to earn more income for their families. Men often take over some harder work like soil tilling, pesticide spraying, transporting, carpentry, brick layering, etc.

In urban areas, women can have different jobs as men; it means that they work in factories, offices or public service agencies. According to the law, women are equal to men in profession<sup>143</sup>. Also, women and men are equally paid when they are at the

<sup>143</sup> Article 54 and Article 63 of the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (1992) clearly states the principle of gender equality. See details in chapter 2.

same professional level and do the same work, regardless of gender. However, due to the features of working assignment by gender and because women have to be a housewife and mother, their working time is often longer and the working intensity of women is more stressful than that of men (Van, 2004). In urban areas, in official and non - official areas<sup>144</sup>, the rate of women with jobs is lower than that of men or women tend to have low - paid jobs. As a result, wives' ability of contribution to family's income is usually lower than husbands'. On average, women only have a salary equal to 78% of men's salary. In rural areas, there is a fact that the average payment of female laborers is lower than that of men (only equal to 73%) (Desai, 2000).

**In short**, of all the jobs, which can bring income to families in rural and urban areas, both women and men take over this responsibility. Women have been importantly contributing to building family finance basis, they have become the main laborer in many fields of production - business, especially in planting and raising - material production fields which produce sources of food, foodstuff directly bringing source of cash to families. From this fact, the economic position of women in families has been improved. Nevertheless, if compared to the financial contribution of men, that of women is still lower.

#### *The burden of housework on women*

The housework mentioned here are some duties, which help to nurturing and look after members of family; in other words, these are chores undertaken to reproduce the working ability of family. It consists of shopping, preparing meals, washing, cleaning, repairing clothing, looking after the orchard, taking care of and raising children: baby-sitting, bathing and feeding them, visiting relative's friends, attending community meetings, parents' meetings. These duties are often done in the scope of family and by people, who do not have an important role in financial contribution to family. It often belongs to women in families<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>144</sup> Official areas usually belong to state factor, whereas non-official areas usually belong to non-state factor.

<sup>145</sup> As Shelton & John (1996) point out in their extensive review of the sociological literature on the housework, one of the most notable characteristics of the division of household labor is that women do the majority of housework, regardless of whether they are employed or not. Although the majority

From ancient times until now, these duties are often named chores or housework. Although it is depreciated, through surveys of families' lives, it can be seen that housework plays a very important part and it is a big amount of work, it takes a lot of time and energy to finish. In contrast to traditional concepts about housework, the viewpoint of the sexual division of labor confirms the important part of this kind of work. They assert that this work is social labor and in work value, family labor has nearly the same social value as the total value of production - business of human society (Khieu, 2003). Hence, they ask the society to change the methods of assessing family labor and having appropriate payment for the ones who do this work.

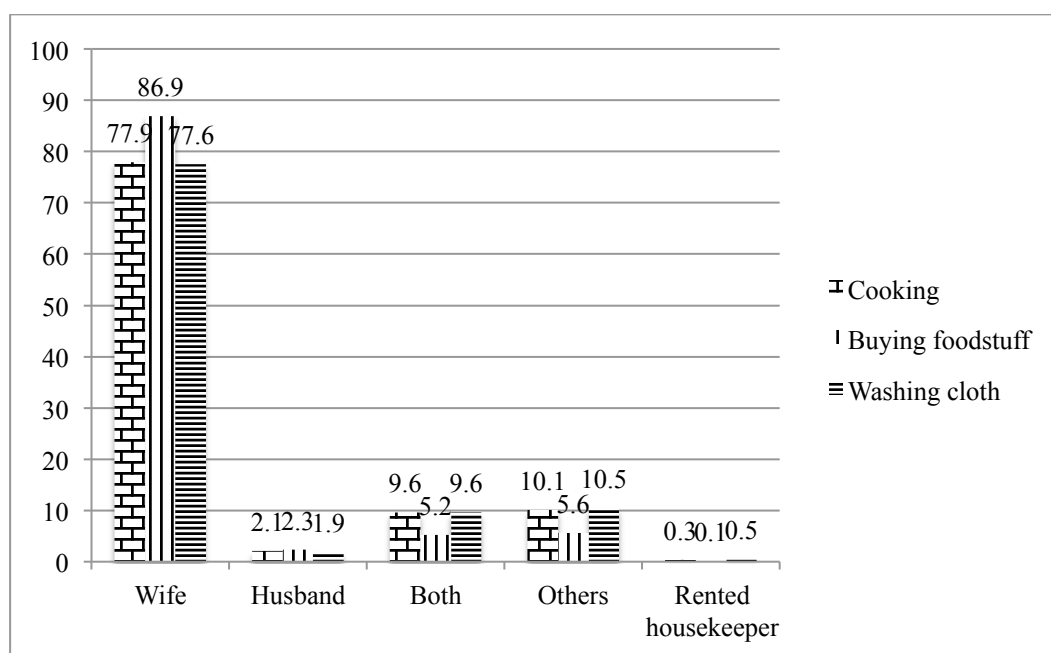
In gender relationship in Vietnam, perhaps due to the influence of the tradition of women respect or due to the existence of some features of matriarchy, the role and position of women is not generally discriminated and depreciated compared to those of men. However, like other societies in the world, working assignment by gender is always popular due to unknown reasons. Working assignment by gender causes the depreciation of women's role and position and this is one of basis causing the popular inequality between men and women and the history of human development.

According to results of sociology surveys in Vietnam for the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the period of industrialization - modernization, women have a very big importance in family life, especially in production in order to build a financial basis for families as well as in giving birth, nurturing children, looking after the old and children. Although with a great role as analyzed above, women are still the ones who take over most of housework.

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of studies examining the division of household work have focused on the US and other Western nations, it seems likely that this pattern is close to universal.

**Fig. 3.6. Who mainly takes over the following duties? (2004) (in:%)**



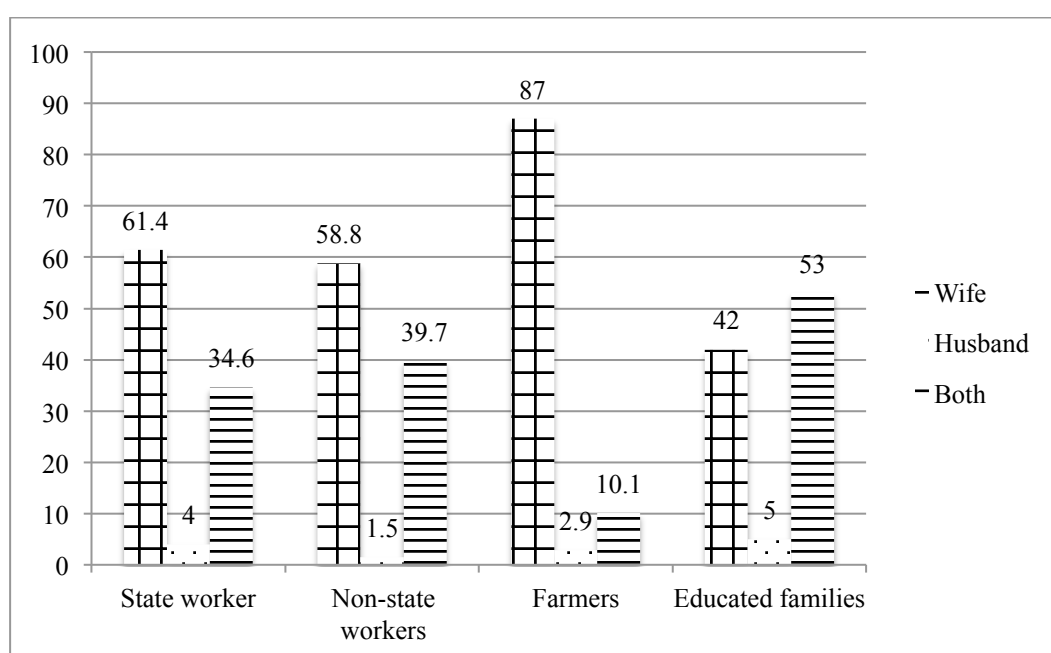
*Source: Van, L.N. (2004). The situation and the problems posed for the Vietnamese families today, pp. 43.*

From the above data result, it can be seen that women are in charge of most of the housework, in which there are duties with the especially high rates of women doing them: cooking (77.9%), buying foodstuff (86.9%), washing cloth (77.6%). This result is based on average opinion of two genders when answering. The rate of the above factors is distinctive between men and women’s opinion if viewpoint of each gender is taken into consideration. For instance, in cooking, 73.2 % of men and 82.1% of women confirm that the main cook is women; also, 83.6% of men buy foodstuff and women account for 89.6%; the rate of men washing cloth is 1.9% and 81.6% of women asserts that it is only women who do this chore. Thus, in such duties as cooking, buying foodstuff, washing clothes, there is the same assertion between men and women that it is women (wives) who ought to do these chores in family. Men (husbands) also give wives a hand but the rate of men doing these chores themselves is very low. For example, the rates of men who mainly do these duties are 2.1% (cooking), 2.3% (buying foodstuff), 1.9% (washing cloth).

The family division of labor between wife and husband depends on the type of job and occupation they and their family members are engaged in. Among different family groups, the group of educated and intellectual families where the wife mainly

does the housework makes up the smallest share, 42% compared to 87% in farming families (fig. 3.7). This can be interpreted as showing that, in highly educated families, there are more opportunities for the equal division of labor between husband and wife since these families of command high incomes to shift part of the housework to women who get paid for it such as: housekeepers, babysitters, maids, cleaners, etc. However, the traditional perception that housework is women's work is still deeply rooted in the mind of many families.

**Fig. 3.7. Wife and husband's participation in housework, in different family groups (2000) (in:%)**



Source: Anh, T.T.V & Hung, L.N. (2000). *Women and Doi Moi in Vietnam*, pp. 205.

If this correlation is considered by researched areas (plain - mountain, rural - urban) we can see that wives mainly do housework regardless of living areas. It can be recognized that in plain areas, women doing the housework account for the highest rates cooking (80.1%), buying foodstuff (89.3%), washing cloth (82.7%); the next highest rates belong to women in mountain and midland: cooking (76.1%), buying foodstuff (87.0%), washing cloth (82.8%), and the lowest rates are of women in urban families: cooking (74.3%), buying foodstuff (80.9%), and washing cloth (56.9%). The possible reasons why in urban families the rate of women mainly doing housework is decreased are as followed: First, some modern facilities as gas cookers, fridges, ovens, washing machines help to make these chores simpler and less hard, so



many people can do these. According to the results of a survey in 2009, the rates of households with modern facilities are: 99% of households have got televisions, 77.7% have radios, 66% have DVD players, 79% have fridges, 75.7% have telephones, 15% have air-conditioners, 81% have motorbikes and 38.7% have washing machines<sup>146</sup>. Secondly, a lot of husbands are initially aware of sharing housework with their wives. Thirdly, some families have hired housekeepers (the rate of urban families hiring others to cook is 1.3%, to wash cloth is 2.4%).

It can be realized that in spite of positive changes in urban families about husbands' housework sharing with wives, in general wives are still the ones who take over these duties.

In housework, the work group: looking after children, the old, the ill, teaching children are duties which the rate of wives doing is higher than that of husbands if compared, but these duties are not necessarily done only by wives. This is different from some Asian countries, for example in Korea, Japan, they consider the above duties are completely in the responsibility of wives (women) in family (Van, 2004).

**Table 3.8. Distribution of housework (2002) (in:%)**

	Areas	Looking after children	Looking after the old, the ill	Teaching children
Wife	Urban	31.3	21.2	14.7
	Rural	51.4	37.1	23.5
Husband	Urban	1.8	3.9	5.3
	Rural	2.7	2.6	8.5
Both	Urban	64.0	66.0	78.9
	Rural	43.4	56.4	66.2
Others	Urban	2.9	8.9	1.1
	Rural	2.5	3.9	1.8

*Source: Van, L.N. (2004). The situation and the problems posed for the Vietnamese families today, pp. 45.*

<sup>146</sup> Website: <http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/news/story.php?d=20020701005532> (accessed in 7.7.2011).

It can be seen that the popular relationship model in both urban and rural areas is that both husband and wife share housework (looking after children, the old and the ill, teaching children) depending each person's time allowance. This is a positive transformation in working assignment in family, or in other words, men or women are aware of the importance in teaching children, taking care of children, the old and consider it as the common responsibility that husband and wife have to take over together (see table 3.8). Here, the factor of educational degree and social awareness level is influencing this transformation.

**In conclusion**, the most striking feature of housework is that it does not directly produce goods and generate income, but produces material and moral values that are not only important and necessary for women but for the family members and society.

Although there is some positive transformation in family's work, basically it still conforms to a traditional model of working assignment. Women are the ones who play the most important part in housework. The rising rate of husbands - men taking part in caring about children, the old, the ill, teaching children does not mean that the role of women decreases in these duties, this only proves that in today transformation conditions, families realize these are important duties, especially teaching children.

### **Comment**

As analyzed above, women in today's families have had more financial contribution for their families. That contribution can be cash or sources of food, foodstuff directly feeding families. They gain income from farm production, raising, planting in rural areas, or from salaries or other business activities, services in urban areas. Despite becoming one of two main people (husband and wife) who create income supporting families, women still have the dominant role in taking over housework in families. Obviously, the role of women has become very important in doing the duties that nurture and reproduce the working ability of other members in family (Long, Hung, Truitt, Mai, Anh, 2000). This demonstrates that the family model: husbands - the earner for families, wives - the housewife is not very popular in Vietnam at current time. The problem, which needs to be solved, is that men should be more active in doing housework to share that burden of work with women (Anh & Hung, 2000). At the same time, it is necessary for the society to eliminate the concept that housework

attaches to “*natural role*” and instinct of women. Therefore, we can achieve gender equality in the condition of comprehensive integration of Vietnam into the world nowadays.

## Chapter 4: Reproductive function of Vietnamese families<sup>147</sup>

### 4.1. Introduction

Engels stated that: “According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life,...production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species” (translated and quoted from Van, 2004:127, my translation). Thus, the reproductive function of families plays an important role in human history.

Today, although the progress in science and technology has demonstrated the possibility of human cloning, natural reproduction in family is still dominant both biologically and socially. In different social systems, childbirth is always considered as the most basic and important role of family (Chuong, 2000; Van, 2004; Thi, 1996; Khanh & Quy, 2007; Bich, 2003). The practice of parturition always brings satisfaction to couples, meeting other family members and relatives’ demand of race maintenance and development, satisfying population reproduction need in both scale and quality (Malinowski, 1993). Along with the development of the society and human, the conception about the important role of reproductive function has been negligibly changed, mainly in standard of expected number of children, value of son or daughter (Minh & Anh, 2009). In some developed countries, although reproductive function is now not an obligation for some families<sup>148</sup> (having no need for childbirth or children adoption), no one can deny that family is where human reproduction takes place and it always reproduces generations of more and more

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<sup>147</sup> This chapter consists of seven papers published at International Journals and an International Conference: 1) Birth rate and the proportion of Vietnamese women having a third child in the period 1999 - 2009. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*. Vol.1, No. 4, pp. 256 - 261; 2) The trend of Vietnamese household size in recent years. 2011 International Conference on Humanities, Society and Culture. 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, pp. 47 - 52; 3) Abortion in present day Vietnam. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. Vol.2, No.1, January 2012, pp. 56 - 61; 4) Age at first marriage in recent years Vietnam. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol.3, No.1, January 2012, pp. 491 - 496; 5) The rate of women having a third child and preference of son in present day Vietnamese families. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol.3, No.1, January 2012, pp. 505 - 512; 6) Contraceptive use in Vietnamese families during the period 2002 - 2008. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Vol.2, No.1, January 2012, pp. 206 - 213; 7) The implementation of reproductive function of Vietnamese families at present time. *International Journal of Human resources studies*. Vol.2, No.2, May 2012, pp. 33 - 52.

<sup>148</sup> For example, in 1960s, more than 90% of married women at the age of 25 - 29 had at least one child, while in 1998, this number dropped to 70% (Khanh & Quy, 2007)

perfect physical features, intellect, mentality and also prepares conditions for individuals to integrate into the society.

In this chapter, we are going to analyze the implementation of reproductive function in Vietnamese families nowadays. Specifically, we are going to study about household size in order to identify the situation as well as its changes, to compare the differences in household size between rural and urban areas, also among different regions in the country. The causes for these changes and differences will be studied. Then, we are going to analyze Vietnamese people's age of marriage to find out the answer to the question about Vietnamese people's average age of marriage and the differences between men and women about this. In the next part of this chapter, we are going to investigate the average number of children in current Vietnamese families, as well as people's expected number of children. We will also clarify the reasons why most Vietnamese couples want to have at least one son. In the last part, we are going to figure out the rate of abortion among Vietnamese women, contraceptive methods and the proportion of couples using these methods.

#### **4.2. Vietnamese household size**

Household size indicates how big a family is - it is a unit of measurement used to show the number of members living in a family, consisting of parents, children and others (Van, 2004; GSO, 2001).

Household size depends on couples' birth rate and model of different generations living together in a family. Theoretically, an ordinary woman can give birth to 10 - 12 children (Van, 2004) and a family can have three or four generations living together, especially in traditional families. However in reality, birth rate and model of living together are determined by socio-economic and socio-psychological factors. For example, according to Freedman, three groups of factors affect birth rate: 1) directly affecting factors consisting of: acceptance of birth control, using of contraceptive methods, marriage or temporary infertility after giving birth, 2) neutral socio-psychological factors consisting of social standard of household size, expected number of children, other related social standards such as social opinion about marriage, other factors impacting the first factor group and 3) infrastructure factors composed of death rate and economic conditions (Cu, 1997).

In traditional agricultural society, a big number of offspring is symbol of a happy family. Having many children was widely viewed as happiness, a dream and a social value because the large family really met vital demands of one's life. The first value among three basic ones of the traditional society was to have many children (a popular saying that summed up the three values went: "*Phuc, Loc, Tho*". It meant to have many children, a great deal of gifts, benefits from gods, and longevity) (Bich, 1997). Having many children means lots of fortune (Thi, 2006; Khanh & Quy, 2007). On the lunar New Year, according to a prevailing custom, people wished one another, among other things, to have many children. People attending a wedding wished the newly-married couple to produce as many children as they could. As a result, in the early last century, when analyzing Vietnam's traditional society, Gourou wrote: "...it is certain that Vietnamese women give birth to as many children as they can. Getting married early, often before 20, they continuously give birth until menopause period" (Gourou, 2003:175). In this society, due to the lack of developed science and technology, a big amount of manual labor was needed. This led to a high birth rate and big household size. Also, many generations lived under the same roof. In other developed industrialized countries, the birth rate is low and grown up children do not live with their parents, so the household size is smaller<sup>149</sup>.

Besides birth rate and model of living together, household size is also influenced by other demographic factors such as children's death rate, marriage age and population's marriage rate, divorce and separation rate of couples, singleness and illegitimate childbirth.

Among three development stages of worldwide population, the first stage was characterized by a high birth rate as well as death rate, and small household size. In the second stage, the birth rate was still high but children's death rate relatively decreased and parents continued to live with grown up children, creating large families. In the third stage, the death rate kept dropping but the birth rate drastically declined; parents did not live with grown up children, reducing household size.

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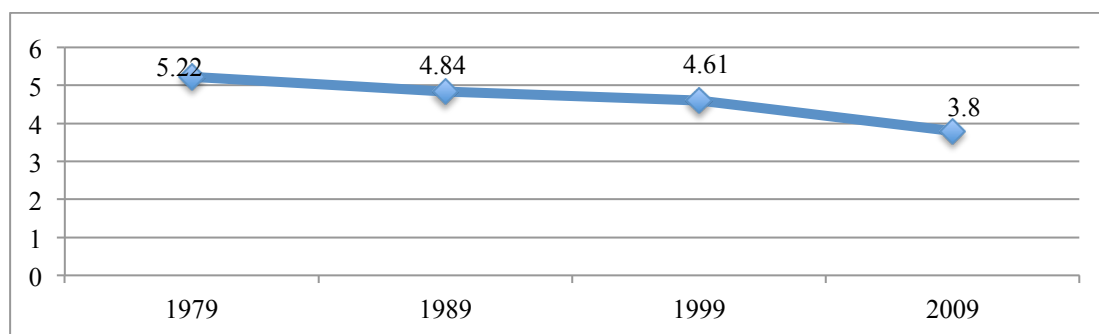
<sup>149</sup> American household size in 2000 was 2.59 people (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>), Australian household size in 2001 was 2.6 people (<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/D5181CC73561D701CA256F7200832FD9?opendocumet>), and English household size in 2001 was 2.36 people (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/commentaries/housing.asp>) (accessed in 11.11.2011).

Thus, in which stage is Vietnamese household size now? Which characteristics does it have?

#### **4.2.1. Vietnamese household size tends to shrink<sup>150</sup>**

According to the 2009 Vietnam population and housing census conducted on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009, Vietnam had 22,628 thousand households, increasing by 5,967 households compared with 1999, up 36%. During the period of 1999 - 2009, the annual average growth rate of household number was 3%. Nevertheless, when Vietnamese household size is taken into consideration, we could realize that household size of Vietnam decreased from 5.22 persons per household in 1979 to 4.84 persons per household in 1989, 4.61 persons per household in 1999 and this number was 3.8 in 2009, declining by 0.81 person compared with 1999 (see fig. 4.1).

**Fig. 4.1. Vietnamese household size (1979 - 2009) (Unit: Person)**



*Source: - National Committee for Population, Family, and Children (2002).*

*The material of population knowledge improvement. Vol. 2, pp. 11*

*- The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result, pp.32.*

The causes of the tendency of smaller household size are vast; some following can be mentioned.

The first is the success of birth control campaign in Vietnam. The birth control campaign in Vietnam in the 80s and 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was greatly successful with the target of increasing marriage age of couples, encouraging each couple to have from one to two children and birth space of five years. The average number of children that a woman at childbearing age had decreased, population growth rate

<sup>150</sup> In so far there is some evidence for the Goode thesis.

tended to drop gradually, and the rate of the third childbirth in families also had a declining tendency through the years<sup>151</sup>.

Secondly, people's demand about the number of children has changed; people tend to have fewer children but better nurturing and caring. It is this change that leads to the decline of household size in Vietnam in the current period.

The development of economy has positively affected the acceptance of small household size, because economic growth contributes to improving material and spiritual life, providing better education and raising awareness, generating the demand of less childbirth.

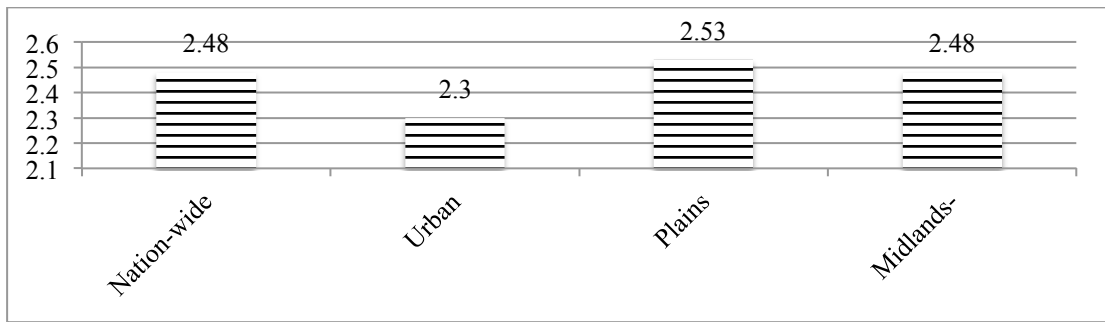
The results of midterm medical and demographic surveys show that the awareness and demand of women in rural areas of a small household is increasingly apparent. The rate of women aged 15 - 49 who want to have from one to two children gradually increased from 31% in 1988 to 49% in 1994 and 69% in 1997. Besides, the proportion of women who want to have four children or more has dropped rather drastically (Van, 2004). All these have reflected a remarkable change in Vietnamese women's opinion of having fewer children over the past years. The comprehensive survey conducted in 1998 - 2000 by the Center for studies of Family and Women on Vietnamese family and women's role in family during the period of industrialization, modernization showed that the average number of wanted children was higher than the current number in all the researched regions, at different ages and levels of education. This fact has reflected couples' awareness, behavior and obligation about the population target and policy as well as the popularity of small household size in Vietnam in the current period. In urban areas, generally couples do not want to have many children. In plains, midlands and mountains, the real birth rate is lower than the wished for number of children.

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<sup>151</sup> See details in part 4.4 of this chapter



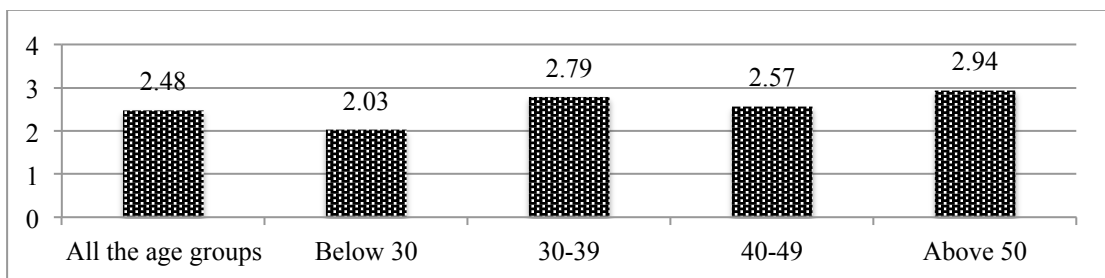
**Fig. 4.2. Couples' wished for number of children (2002) (Unit: Person)**



*Source: Van, L.N., Khieu, N.L., Binh, D.T. (2002). Basic data about Vietnamese families and women in families in the industrialization and modernization period, pp.143.*

There is a remarkable difference in the demand of childbirth among people of different age groups. The older the age is, the greater the demand of childbirth is (fig. 4.3). The number of children wanted by people above 50 is highest, at 2.94. This group of women belongs to older generations so they wish large number of children, which is different from younger women. Specifically, the younger women are, the fewer the wished for number of children is. The number of children wished for by couples below 30 is lowest (2.03 children). What needs to be considered is that the group of people above 50 has the highest demand of childbirth but the wished for number of children does not exceed three. This represents Vietnam's success in encouraging all the people to implement population and family planning policy.

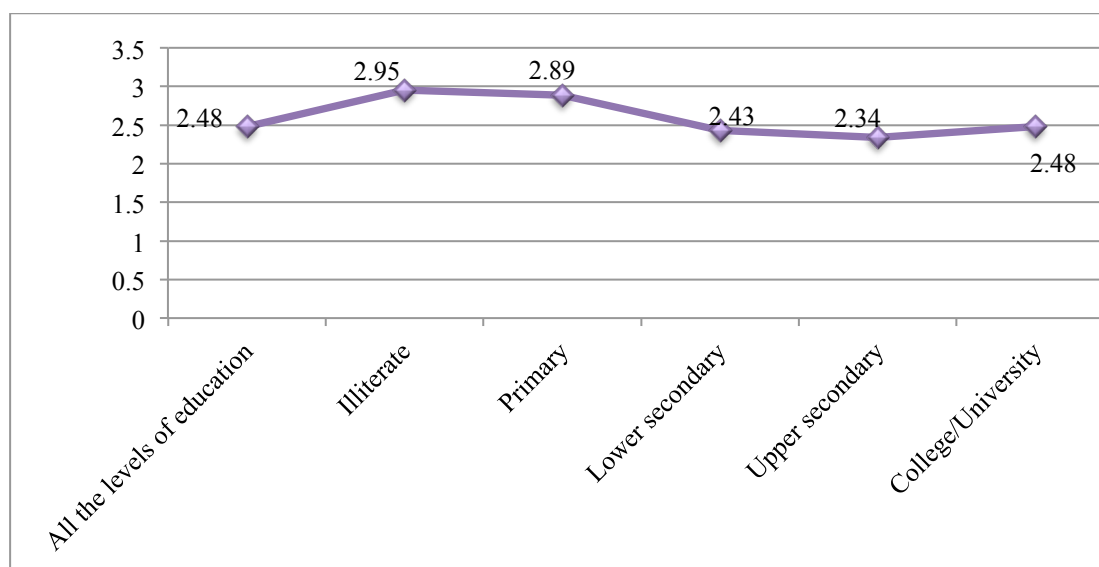
**Fig. 4.3. The wished for number of children by wives' age groups (2002) (Unit: Person)**



*Source: Van, L.N., Khieu, N.L., Binh, D.T. (2002). Basic data about Vietnamese families and women in families in the industrialization and modernization period, pp.143.*

Considering women's education level, generally the lower the education level is, the higher the wished for number of children is (except for those with college/university education wishing to have more children than people with the education level of upper secondary). Illiterate people have the highest demand of childbirth (2.95 children), and people with upper secondary education has the lowest demand of childbirth (2.34 children).

**Fig. 4.4. The wished for number of children by wives' education levels (2002)**  
(Unit: Person)



*Source: Van, L.N., Khieu, N.L., Binh, D.T. (2002). Basic data about Vietnamese families and women in families in the industrialization and modernization period, pp.143.*

Therefore, together with socio-economic development, the change in awareness arose from not only increasing education levels but also the influence of population and family planning programme with the target of small household size in order to have a happy, well-fed life; especially during the process of implementing Vietnamese population strategy in the period of 2001 - 2010 and carrying out the population ordinance with the objective of population and family planning policy that each family only has from one to two children, reproductive function of family has changed towards the trend of having fewer children, which is suitable with the right and responsibility of each couple in the process of building a well-fed, equal, progressive, happy and stable family. This has quite a big effect on increasingly smaller household size in recent years.

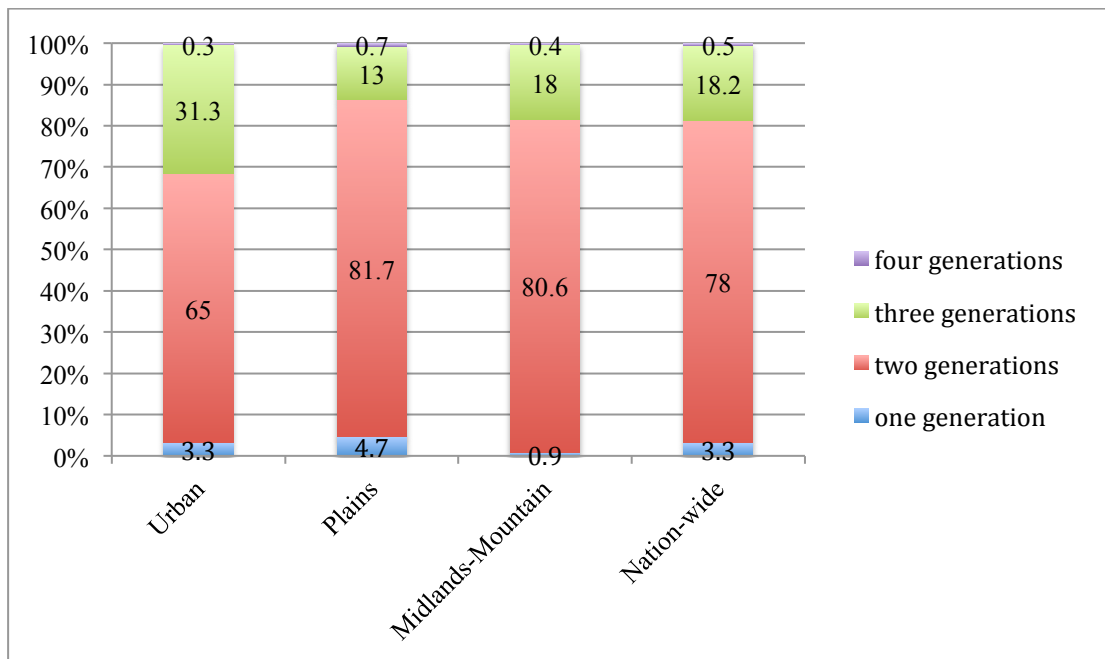
The third reason is the transformation in the model of generations living together. The change in households' average size is determined by not only the birth rate and death rate but also the process of household joining and separating. In Vietnam, this process takes place regularly. Normally, when getting married, a woman will separate from her parents and join in her husband's family. As a rule, household size in the whole society will not be changed because when husband's family has more members, wife's family has fewer. However, household size will be enlarged when a married woman begins to give birth. In fact, for the last decades, Vietnamese household size has not increased but decreased as most couples only live with parents-in-law for a short time, and then have a separate life. By Vietnamese tradition, husband's parents often live with one of their children (in the North, parents live with their oldest son whereas in the South, they live with their youngest son). Other children leave their family after marriage sooner or later, building new families.

Consequently, in Vietnam, nuclear family (a family with two generations: parents and an immature child) accounts for much higher proportion than family with three generations (consisting of grandparents, parents and grandchildren)<sup>152</sup>. The data of basic survey about Vietnamese family in 2002 showed that in the North, families with two generations account for 78%, families with three generations 18.2% and families with one generation 3.3 %.

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<sup>152</sup> See details in chapter 2

**Fig. 4.5. Percentage of generation number in families by researched regions (2002)**



*Source: Van, L.N., Khieu, N.L., Binh, D.T. (2002). Basic data about Vietnamese families and women in families in the industrialization and modernization period, pp.28.*

The results show that in the North, families with two generations account for 78%, families with three generations 18.2 %, families with four generations 0.5% and families with one generation 3.3%. The number of families with three generations in urban areas is higher than those in rural areas (31.3% and 13% respectively). This is explained that in recent years, in rural areas many newly-weds immediately ask for separation from their parents so that they can be allowed to have farmland and residential land in their commune (Thi, 2002). In urban areas, partly due to difficult accommodation condition, partly because young couples would like to receive help in caring and nurturing children so they keep living with parents after marriage (Van, Khieu, Binh, 2002). In addition, cities are very crowded so the desire to separate from parents is not easy to be accomplished (Khanh & Quy, 2007). Nevertheless, the tendency of nuclear family in some big cities has swiftly risen in recent years. The study of the Committee for Population, Family and Children, Hanoi in 2002 demonstrated that families with two generations in Hanoi accounted for 82.9% (inner city 84.3%, suburb 81.1%) while the rate of families with three generations and more declined by 17.1% (inner city 15.7%, suburb 18.9%). Thus, the trend of nuclear

family that has strongly developed in both rural and urban areas indicates that small household size has been increasingly preferred in Vietnam. This boosts equal, democratic relationship in families, freedom and private happiness satisfaction of couples and helps avoid conflict and disagreement in families with many generations.

The fourth reason is that apart from lower average rate of childbirth and the change in the model of different generations living together; the rise of divorce, celibacy, no demands of giving birth and illegitimate childbirth also contribute to smaller household size.

First of all, we are going to analyze the situation of divorce in Vietnam. According to the results of the 2009 Vietnam population and housing census, the rate of widowhood, divorce and separation of population at the age of 15 and older is 2.8% of men and 12.5% of women. The divorce rate of population at the age of 15 and older is 2.2% (men account for 30.4% and women 69.6%). Women's divorce rate is higher than men's, especially in urban areas possibly due to economic conditions, particularly because urban women are more independent than rural ones so they are easier to accept divorce. In general, the divorce rate in Vietnam is much lower than in other countries in the world<sup>153</sup>. Although the divorce rate in Vietnam is not high, the number of divorce has increased through the years. According to statistics of the People's Supreme Court, the number of couples who want to divorce rose from 51,361 in 2000 to 54,226 in 2001 and 56,478 in 2002; in the first eight months of 2003 there were 41,326 divorce cases all over the country.

Causes of divorce are vast and complicated. Based on the court's actual trials of divorce cases proceeded yearly, it can be seen that the common causes of divorce are: 1) family conflict, maltreatment, 2) adultery, 3) economic conflict, 4) husband or wife missing, 5) husband or wife living abroad or coming back from abroad, 6) husband or wife being administratively penalized or criminally prosecuted, 7) disease, no children, 8) others.

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<sup>153</sup> The divorce rate in Western countries is around 30%. Some 50% of American marriages end in divorce. In South Korea, according to the GSO, the annual report on population change shows that the number of marriages falls, the divorce rate increases sharply (Van, 2004).

Although celibacy is not common in our country, the rate of single households has been rising due to a lot of social impacts such as late marriage crusade, unmarried people being past their prime, widowhood, divorce, separation, etc. This leads to a significant decline in household size. According to the 2009 Vietnam population and housing census, the number of one-member households (single households) is 1,625,592, accounting for 7.24% (urban areas 8.29%, rural areas 6.78%). The rate of single households in 2009 went up by 3.02% compared with 1999 (4.22%).

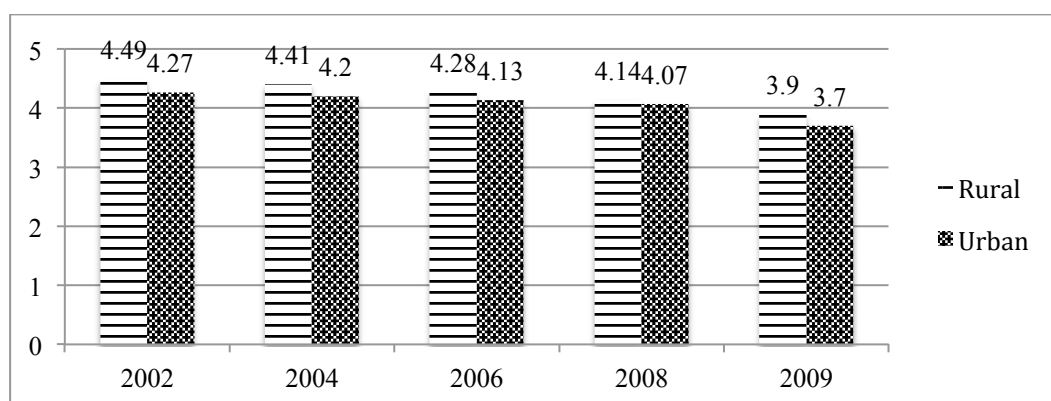
During the recent years, the appearance and rising of families without children have been one of the factors that decline average household size. For example, a study by the Committee of Population, Family and Children, Hanoi shows that, in the inner area of Hanoi there have been a small number of couples who do not want to have children (1.7%). For these couples, giving birth and having many children are not principal purposes of marriage. Success in career and personal satisfaction in life are the reasons why some people do not want to have children.

**In short**, one of the reasons why household size has declined is the appearance of non-traditional family models like single households, unmarried women having children, families without children.

***4.2.2. There are differences in household size between rural and urban households, among households in different geographic regions, among households with different incomes, and between male and female households headship***

The survey conducted by GSO over the last years shows that rural household size is always larger than urban one (fig. 4.6). However, that difference is not much. The result of the 2009 Vietnam population and housing census indicated that rural household size was 3.9 persons, and urban household size was 3.7 persons.

**Fig. 4.6. Rural - urban household size (2002 - 2009) (Unit: person)**



*Source: - 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

*- The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result, pp.32.*

Rural household size is often larger than urban one possibly because rural families' birth rate is still higher than urban families' (see the details in part three). This leads to the fact that rural household size is higher than urban household size.

Geographically, in 2008 the Northwest had the largest household size with 4.85 persons; the second is the Central Highlands with 4.8 persons. The area with the smallest household size is the Red River Delta (3.79 persons). This is the only region where an average household size has less than 4.0 persons. The Northwest and the Central Highlands have the largest and excessively bigger household size compared with other geographic regions because these are two areas of the least economic development, low level of awareness, concentration of ethnic minorities, high birth rate and maintenance of multi-generation family tradition. For instance, when studying household size in the Northwest, the author Do Thuy Binh pointed out that household size of ethnic minorities here was very large, much larger than that of Kinh ethnic group. Specifically, Tay ethnic group's average household size was 6.3 persons, Nung 7.5 persons, Thai 8.5 persons. More than half of Nung's families consist of from 7 to 10 persons, 78% of Thai's families have 7 persons or more (Binh, 1994). Another survey conducted in 2002 showed the number of 4.3 persons per Kinh household, 5.68 persons per Thai, 5.65 persons per Dao, 5.14 persons per Nung, H'Mong and 5 persons per Khmer household (Khanh & Quy, 2007). In Central Highlands area, as is Ede custom, sons-in-law live in their wives' long houses (Picture 4.1). As a result, the size of these households is very large.

**Table 4.1. Household size by geographic regions (2002 - 2008) (Unit: person)**

Geographic regions	2002	2004	2006	2008
Red River Delta	3.97	3.92	3.84	3.79
Northeast	4.55	4.46	4.30	4.16
Northwest	5.15	5.15	4.93	4.85
North Central	4.53	4.40	4.28	4.06
South Central Coast	4.38	4.24	4.22	4.11
Central Highlands	5.08	5.09	4.93	4.80
Southeast	4.52	4.48	4.34	4.24
Mekong River Delta	4.60	4.47	4.32	4.16

*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

**Picture 4.1. Long house of Ede ethnic group in the Central Highlands**



In terms of the declining rate of household size, the North Central ranks at the top (in 2008, the dropping rate of household size was 0.47 persons compared with 2002), the second is Mekong River Delta with the dropping rate of 0.46 persons (the comparison of the year 2008 and 2002).

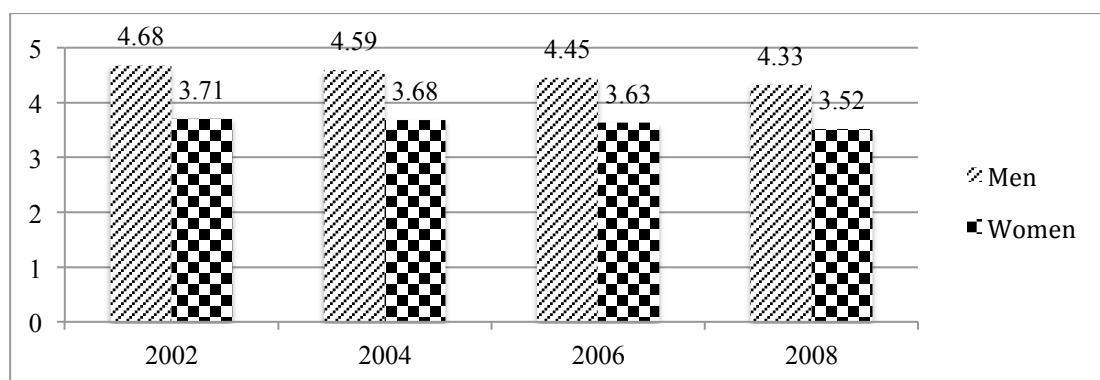


According to the latest survey from the 2009 Vietnam population and housing census, household size in different geographic regions<sup>154</sup> is as follows. The Red River Delta had the smallest average number of persons per household (3.4 persons). The region with the biggest average number of persons per household was the Central Highlands (4.1 persons), the second was the Northern Midlands and Mountain and the Mekong River Delta (4.0 persons).

In terms of income groups, we can clearly realize the difference in household size. In 2008, quintile 1 (the poorest) had the largest household size (4.41 persons). The size declined gradually among the higher income groups. With the highest income group (quintile 5), the household size was only 3.77 persons. Thus, it can be concluded that the wealthier families are, the smaller household size is. In contrast, the poorer families are, the larger household size is.

The difference in household size can be clearly showed when we bring male and female household headship into comparison. Specifically, household size of female-headed households in 2008 was only 3.52 persons. Meanwhile, that of male-headed households was higher, at 4.33 persons.

**Fig. 4.7. Household size by genders of household headship (2002 - 2008)**  
(Unit: Person)



*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

The main cause of this difference is that women heading households are often widows without remarriage, divorced women, women separating from husbands or

<sup>154</sup> The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census was not categorized into eight geographic regions as before, instead it was classified into six geographic regions: Northern Midlands and Mountain, Red River Delta, North Coastal Central, Central Highlands, Southeast and Mekong River Delta.

with husbands regularly away (accounting for 67% of female-headed households) (Van, 2004). By tradition, divorced women or widows keep living alone to bring their children up in stead of remarrying, so household size is small due to the absence of men in families. In other words, women are often heads of single-parent families, so small household size is absolutely reasonable. In contrast, man-headed complete families mean large household size. In addition, the rate of men remarrying after divorce or after wives' death is very high. Then, they continue heading new families; keep giving birth so household size of households mastered by men is larger than that of households mastered by women.

### **Comment**

Along with the country's socio-economic development, Vietnamese families have undergone considerable changes. These changes can be clearly seen in the obvious decline in household size. This success is attributed to Vietnam's population and family planning policy and the change in model of multi-generation living together, which have existed for thousands of years now. Nonetheless, the reduction in household size is also due to such negative factors as the increasing divorce rate of couples or the trend that a part of the population, especially young people do not want to get married or give birth in order to enjoy their own life.

Across the country, single household account for a very low proportion. The number of households consisting of seven members or more has the lowest proportion throughout the country and in almost all the geographic regions. Small household size (households with four members or fewer) is common in our country (72%), especially in urban areas (76%).

Generally, rural household size is larger than urban one throughout the country. In terms of residency, we can see that the urban areas of the Northern Midlands and Mountain region has the lowest mean number of persons per household (3.2 persons in 2009), whereas the highest is the urban area in the Mekong River Delta (3.9 persons). Again, this demonstrates that small household size is common in urban areas of all the geographic regions.

There exists a difference in household size among geographic regions. The Central Highlands has the largest household size in the country; the second is the Northern Midlands and Mountainous. The Red River Delta is the region with the smallest household size.

Household size is inversely proportional to incomes of household groups. Household group with the highest incomes (quintile 1) has the smallest household size; in contrast, the poorest household group (quintile 5) has the largest household size.

If the correlation between household size and genders of household heads is considered, female-headed households are smaller than male-headed households.

### **4.3. Age at first marriage in Vietnam**

In recent years, many studies in Asian countries have shown increased age at first marriage partly due to modernization (Minh, 2007; Xenos & Gultiano, 1992). Researchers have provided experimental evidences, at both macro and micro levels, to assert that individuals who possess more modern features (higher educational level, more modern professions, and living in urbanized environments) are more likely to get married later than others with less modern features (Smith, 1980; Hirschman, 1985; Smith & Karim, 1980; UN, 1986). Besides, some other factors can also have a strong impact on the change in marriage age in Asia such as parents' interference into children's marriage or national policies<sup>155</sup>.

Similarly, the tendency from early to later marriage has taken place in Vietnam in recent years (Minh, 2000; Van, 2006; GSO, 2001). Because of the importance of marriage in Vietnamese traditional culture, families and a system of kinship in the feudal period largely attributed to Vietnamese's early marriage, especially in rural areas. Nevertheless, under a strong socio-economic influence during industrialization-modernization together with the government's effort to encourage late marriage, men and women's marriage age in Vietnam has been older.

SMAM is the average length of single life in years before first marriage (GSO, 2010). This index is often separately measured for each gender.

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<sup>155</sup> See more in Minh, N.H. (2007). *Age at first marriage in 3 survey regions and impacts*.

**Table 4.2. Mean age at first marriage (1989 - 2009) (Unit: Year).**

Year	Men	Women	Different SMAM (Men-Women)
1989	24.4	23.2	1.2
1999	25.4	22.8	2.6
2009	26.2	22.8	3.4

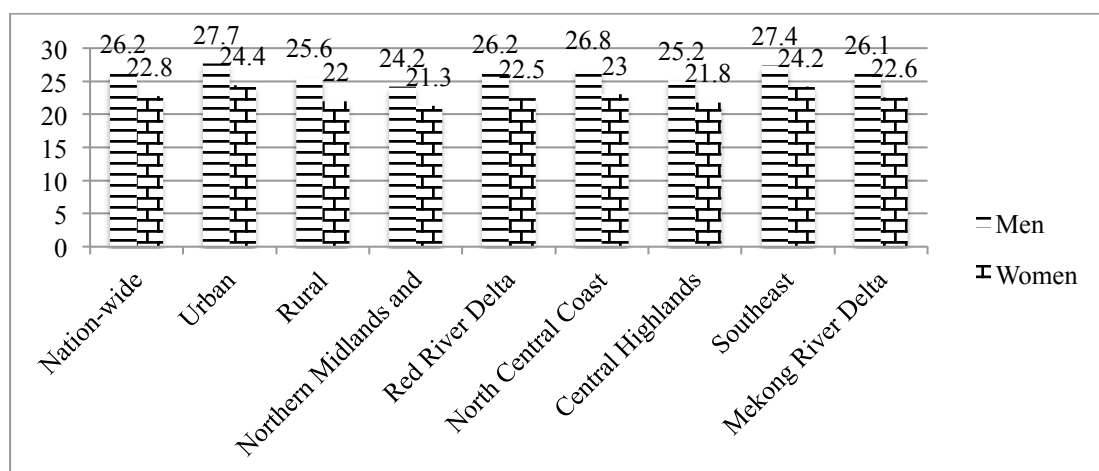
*Source: The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result, pp. 48.*

Initially, we can recognize that men's mean age of marriage is higher than women's through all the years (see table 4.2). It may be because families put higher pressure on women to get married than on men. Women have long played quite a passive role in marriage; they often wait for men's marriage proposal. The biological limitations (women's young age) result in their shorter time spent on marriage than men's. Women are not allowed to miss many chances. It is parents who understand the concept "girls only have one prime of life" and they are afraid that their daughters cannot get married when they get older (Van, 1996). Consequently, women's mean age of marriage is normally lower than men's.

Also shown in the above data table, men's mean age at first marriage is likely to rise. Compared with 1999, men's SMAM increased by 0.8 years in 2009. Meanwhile, women's SMAM in 2009 did not change compared with 1999 (both at 22.8 years old). The SMAM difference between men and women was expanding, hitting 3.4 years in 2009. The trend of late marriage is now developing because many young people and their parents want to have good education, expertise or skills so that they will be able to get jobs before marriage (Thi, 2006). In other words, late marriage, high age at first marriage can enable couples to enter marriage and family life with their maturity as well as stability of career, income and to ensure a happy and stable life.

There is a certain difference between men and women's mean age at first marriage among socio-economic regions and between rural and urban areas (fig. 4.8).

**Fig. 4.8. Mean age at first marriage categorized into genders, urban/rural areas and socio-economic regions (2009) (Unit: Year).**



*Source: The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result, pp. 49.*

From the above data, it can be seen that both men's and women's mean age at first marriage in urban areas are higher than in rural areas. This accurately reflects the current convention in Vietnam. Its reasons can be traced back to a fact that in urban areas, young people often go to university or college after high school graduation. After graduation and having a stable job, they get married; but in rural areas, right after finishing high school, many young people immediately get a job and get married. Hence, marriage age in rural areas is lower than in urban areas. Another reason for the difference in marriage age between rural and urban areas is that many urban young men think that they want to get married late because they should concentrate on making money, having fun with friends and understanding about society more before getting married. Entering married life means that you have to take care of, earn money to support your own family, children's education as well as many other concerns. A lot of young people aged 29 - 30 in urban areas are not ready for marriage as they still have to earn enough money to get married because marriage is an important event and money is needed to prepare for the wedding and building a house later. As for myself, living in Hanoi - a busy city of the country, the 31-year-old does not think of getting married yet because I wish to complete my education, my research before getting married and having children. The reason is that if married, it would be difficult for me to accomplish my study. I would have to spend a lot of time earning money to support myself as well as my family. Moreover, I also want to make money to have an independent life before thinking of marriage.

Also according to the above figure, the Southeast has the highest mean age at first marriage (27.4 years for men and 24.2 for women), the second is the North Central Coast. Two regions with the lowest mean age at first marriage are the Central Highlands (25.2 for men and 21.8 for women), and Northern Midlands and Mountain (24.2 for men and 21.3 for women). This is due to a considerably high proportion of ethnic minorities in both the Central Highlands and Northern Midlands and Mountain. They have their own customs and traditions and cannot afford higher education. Moreover, their awareness is still limited so they often get married very early. In their point of view, adolescents' physiological development (puberty) is the age of marriage. In addition, as the popularization and propaganda of Marriage and Family Law has been limited: 37% of households in rural and mountainous areas have no idea about this law, 63% have heard of it but they are not clear about its detailed regulations (Van, 2004:25).

There is an obvious distinction between marriage age and family and individual features such as educational level, ethnicity, economic region in working place, etc. (GSO, 2001; Van, 2006).

The analyzed results from Minh's study (2007) confirmed educational factor's considerable influence on men's marriage age. People with high school education or higher get married 1.2 years later than people with secondary school education and 1.6 years later than illiterate people. Particularly with women, it is surprising that illiterate women get married later than others with higher educational levels. Perhaps illiteracy is a limitation to women, making them miss chances in the market of marriage as analyzed about factors of ability to choose a partner by Dixon<sup>156</sup> (1971).

Ethnic factor has an obvious effect on Vietnamese people's age at first marriage. In general, Kinh people's mean age of marriage (the ethnic majority in Vietnam) is highest. Other ethnic groups' mean age at first marriage is often lower. Recent research results have shown some ethnic minorities' mean age at first marriage in our country as follows: Tay 21.3 years; Thai 20.1; Muong 21.8; Nung 20.2; H'Mong 18.3; Dao 19.5, Giarai 20.7; Ede 20.2 (Thi, 2006). Especially, there exists a custom

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<sup>156</sup> Dixon (1971) proposed a sociology schema emphasizing the importance of three variables, which modify social structure's influence on marriage models. These variables were availability of marriage, feasibility of marriage, desirability of marriage.

of early marriage in some ethnic minorities (H'Mong), many young people get married at the age of 14 or 15 (Minh, 2007).

The role of husbands' working region when they get married is clearly shown as well. People working in public sector have considerably higher marriage age than those in private or household sector. People in public sector has marriage age 1.7 years higher than those in private or household sector; and 1.4 years higher than those in co-operative society sector (Minh, 2007). One of the reasons for public sector workers' late marriage is that they have to worry about education to find a necessary job, then they have to try their best in their job to support their family's finance and career. In addition, they often live away from their family so they are not bound by family, which enables them to decide the time to get married more easily.

According to Minh's research result (2007), the tendency of late marriage is clearly shown for different social - professional groups. Nonetheless, the changing pace is different among groups of each factor, for instance, between farmers and non-farmers, people working in public sector and in households, or among groups of different educational levels. For example, the difference between men's mean age of marriage in the period of 1996 - 2005 and 1976 - 1985 for specific groups was: elementary school 1.6 years; secondary school 3.5 years; high school or higher education 4.5 years. Similarly, the difference between farmers and non-farmers was 3.8 years; people working in public sector seven years and people working in household or private sector four years. For women, specific difference rates are: elementary school (3.4 years), secondary school (2.7 years) and high school or higher education (2.8 years); farmers (2.8 years); non-farmers (2.4 years); public sector (1.2 years) and households and private sector (3.2 years).

## **Conclusion**

Vietnamese's mean age of marriage, especially men's is rising; for women, this trend has been likely to be stable compared with previous decades. This success is attributed to Vietnam's great effort in popularizing, propagandizing people to get married late; moreover, people's awareness is better so they do not get married early. Nevertheless, the most important factor resulting in the change from traditional marriage age pattern (early marriage for both men and women) to modern marriage

age pattern (late marriage) is the impact of socio-economic and political transformation for last decades (Goode, 1963). In other words, the factors specializing for the process of modernization, the nation's policy, culture and more freedom in marriage arrangement have contributed to forming Vietnamese's tendency of late marriage

Vietnamese men's mean age at first marriage is higher than women's in all the periods and regions. Men often desire to have social status before getting married so they give first priority to career. For women, pressure on marriage is higher than for men because their youth is shorter than men's and they are normally in a passive position in marriage relationship. Thus, their choices of partners are not much so they are likely to get married earlier than men.

Urban young people get married later than rural ones because of the pressure of jobs, income, urban busy life; marriage is not regarded as important as other things. Moreover, in cities, many people would like to have an independent life instead of early being bounded by married life.

Kinh ethnic group - an ethnic majority in Vietnam, is considered to have more opportunities to get access to modern life, to know more about national policies so they have a trend to get married later than ethnic minorities.

People working in public sector are more likely to get married later than people working in private sector or households because they suffer pressure from jobs they are in charge of in public sector, as well as seriously obey national policies related to marriage and family. People at low level of education and doing jobs concerning agriculture before getting married will often get married at younger age. Only illiterate women get married later than women with higher educational levels.

#### **4.4. Birth rate and population and family planning policy in Vietnam in recent years**

##### ***4.4.1. Total fertility rate***

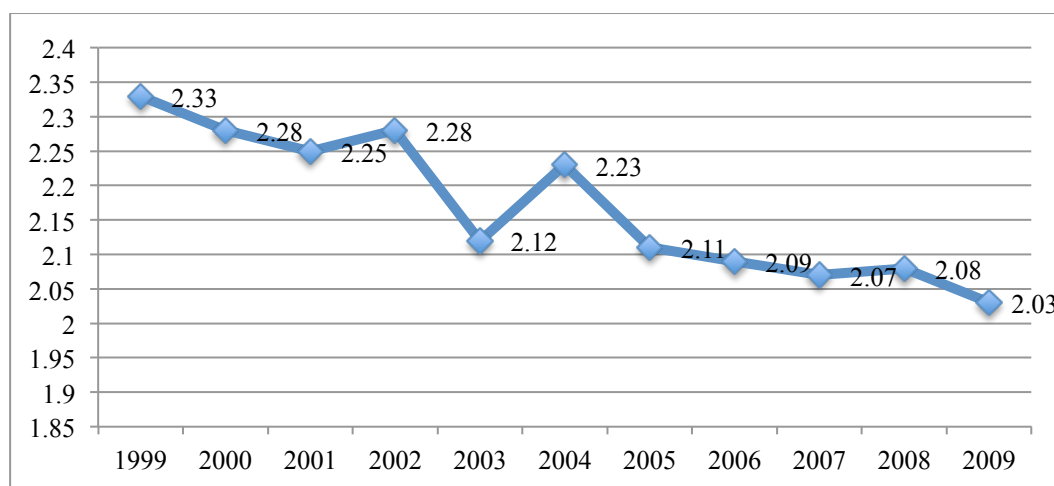
TFR of a population is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime if she were to experience the exact current age-specific



fertility rates observed for 12 months before research (The Steering Board of the general census of population and accommodation, 2010). TFR is the most common measure of birth rate (Cu, 1997) because TFR is a synthetic rate, not based on the fertility of any real group of women; this would involve waiting until they had completed childbearing. Nor is it based on counting up the total number of children actually born over their lifetime, but instead is based on the age-specific fertility rates of women in their “*child-bearing years*”, which in conventional statistical usage is 15 - 49.

During the last years, Vietnam’s TFR has remarkably changed (fig. 4.9).

**Fig. 4.9. Total fertility rate (1999 - 2009) (Children)**



*Source: The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result, pp. 54.*

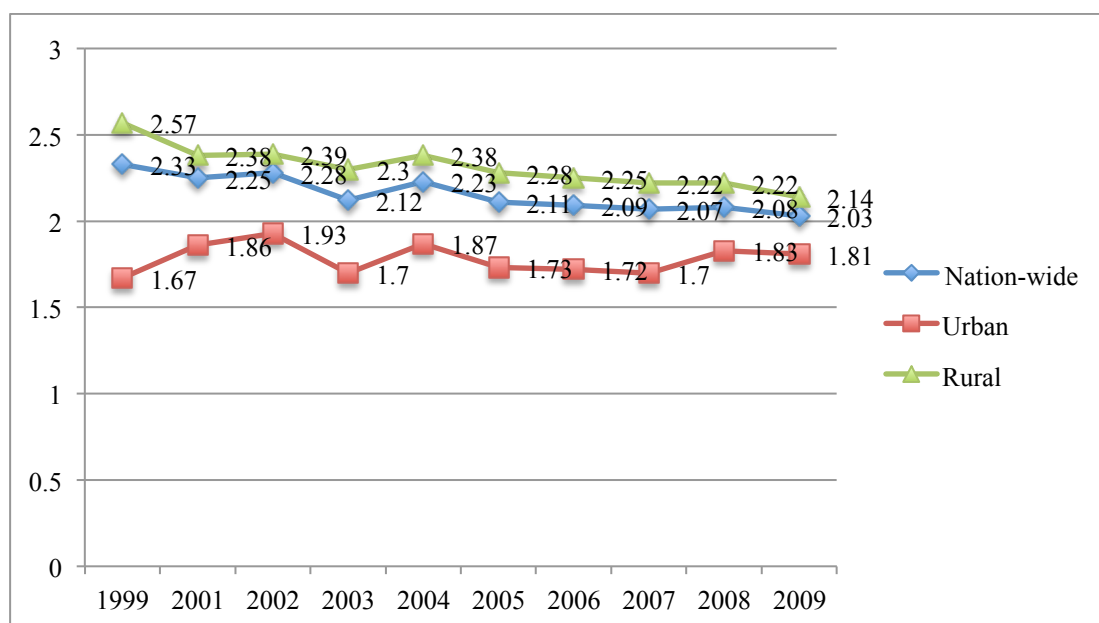
It can be realized that total fertility rate drastically dropped from 2.33 children per woman in 1999 to 2.03 in 2009. TFR in 2004 (fertility rate from 1/4/2003 - 31/3/2004) was a little higher than in 2003 (fertility rate from 1/4/2002 - 31/3/2003) due to the desire to give birth in a good year<sup>157</sup> (2003, year of the Goat in lunar calendar), but this rate strongly decreased in 2005 and remained the tendency of continuous decline from 2005 to 2009. TFR’s sharp decline has contributed to the population growth rate for the last ten years and has been an obvious evidence for the success of Vietnam’s population and family planning program.

<sup>157</sup> In Asian people’s viewpoint in general and Vietnamese people in particular, people born in the years of the Tiger, Goat, Boar/Pig, etc. especially men would have a very convenient life later. Meanwhile if they were born in other years, it would not be good. This partly affects Vietnamese households’ fertility rate. Specifically, there are years when the birthrate is excessively high but in other years it is very low.

Fig. 4.9 also shows that since 2006, Vietnamese households' fertility rate has continuously dropped and reached the sub-replacement fertility rate<sup>158</sup>. Replacement fertility rate is defined as the rate at which a generation of women has an average of enough daughters<sup>159</sup> to replace themselves during the process of population reproduction (Cu, 1997; Steering Board of general census of population and accommodation, 2010). A population which reaches the replacement fertility rate or sub-replacement fertility rate can continue increasing the amount of birth rate in some decades, because high birthrate in the past leads to high concentration of women during the age of fertility so the birth rate keeps outnumbering the death rate. Perhaps in two or three next generations (50 - 70 years) when each newly born is equal to a dead person in population, population can achieve the stable status.

The difference in total fertility rate is clearly visible when we put rural and urban areas into comparison (fig. 4.10).

**Fig. 4.10. Vietnam's total fertility rate (1999 - 2009) (Children)**



*Source: The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result, pp. 55.*

<sup>158</sup> Replacement fertility rate is often 2.1 children per woman (Steering Board of general census of population and accommodation 2010). In Vietnam, there has not been an exact assessment on replacement fertility rate but it is estimated that this rate can be slightly higher than normal rate because in Vietnam the ratio of gender at fertility is quite high (details in the next part).

<sup>159</sup> It is slight different from international definitions because international definitions don't mention about the gender of children.

Research results show that total fertility rate in urban areas in 2009 was 1.81 children per women, lower than the rate of 2.14 children per woman in rural ones. This difference may be because compared with rural couples, urban couples are more easily accessible to sources of information, have better awareness of benefits of families with few children and they have access to medical centers providing services of family planning to help them avoid being unexpectedly pregnant and giving birth. Another reason is that the living conditions in urban area are much better than in rural areas (income, infrastructure system, social services, etc.); children in urban areas receive better care than those in rural areas, resulting in lower neonatal mortality and infant mortality rates in urban areas, contributing to a decreased replacement fertility rate in these areas. Furthermore, old parents' independence on their children in urban areas is lower than rural ones' so urban people are less likely to have the desire to give birth to live on when getting old.

As shown in fig. 4.10, TFR in rural areas dropped quite quickly from 2.57 children per woman to 2.14, nearly reaching replacement fertility rate. Meanwhile, this rate in urban areas did not see a considerable change, just around the rate of 1.8 children per woman during 10 years from 1999 to 2009. Obviously for the last ten years, a very positive change has been shown in households' awareness of benefits from having few children in general, especially rural households'. This asserts the success of population and family planning program and many other campaigns of public health care, particularly reproductive health in rural areas. However, the fertility rate in rural areas is still relatively higher than in urban areas, so in the coming time it is necessary to promote the implementation of the policy of reproductive health care and family planning along with more investment into building socio-economic infrastructure in rural areas.

In terms of TFR in the period of 1999 - 2009 by socio-economic regions, the research data shows that for the last 10 years, the Central Highlands has always had the highest fertility rate in the country. In 2009, TFR of this region was 2.65 children per woman, much higher than the country's average. The second was the Northeast and Northwest (aggregated into Northern Midlands and Mountain) with TFR of 2.24 children per woman in 2009. Two regions with the lowest birthrate were the

Southeast and Mekong River Delta with 1.69 and 1.84 children per woman, respectively.

**Table 4.3. Total fertility rate by socio-economic regions (1999 - 2009) (Children)**

Research years	Socio-economic regions							
	Northeast	Northwest	Red River Delta	North Central	South Central Coast	Central Highlands	Southeast	Mekong River Delta
1999	3.07	3.07	2.35	2.70	2.49	3.56	2.16	2.21
2000	2.27	2.27	2.14	2.55	2.40	3.15	2.03	1.99
2001	2.22	2.72	2.17	2.58	2.26	3.06	1.79	1.91
2002	2.32	2.51	2.23	2.63	2.31	3.06	1.88	2.02
2003	2.28	2.49	2.06	2.45	2.21	3.07	1.85	2.00
2004	2.23	2.43	2.05	2.48	2.28	2.82	1.76	1.92
2005	2.18	2.39	2.11	2.32	2.19	2.77	1.74	1.87
2006	3.07	3.07	2.35	2.70	2.49	3.56	2.16	2.21
2007	2.27	2.27	2.14	2.55	2.40	3.15	2.03	1.99
2008	2.30		2.13	2.30		2.68	1.73	1.87
2009	2.24		2.11	2.21		2.65	1.69	1.84

*Source: The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result, pp. 56.*

Despite the highest fertility rate, the Northern Midlands and Mountain and the Central Highlands saw the quickest decline of birth rate for the last decade. Specifically, the Central Highland's TFR dropped from 3.56 children per woman in 1999 to 2.65 in 2009, declining by 0.9 children per woman; TFR of the Northern Midlands and Mountain decreased by 0.8 children per woman, from 3.07 children per woman in 1999 to 2.24 in 2009. This is quite a big decline rate; nevertheless, these two regions' birthrate was still high compared with the whole country's average fertility rate.

In terms of ethnic group criteria, the result of the 2009 Vietnam population and housing census indicates that TFR of Kinh group (the ethnic majority in Vietnam) was 2.0 children per woman, equal to TFR of some other ethnic groups such as Tay, Muong, Kh'mer; a bit lower than TFR of Thai group (2.3 children per woman); and 2.5 times lower than TFR of H'Mong (4.9 children per woman). The main cause resulting in H'Mong households' high birth rate is early marriage custom (as

analyzed above) so their period of time for fertility is surely long, and naturally the opportunities to give birth to many children are unavoidable.

In terms of religions, the research results showed that there was almost no difference in TFR of different religious groups. The lowest rate belonged to Catholic group with 1.8 children per woman and the highest was of Hoa Hao Buddhist group with 2.3 children per woman. TFR of other religious groups was 1.9 children per woman and non-religious group was 2.0, equal to TFR of Buddhist group.

The research data in 2008 confirms that there was a close connection between birth rate and women's education level. The highest TFR (2.65 children per woman) was of illiterate women, women with secondary school graduation were at the sub-replacement fertility rate and women with high school graduation had the lowest TFR (1.64) (UNFPA, 2009). This data demonstrates that women with higher level of education will have fewer children. This requires the program of population and family planning to focus more on groups of low educational level to provide them with information about benefits of families with few children such as having more opportunities to develop, improving mothers' education and bringing benefits of health to their children.

Vietnam's research data in recent years show that there is a direct relation between the decline of birth rate and the rise of using contraceptive methods, especially modern contraceptive methods<sup>160</sup>. The more couples use contraceptive methods, the lower the fertility rate is.

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<sup>160</sup> Modern contraceptive methods consist of: IUDs, birth control pills, injectable contraceptives, vaginal methods (effervescent tablets), condoms, male or female sterilization. The methods of counting menstrual cycle, withdrawal and others are called non-modern contraceptive methods. This distinguish is very necessary because most modern contraceptive methods are more effective than non-modern ones (The Committee of population and family planning, 2000).

**Table 4.4. Total fertility rate and the rate of using contraceptive methods  
(2004 - 2008)**

Research years	TFR	Modern contraceptive methods
2004	2.33	64.6
2005	2.11	65.7
2006	2.09	67.1
2007	2.07	68.3
2008	2.08	68.8

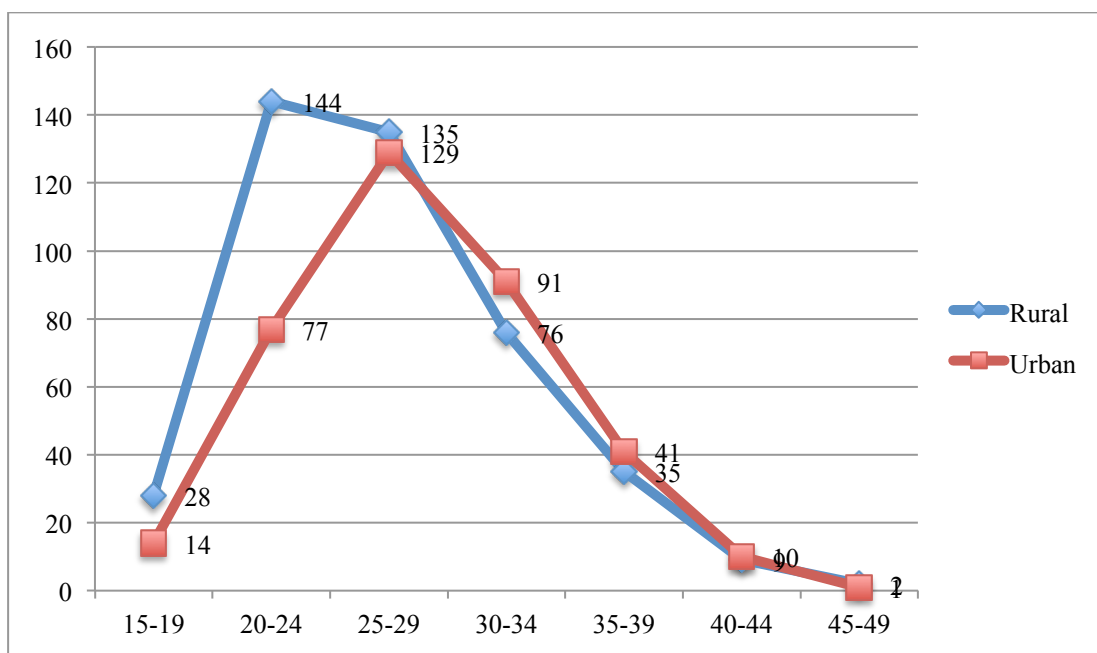
*Source: UNFPA. The fact of Vietnam's population 2008, pp. 9.*

Regarding age specific fertility rate<sup>161</sup>, the data from the 2009 Vietnam population and housing census in two regions - rural and urban areas show that in spite of having the same “bell” shape, the curved line indicating the fertility model of urban area was not only lower but also had the level of “lateness” compared with the line of rural area, which means that urban women give birth later and to fewer children than rural ones. In urban areas, the highest fertility rate belonged to women from 25 - 29 years old with 129 live births per 1000 women. Meanwhile in rural areas, the highest birth rate was of women aged 20 - 24 with 144 live births per 1000 women. Compared with the birth rate of women at the same age group of 20 - 24 in urban areas, it nearly doubles (144 to 77). This may be because rural women do not have the same chances to pursue higher educational levels as urban women so they get married and have children earlier than do urban women. However, it can be clearly recognized that the fertility model in Vietnam keeps changing from “early” to “late” childbirth. “Late” fertility model presents the trend of Vietnamese women’s older age at marriage. Getting married late, women have conditions to improve their education level and develop their career.

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<sup>161</sup> ASFR is the number of births during a year to women in a particular age group, usually per 1,000 women in a five-year age group at midyear.

**Fig. 4.11. Age specific fertility rate in urban and rural areas (2009) (‰)**



Source: *The 2009 census of population and accommodation in Vietnam*, pp. 59.

## Conclusion

Vietnamese households' fertility rate have substantially declined and reached the sub-replacement fertility rate over the past years. The fertility rate in rural areas decreases faster than in urban area, however it is still higher. The Central Highlands has the highest fertility rate in the country, and the Mekong River Delta has the lowest rate. In recent years, the fertility rate of ethnic minorities is not a very big difference compared with that of Kinh group, apart from the excessively higher fertility rate of H'Mong women. Similarly, there only exists a slight difference in the fertility rate of different religious groups.

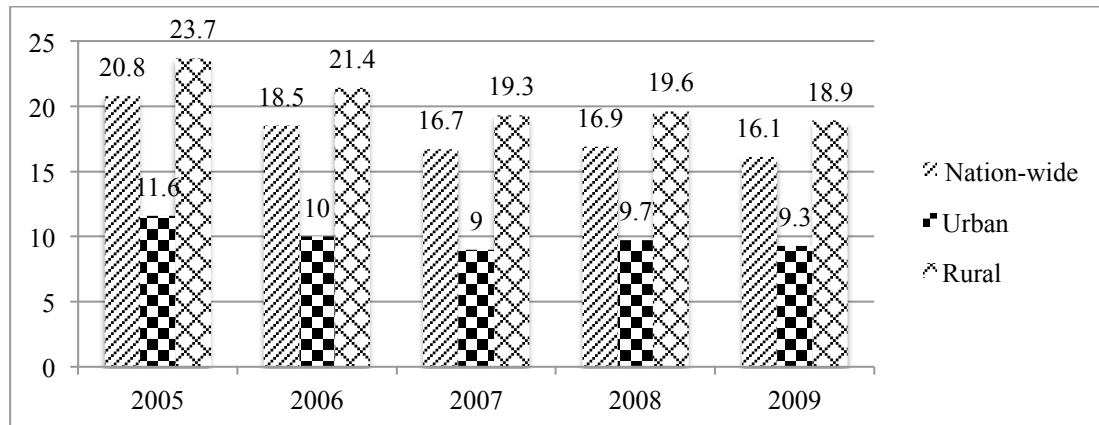
Women's education level has an obvious impact on the fertility rate. The higher their education level is, the lower the fertility rate is and vice versa. Fertility rate is also directly proportional to the rate of using contraceptive methods. The more couples use contraceptive methods, the lower the fertility rate becomes. In terms of age specific fertility rate, it can be clearly recognized that Vietnam's fertility model has continued transforming from "early" fertility to "late" fertility.

#### 4.4.2. The rate of women having a third child and the policy of population and family planning in Vietnam

##### 4.4.2.1. The rate of women having a third child in Vietnam

Vietnam has been implementing the policy of fertility decline through the population program, fertility health care including family planning. Small household size is now encouraged. Together with services of fertility health care, family planning provided, a lot of popularizing, propagandizing activities for changing behaviors have been organized in order to equip couples with knowledge and encourage them to carry out the target of family planning. Hence, the data related to the rate of women giving birth to a third child or more becomes a big concern of the population and family planning media every year. The rate of women having a third child or more shows the number of women having a third child or more for 12 months before research over 100 women during that period.

**Fig. 4.12. The rate of women aged 15 - 49 having a third child by area (2005 - 2009) (in:%)**



Source: *The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result*, pp. 64.

Fig. 4.12 represents the rate of women aged 15 - 49 giving birth to a third child or more in Vietnam from 2005 to 2009 categorized into rural and urban area. The data shows that during this period of time, this rate all over the country dropped from 20.8% in 2005 to 16.1% in 2009. The rate of women stopping giving birth after the first and second fertility in both urban and rural areas rose, especially in urban areas, helping decreasing the fertility rate in Vietnam. This helps Vietnam stabilize



population, decrease dependence on children and creates favorable opportunities for Vietnam to carry out targets of developing a stable and quality economy.

A difference in the rate of women giving birth to a third child or more can be seen in different geographic regions. The regions with a low rate of women giving birth to a third child were the Southeast (10.9%), the Mekong River Delta (12.4%) and the Red River Delta (13.2%). The highest rates belonged to the Central Highlands (27.4%), the North Central Coast (21.1%) (see table 4.5). As a general rule, in well-developed regions, this rate is low, and vice versa, in remote areas with hard life this rate is high.

**Table 4.5. The percentage of women giving birth to a third child or more (2005 - 2009)**

Regions	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Red River Delta	17	14.7	13.7	13.8	13.2
Northeast	19	17.1	15.0	14.7	18.7
Northwest	23	20.7	17.7	18.0	
North Central	29	28.3	23.5	26.5	21.1
South Central Coast	23	22.4	21.8	19.4	
Central Highlands	39	32.2	30.0	26.9	27.4
Southeast	17	14.3	13.8	14.4	10.9
Mekong River Delta	16	13.9	12.6	12.6	12.4

*Source: - UNFPA: The fact of Vietnam's population in 2008, pp. 17.*

*- The 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result, pp. 216.*

For the past years, the rate of women giving birth to a third child tends to decline in all the geographic regions, particularly in the Northern Midlands and Mountain (Northeast and Northwest), and the Central Highlands has the rising trend. Thus, in the coming time, Vietnam needs to focus on solving the situation of women giving birth to a third child in these regions, as well as maintaining the trend of fertility decline in other geographic regions in order to achieve a stable decrease of women having a third child.

The rate of women having a third child or more is closely related to their education level. According to the research data in 2007, this rate of illiterate women was 43.1%, 28.1% for women who have not finished elementary school, 19.4% for

elementary school graduates, 15.3% for secondary school graduates and 4.5% for women with high school education level or over (see table 4.6).

**Table 4.6. The rate of women giving birth to a third child or more by education level (2007) (in:%)**

Illiterate	Elementary school unfinished	Elementary school graduate	Secondary school	High school
43.1	28.1	19.4	15.3	4.5

*Source: UNFPA: The fact of Vietnam's population in 2007, pp. 16.*

It can be concluded that the higher women's education level is, the lower the rate of having a third child is. With high education level, women are aware that children must be looked after and nurtured well so they do not desire to have too many children, resulting in their relatively low rate of having a third child. Additionally, because their awareness and use of contraceptive methods are more effective so this group's rate of giving birth to a third child is lower than groups of low educational level. Thus, in order to change the situation, the program of family planning needs to focus on propagandizing to women at low education level. Normally, these women have low income, and live in rural, mountainous and remote areas. Thus, it is essential to have suitable techniques of propaganda for this group.

During the last years, Vietnam has tried their best to encourage families to stop giving birth to a third child. We have obtained some certain success<sup>162</sup>, however there still exists the problem of couples giving birth to a third child, especially in some geographic regions, this rate tends to increase. The authorities and experts from the Committee of Population, Family and Children have stated some causes related to the implementation of population, family planning in local area such as: there is self-satisfaction about some achievement; the letting loose of leadership and population work conduction; the organization system of family planning staff has not been strong enough and overloaded with work; the propagandizing, educating, providing services and building policies, regime faces many problems, etc. These are indirect causes, what are the direct reasons why women have a third child? According to Le Thi, the reasons for giving birth to a third child arise from the couples themselves (Thi, 2006).

<sup>162</sup> In 1999, Vietnam was awarded by the UN for the fast decline of population development rate.

*Initially*, it is male supremacy and discrimination against women that leads to the desire to have a son. Families with two daughters did not intend to have a third child but now they give birth to the third child in the hope of having a son. This is often the case with civil servants in urban areas. The case of Mrs. Hoai<sup>163</sup> can be taken as an example. She said that both her husband and she were intellectuals, she was an editor of a magazine, he was a science researcher. As a gentle, diligent woman, she was loved and respected by her husband's family. When they had two pretty daughters, her husband went abroad to study. For three years, she herself nurtured her children, went to work and had extra jobs to support her family, looked after her old and weak parents in law. When her husband came back, she was extremely happy. Nevertheless, the happiness of reunion had not lasted long; she was urged to have a son by her husband and his family. Despite being a civil servant, she thought of her family's happiness, parents' desire and husband's pride, she had a third child but it was a daughter again. After the baby was born, she felt really painful when all the members in her husband's family became cold toward hers; her husband ignored both her and the baby. Whenever coming home, he was drunk and always yelled at her. Through Mrs. Hoai's story, we can realize that male supremacy and discrimination against women is still obviously shown in part of Vietnamese population. The main aim of having a third, fourth child, etc. is only to have a son to be the heir of the family.

*Secondly*, some families with two sons still want to have both sons and daughters like their friends, because in Vietnamese tradition, giving birth means having both sons and daughters. As a result, many families with sons still try to have a third child in the hope of having a daughter if they can afford it. However, in fact, the pressure of having a daughter is not as heavy as having a son.

*Thirdly*, there is a mentality of desiring to have many children, because in their opinion, having a lot of children means possessing a lot of property, happiness and luckiness. This mentality has existed since the old days and instilled in many households' mind, especially in rural and mountainous areas. Two children are too few for them; four to five children are enough (Thi, 2006) in case they die young. Having many children also means a lot of labor force. This plays an especially

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<sup>163</sup> The family and society newspaper, issued on 27-11-2003

important role when production stages have not applied much technology but mainly used manual labor, especially in many rural households' farm work. In other words, having many children in that period of time was economically very beneficial; it was a basis to create income for households. Although having many children means lots of food consumed, these children helped their parents a lot in production and housework, etc. Now, household economy mainly depends on parents' and children's effort. Even if the nation lends them capital for business, this amount of capital will not yield positive effectiveness without enough labor resource. As a result, many families want to have many children. My family is an example. My family has three children. Our parents told us that their desire was having many children, the more the merrier. Our parents intended to have 6 children (they had thought of names for six ones), because at that time my father worked in commerce, the family life was very comfortable even in the period of subsidy. We had accumulated fortune so our parents wanted to have many children because we had enough material condition to nurture children well and our parents also considered many children as a lot of fortune. However, after the economy transformed from subsidy to a market economy, our family faced economic difficulty because the commerce was not at a high position, so I was the third and last child of theirs. Although my parents could not have the number of children as they wanted; our story was typical for many Vietnamese families in the sense that if having conditions, we want to have as many children as possible because it is big happiness.

*Fourthly*, the mentality of desiring to have many children who they can depend on and be looked after by when people get old. Because if a family have many children, especially sons, they can look after their parents by turns when their parents are weak or too old. It is very necessary for everybody to be cared by someone at the old age when a lot of farmers do not have medical and social insurance. Even with public servants, the allowance of medical and social insurance is too little. Thus, when they should be ill or have accidents, they mainly depend on their family and children. With many children, the life of old or ill people can be better ensured as by only one child.

#### *4.4.2.2. The policy of population and family planning in Vietnam*

Having a third child for the last years as analyzed above can contradict the policy of population and family planning that Vietnam has been implementing. This may affect the results of the implementation of the population policy in Vietnam. Thus, what is the policy of population and family planning that Vietnam has been conducting now? What are its specific targets? What are the solutions raised to call on and force people to practice that policy? The content of this part will clarify the above issues.

The policy of population-family planning is always considered as an important part of the strategy to develop the country and as one of the top important socio-economic issues of the country. Effective implementation of the policy of population-family planning is a basic solution to improve the life quality of each individual, family and of the whole society. For the last years, our Party and state have drawn up a lot of policies, laws, and strategies to comprehensively care about population-family planning. To effectively carry out the Party and State's policies, the General Department of Population and Family Planning and relevant ministries have issued many joint circulars, guidelines, consisting of:

- Resolution 04-NQ/TW dated 14/01/1993 by the fourth conference of the Party's Central Committee VII on population - family planning policy.
- Directive 50-CT/TW dated 06/03/1995 by the Secretariat on the promotion of the implementation of Resolution 4 on population-family planning policy
- Directive 37-CT/TTg dated 17/01/1997 by the Prime Minister on the promotion of the implementation of population-family planning strategy.
- Resolution no 47-NQ/TW dated 22/03/2005 by the Central Committee on carrying on the promotion of the implementation of population-family planning strategy.
- Decision no 09/2006/QĐ-TTg dated 10/06/2006 by the Prime Minister on the issue of the government's action plan in carrying out Resolution no 47-NQ/TW 22/03/2005 by the Politburo about carrying on the promotion of the implementation of population-family planning strategy.

- Resolution no 114/NĐ-CP dated 03/10/2006 by the Government on the provisions of administrative punishment of population and children.
- Directive no 13/2007/CT-TTg dated 06/6/2007 by the Prime Minister on the promotion of carrying out the government's action plan to implement Resolution no 47-NQ/TW dated 22/03/2005 by the Politburo about carrying on the promotion of the implementation of population-family planning strategy.
- Provision no 94-QĐ/TW dated 15/10/2007 by the Politburo on the discipline treatment of party members violating discipline
- Guideline no 11/HD-UBKTTW dated 24/3/2008 by the Central Committee about the carrying out of Provision no 94-QĐ/TW dated 15/10/2007 by the Politburo about the discipline treatment of party members violating discipline
- Resolution no 170/2007/QĐ-TTg dated 08/11/2007 by the Prime Minister on the approval of the national target program of population-family planning in the period of 2006-2010
- Directive no 23/2008/CT-TTg dated 04/8/2008 by the Prime Minister on carrying on promoting the practice of population - family planning.
- Conclusion no 44-KL/TW dated 01/4/2009 by the Politburo about three-year implementation of Resolution no 47-NQ/TW 22/03/2005 by the Politburo about carrying on the promotion of the implementation of population-family planning strategy.

The policy of population - family planning in Vietnam aims to limit population growth, and at the same time to protect women's and children's health to bring happiness to families. Some specific targets are:

- Age at first marriage (at least 22 for women and 24 for men in cities, public offices or industrial fields; other objects can get married three years earlier)
- The number of children (one or two) having few children to reduce the possibility of obstetric accidents, avoiding sex, protecting women's health, avoiding

malnutrition as well as protecting women's beauty. For some ethnic minorities and other people, they can have three children<sup>164</sup>.

- Child spacing (three - five years): not increasing the burden on women about nutrition as well as about health to help reduce malnutrition, avoid obstetric accidents, and help give birth easily. Also, mothers have time to take care of their children and to avoid diseases. Child spacing should not be too large as mothers may forget experience of nurturing babies.

- Age at childbirth should be from 22 - 35. Giving birth too early when the body has not been fully developed can increase obstetric accidents and the rate of malfunction for both mother and children.

In order to achieve the above goal, the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam have drawn some specific solutions as follows:

- Propagandizing, popularizing, educating and at the same time bringing services of family planning to people, having policies of bringing direct benefits to people accepting the model of small size family, creating the motivation to promote the public movement in carrying out family planning.

- Keeping enhancing and perfecting the operational mechanism of the population committee, improving the quality of staff in charge, collaborators. Increasing the work of regular examining and monitoring activities about management; supervising, updating, collecting information about the changes in population - family planning of regions.

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<sup>164</sup> As stated in Vietnamese law, there are seven cases which are allowed to have a third child: 1) If both husband and wife or either belong to ethnic groups having population under 10,000 persons, or ethnic groups in danger of population decline according to the official report of the Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2) Couples have three children or more at first childbirth, it means that they are allowed to have the second childbirth although their number of children exceeds two; 3) Couple who already have one child at the first time and have double children in the second time; 4) Couples who have the third childbirth or more, if at the time of fertility there is only one alive child, even a child who is given away for adoption; 5) Couples give birth to the third child, if having two children but either is disabled or seriously but not genetically ill, which is confirmed by the Council of medical assessment at provincial or central level; 6) Couples has a stepchild (offspring), only give birth to one or two children during two childbirth times. This provision is not applied to couples who used to have two children and more and these children are still alive; 7) Unmarried women give birth to one or two children and more in the same childbirth time.

- The state increases the national fund's expense on the work of population family planning, as well as encourages the contribution from the public and enlists international support. It is important to mobilize the forces of the whole society to participate in population family planning.

- Increasing the practice of consulting at medical clinics about modern contraceptive methods, taking care of adolescents' reproductive health, pregnant women and mothers after giving birth and prevention of diseases reproductively infected.

- Investing into the quality of services through consulting activities, providing high quality contraceptive services, ensuring safety and convenience for users, diversifying contraceptive methods to meet customers' demands.

## **Conclusion**

Population and family planning is an important part in the process of building and developing the country and it contributes a small part to the construction and approach to national industrialization and modernization. Effective implementation of population-family planning is a basic solution to improve family's living standard. The building of cooperation mechanism among the state organs with departments, unions, political-social organizations is an essential factor in ensuring the perfection of organization, improving the quality of activities about population-family planning in localities, helping successfully complete the target of stabilizing population size and improving population quality that the Party and the state has given.

### ***4.4.3. Preference of son in Vietnamese families***

In the Vietnamese families, daughters are not so looked down as in China<sup>165</sup>; daughter births are welcomed. In the traditional peasant family, a daughter was especially appreciated if she was the first child because she would help her parents a great deal in doing, and sharing household chores. That was why a Vietnamese proverb went: "*Having a piece of fertile female buffalo is not as valuable as having a daughter as your first child*". Another proverb goes: "*It would be better to have both glutinous rice and ordinary one*"; that means people like to have children of both

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<sup>165</sup> Due to one child policy in China, almost families want to have a son only.



sexes. In such cases, not only do parents have two children, but the son will carry on the family name while the daughter provides for domestic and emotional duties. For that reason some families that have already had many sons still wish for a daughter. If the family has a daughter as a first child, and a son as a second one, they will get mark “*ten*”. It is even better than a son as the first and the daughter as the second child. There is a popular saying which people often say to the parents’ new - born daughters: “*Co hoa mung hoa, co nu mung nu*” (Let us rejoice, whether buds or flowers). That means that child - birth is always a happy event regardless of the sex of the new - born child.

However, son preference is a prominent feature of Vietnamese culture, particularly in the north of the country where the Confucian influence has been the strongest. Foreign researchers have made a comparison that in Vietnam, the importance of having male children is stressed more than in Thailand and Burma (Goethals, 1991). People, especially in countryside, like to have a son so much, regardless of their social categories: from ordinary people to officials, from non - members of political affiliation to communist party members (Bich, 1997:275). The preference for sons is so strong that parent who have a new - born son in the commune draw fire crackers to celebrate, or they slaughter one, even two pigs to entertain all members of their lineage (Tinh, 1994:27). In other words, the whole family happily greets the birth of a son. By contrast, people who have already had more than one child, but do not have a son yet feel disappointed. In mass media there are often stories about how men who are waiting for a son react to their new - born female children. For instance, Nguyen Tri Thuc (1995) tells us about his relative who had already had four daughters: the man prepared well in advance for a celebration in the hope of getting a son when his wife was going to give birth to a new child. He kept carefully some chickens that his family had raised to slaughter if the new - born child would be a son. Nevertheless, hearing that the new - born child was a daughter again, he was disappointed, and released the chickens. Compared to the above son birth, this daughter’s birth is entirely opposite: no celebration, not even some good food for the parturient.

Why people have no son feel boring like that? This derives from a tradition according to which when having no son, people very often thought that something

wrong with the wife. Her position in the family would be insecure, no matter how well she performed her duties as a wife and daughter-in-law. For example, according to the pre-1945 law<sup>166</sup>, failure to give birth to a male child was the first reason of the seven ones which would allow a man to repudiate his wife. Despite decades of socialist policies that promote gender equality, son preference remains strong (Belanger, 2002; Goodkind, 1995). It reminds us of a traditional proverb: “If you have a son, you can say you have a descendent; but you can not say thus, even if you have ten daughters” (Dong, 1991; Rydström, 1998).

When asked about the wished number of sons, as shown in the recent survey result, an average of couples wants to have from one to two sons.

**Table 4.7. The wished for number of sons according to geographic regions and education level (2002) (Unit: Children)**

Ordinal numbers	Geographic regions and education level	Wanted number of sons
	Geographic regions	1.33
1	Urban	1.22
2	Plains	1.37
3	Midlands-Mountain	1.35
	Education level	1.33
1	Illiterate	1.68
2	Elementary School	1.56
3	Secondary school	1.30
4	High school	1.20
5	Post-secondary	1.29

*Source: Van, L.N., Khieu, N.L., Binh, D.T. (2002). Basic data about Vietnamese families and women in families in the industrialization and modernization period. [Quoted in Van, L.N. (2004). The situation and the problems posed for the Vietnamese families today, pp. 136].*

Table 4.7 shows that urban families have a little lower demand of sons than families in other regions. The main reason may originate from the fact that urban people have

<sup>166</sup> According to Gia Long code of law it was mainly the husband who had the right to initiate divorce. Based on the so-called “seven outs” men could repudiate their wives on the following grounds: Infertility; adultery; neglect of parent-in-law; talkativeness; theft; jealousy; incurable diseases (Binh, 1992:63).

stable incomes and do not need to depend on their children when getting old, so having sons to depend on at the old age is not very necessary for them. As a result, urban families' demand of having sons is not higher than families' in other regions.

In terms of education level, a general trend is: the couples' lower education level, the higher their demands of having sons. The number of sons wanted by illiterate couples is 1.68, whereas couples with above high school education want to have 1.29 sons. People with high education level often have stable jobs and enjoy social allowances in old age, they will not depend much on their children, especially sons. Meanwhile, people without certain education level do not have stable jobs in state organs, so when they lose their working ability, they have to live of their children, normally their sons as conventional. This obviously leads to the demands of having sons to depend on later.

Among the reasons of giving birth to sons in families of Vietnam, the results (table 4.8) show the "necessity" of having sons to depend on at the old age is quite common, accounting for 64% (in cities 51%, in plains 67% and in midlands and mountain areas 65.2%). The second reason is to continue the lineage of families (accounting for nearly 61%). Clearly, in the regions where the social allowance for old people is small, the demand of having sons is higher and that is the reason to explain the difference in the demand of having sons between urban and rural areas and among different occupational groups.

**Table 4.8. The "necessary" reasons for having sons by geographic regions (2002)**  
(in:%)

Numbers	Reasons	Urban	Plains	Midlands and Mountain	Nation-wide
1	To depend on at old age	51.0	67.0	65.2	64.3
2	To carry on the lineage	37.0	68.4	56.6	60.6
3	To have labour source	7.0	9.7	9.0	9.2
4	Others	0.0	2.7	0.5	1.6

*Source: Van, L.N., Khieu, N.L., Binh, D.T (2002). Basic data about Vietnamese families and women in families in the industrialization and modernization period, pp. 147.*

### *Care for old parents*

It may be explained that the patrilocal model and its variant play a role here. Like the traditional family, contemporary marriage has required a bride to leave her parents, to go live with the groom's family. The crucial point was not the residence model, but the social security system related to this model. As a source shows, since then on, daughter's main responsibilities of caring old people were towards her parent-in-law, not natal parents (Toan Anh, 153 - 154). That is why in the Confucian tradition; girls were likened to "*flying ducks*", lost to their parental family at marriage. So that, to make sure about their security in old age, parents do their best to keep close their relationships to their children, especially the oldest son. Because they normally live with or depend on his family when they are old.

### *Continue of the lineage*

In Vietnam, the importance of the community called lineage in comparison to the individual person lies in this point: in a patrilineal lineage, a man is not an independent person, an individual in the full sense of the word, but a member of a given lineage. He is thought of as being the personification of this lineage at present. His existence is not only a link in the communal chain. He must continue his lineage by having at least one son to guarantee that someone will fulfill in the future his present obligations. It is only a male child who can ensure the continuation of the lineage in two senses. Only he can practice the ancestor worship because it can't be done by female descendants who are treated as members of their husbands' families. And it is only a son who can ensure the continuation of the bloodline because of the prevailing patrilineage. If a man should die without male progeny, his whole lineage, including his ancestors and his unborn descendants would die with him. An end would be put to the line of descent because nobody takes care of that lineage anymore. You could also see the children's surname is followed by father's one. So the sons are very important for the lineage.

### *Ancestor worship*

Although ancestor worship does not mention in table 4.8 but it is indispensable in Vietnamese families. Ancestor worship is very important because it is to worship

people in the former times from one whom is descended. A Vietnamese folk song goes: “*Men have ancestors, just as trees have roots and rivers have sources*”. The worship duty to parents starts from their death. Traditionally, in the funeral procession, sons of the deceased wear straw hats and walk on canes; daughters and daughters-in-law lie in the courtyard in the path of the coffin. In the funeral of his father, the son clothes in coarse fibber, and walks on a bamboo cane. He moves backward before the casket of his death parent. Now, a new ritual system according to which every ritual must be simplified was imposed to replace the old one. Sons put their dead father’s coffin into a carrier, took it to graveyard, and they no longer wore straw hats and walked on cane; daughters and daughters-in-law no longer lay in the courtyard in the path of the coffin in procession. (Hy, 1993:82). However, it is very essential to have at least a son who walks on cane before one’s coffin. Since then, sons continue their worship duty to their death parents. One of the fundamental purposes of ancestor worship is to ensure the happiness of death parents in otherworld. While alive, parents are served and respected; when dead, they are served and worshipped. Their other world existence needs the same things as this world existence does. If the parents need food, clothing, shelter and money when they are alive, they would continue to need that when they are dead. By practicing ancestor worship, children supply their dead parents with these essentials. In celebrating death anniversaries of their parents, children “*transfer*” goods from this world to the next. This transfer is achieved by burning. Paper clothes, and paper money could all be sent on to the dead parents in this way. Real food is not burnt, but merely offered to the dead parents.

Dead parents need the worship of their children in order to be comfortable and happy. A soul with no descendants is doomed to eternal wandering in the world of shadow because it would not receive homage. Children who do not observe the sacrifice are considered as committing a serious crime of being impetuous, and undutiful because the souls of their dead parents have to make a precarious living as wandering beggars.

However, the relationship between dead parents and their children is the mutual interdependence. To their turn, dead parents are believed to become the protectors of their descendants. In return for the sacrifices and services of the living, the dead

parents give their descendants some blessings that are in their supernatural power. Moreover, they could warn their children about some coming unhappy events so that children could escape. To request intercession for success in business or on behalf of a sick child, sacrifices are offered, and prayers are said to the souls of the dead parents.

The interaction between dead people and their family members is not limited to the periodical, annual occasions<sup>167</sup> of ancestor worship; but also on the other occasions<sup>168</sup>. They want the ancestors to know the event and bless them on the occasion. To do it, ancestor worship requires the installation of an altar table in the home. Every family had ancestral altar in the center of the house. That may not be an exaggerated estimation because people did their best to get ancestral altar at home, however poor they were and however simple it was. The practice of worshipping is based on the principle of male members of the family, on the oldest son. In general, he had to bear all expenses for celebrating death anniversaries; that was why he received the greatest part of property handed down by his parents, mainly land. Other sons or girls have to go to the eldest son's house with their families to attend the ceremony, although they can place a very simple altar in their own houses.

**To sum up**, we can say that one of the main meanings of reproduction for Vietnamese people is to get sons to practice ancestor worship. Only a man could perform the ancestral rituals and pray for the souls of the dead. If a man died without a son, his lineage was broken and all his ancestors and unborn dependents would die with him. The deep cultural value of sons in combination with the strong government policies advocating a small family has created conflicts and dilemmas for Vietnam families if no son is born, especially for the women (Johansson, 1998).

#### **4.5. Abortion in present day Vietnam**

At which level reproductive function in family is practised depends on some factors such as couples' rate of abortion and rate of using contraceptive methods. In the content of this part, we are going to analyze the real situation of the rate of abortion

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<sup>167</sup> For example: Lunar New Year; Thanh Minh festival; death anniversaries; the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month according to lunar calendar and so on.

<sup>168</sup> For instance: On wedding day of descendants; on day exam of family's members to university; on day to build new house; etc.

in Vietnam based on the research result of changes in population and family planning in 2005.

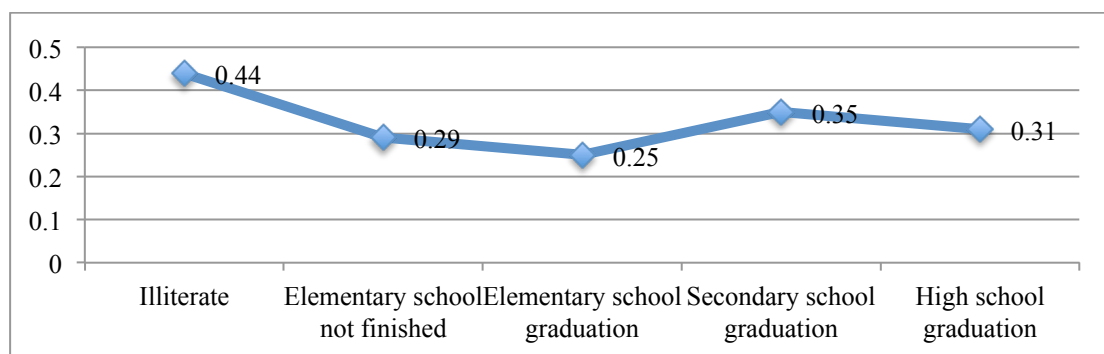
The abortion rate of married women aged 15 - 49 years old for 12 months before the time of research on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005 increased by 0.09% compared with 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002, at 0.31%. The abortion rate between two regions in 2005 was different from in 2002: that of urban areas (0.26%) was lower than that of rural areas (0.33%) and these were both higher than in 2002. Cause of rising abortion rate is that doctors can identify by ultra-sound the sex of the unborn before it is too late for an abortion (see pp. 136). The abortion rate of the Northwest in 2005 was higher than in 2002 and that of the Southeast stayed the same, six other regions had higher rates. The abortion rate in 2005 was shaped into slope compared with in 2002, only the Northwest, the Northeast and the South Central Coast remained the same position, five other regions had changes: The Northwest had the highest abortion rate (0.8%), but lower than in 2002 (-0.57%). The Northeast ranked the second but had higher rate than in 2002 (+0.17%). The abortion rate of the Red River Delta (0.41%) was at the third position and 2 times as high as in 2002. The fourth rank belonged to the North Central (0.32%) and its abortion rate was higher than in 2002 (+0.09%). The lowest rate was of the South Central Coast (0.10%), but still 0.08% as high as in 2002. The Southeast and the Mekong River Delta had the approximately equal rates (0.2% and 0.21%). The general trend was that there were uneven rates of abortion among geographic regions.

In terms of age, the abortion situation also had distinct features among different groups of age. The highest age of abortion was for women aged 25 - 29 years (0.40%), the next was the age of 30 - 34 (0.35%), and the lowest rate was of the age of 45 - 49 (0.22%). The fertility of women aged 45 - 49 years is lower than in younger women. It can be seen that the principal tendency is that the younger the age is, the higher the abortion rate. This can be attributed to young people's inexperience in contraceptive methods so they are easier to be unexpectedly pregnant. As a result, the abortion rate is high. Due to the lack of knowledge and limited understanding about contraceptive methods, they even do not know that they are pregnant, when realizing about it, they have to undergo an abortion because maybe they do not want to have children or their conditions do not allow them to give birth and nurture

children. Thu's case is an example. Thu, 20 years old, went to a district medical center in Ho Chi Minh city and unconsciously told the doctors: "Recently, I have realized that my abdomen is a little big so I want to be examined". With experience, doctors reported that she was pregnant but she argued that "How can I be pregnant? I only have had sex once"... "I am still very healthy, and work extra shifts as usual"... Only when having the ultra-sound<sup>169</sup> result of a 26 week baby and unable to be aborted, did she burst into tears<sup>170</sup>. The above story shows us that unlimited understanding about contraceptive methods has led to many abortion cases, especially among young people.

Considered in terms of married women's educational level during the age of 15 - 49, the result is as follows.

**Fig. 4.13. The abortion rate of women aged 15 - 49 by education level (2005)  
(in:%)**



*Source: Self-calculation based on the survey results about changes in population - family planning, 2005, pp. 200.*

The above figure indicates that the relatively high abortion rate of object groups with low educational levels, such as illiterate people, was highest (0.44%). Then, it is likely to sharply decline when educational level increases: elementary school undergraduation (0.29%) and elementary school graduation (0.25%). Here, the abortion rate rose up to 0.35% for groups with high school graduation, and the group of high school graduation had lower rate of abortion than secondary school graduation group (0.31%). It can be recognized that the complicated change in the correlation between education level and abortion.

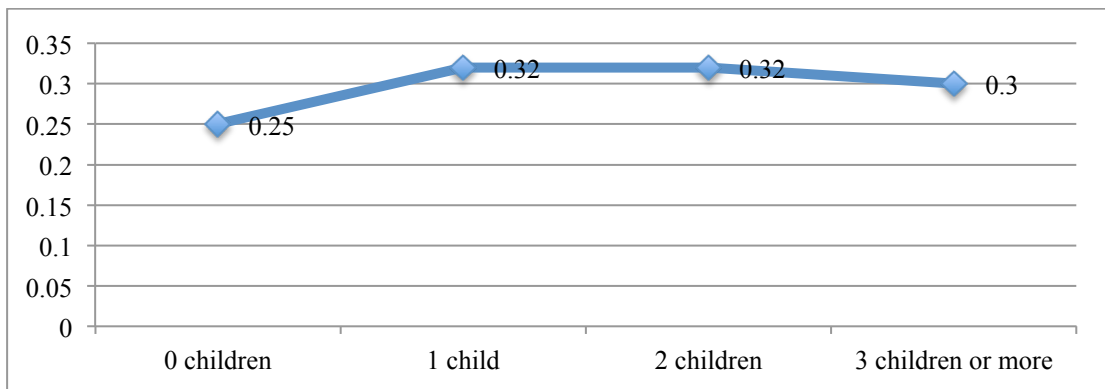
<sup>169</sup> Now ultra-sound is used as in China and India to terminate pregnancies with female fetus.

<sup>170</sup> [http://www.danchua.eu/373.0.html?&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=174&cHash=4a7276e7b9](http://www.danchua.eu/373.0.html?&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=174&cHash=4a7276e7b9) (accessed on 1.12.2011).



In the relation between the number of alive children and the abortion rate, we can realize a clear difference. Families with one or two alive children had the highest abortion rate, whereas families with three or more alive children or no alive children had lower abortion rate (fig. 4.14). Obviously, the number of alive children will determine the abortion. If the number of alive children is in family's and the law's acceptable limit (one or two children), surely family will choose the method of abortion, otherwise they will commit the population - family planning carried out in Vietnam, so the abortion rate of this group is reasonably high.

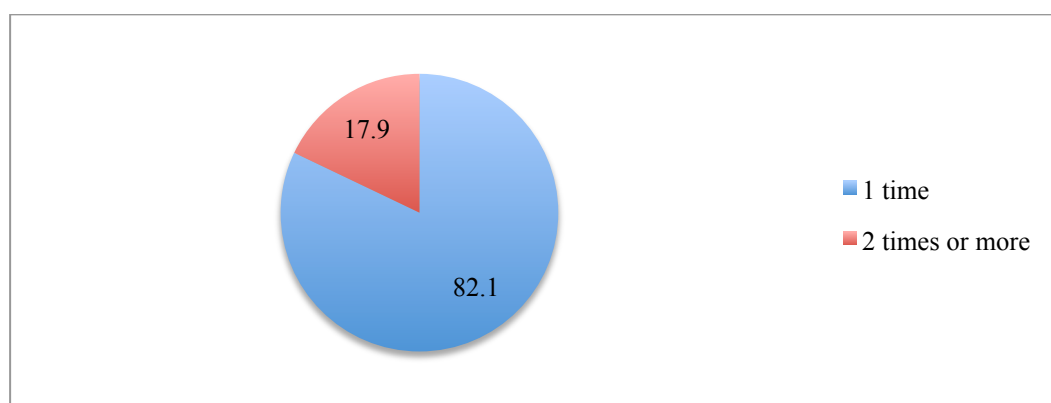
**Fig. 4.14. The abortion rate of women aged 15 - 49 by the number of alive children (2005) (in:%)**



*Source: Self - calculation based on the survey result about changes in population and family planning, 2005, pp. 200.*

About the number of abortion times, the results from figure 4.15 show that married women aged 15 - 49 years old who had one abortion for 12 months before the timepoint of research accounted for 82.1%, the number of women having two times of abortion and over accounted for only 17.9%.

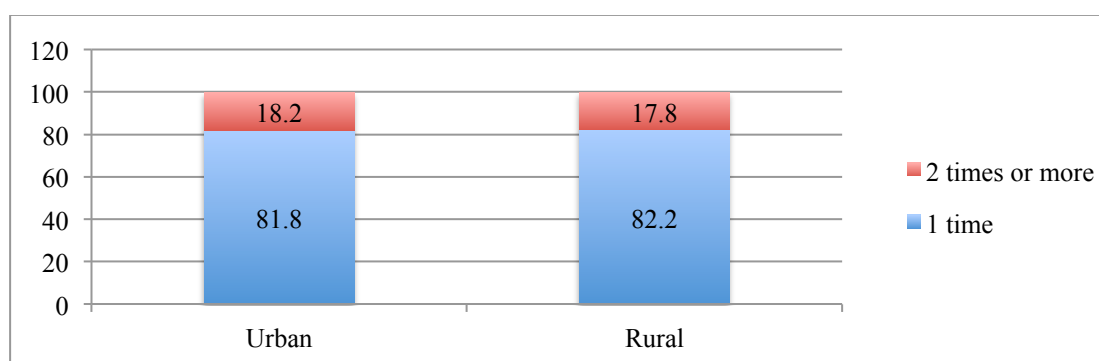
**Fig. 4.15. The ratio of abortion times (2005) (in:%)**



*Source: Survey result about changes in population and family planning, 2005, pp. 60.*

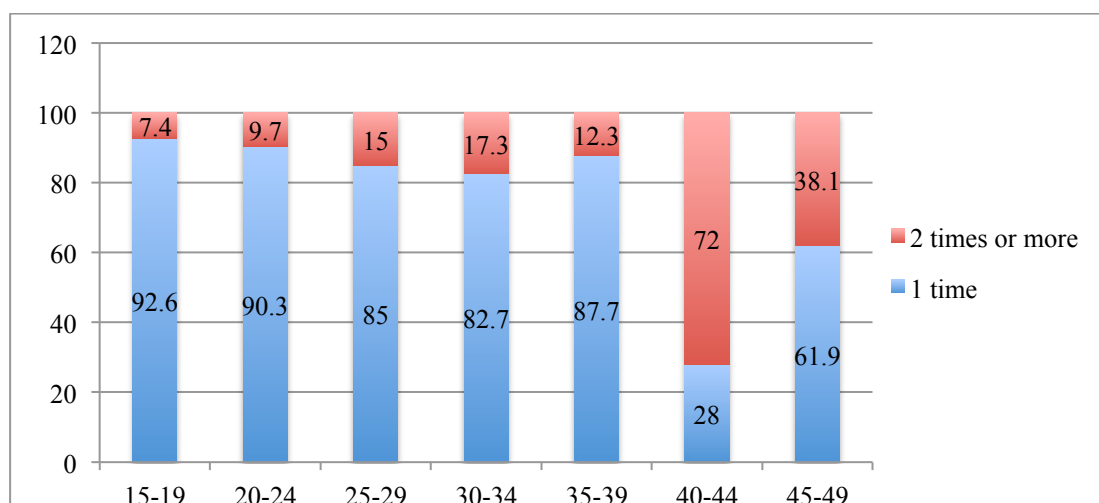
The number of rural women having one time of abortion was bigger than that of urban women (82.2% to 81.8%). The number of married women aged 15 - 49 years old having one abortion (82.1%) dropped by 0.26% compared with 2002, declined by 7.1% in urban areas and increased by 1.3% in rural areas. Women of the age group of 15 - 19 having one abortion accounted for 92.6%, this rate increased by 21.6% compared with 2003 and the rate of women having two and more abortions dropped by 22.6%. In contrast, the group of women aged 45 - 49 with one abortion had the lower rate (61.9%) compared to women of age 15 - 19 (30.8%) and 25.0% lower than in 2002. This might be due to the fact that safe medical availability of abortions was not provided during the phase when these women went through their most fertile years being 15 - 35 years old.

**Fig. 4.16. The rate of number of abortion times of married women aged 15 - 49 during the last 12 months by rural/urban area (2005) (in:%)**



*Source: Survey result of changes in population and family planning, 2005, pp. 60.*

**Fig. 4.17. The abortion rate of married women aged 15 - 49 during the last 12 months (2005) (in:%)**



*Source: Survey result of changes in population and family planning, 2005, pp. 60.*

Thus, the abortion rate in Vietnam has been likely to rise for recent years. In rural area, this rate is a bit higher than in urban area. Young age groups' abortion rate is relatively high and offer higher than older age groups. The main reason is due to their limited awareness of contraceptive methods. Low education level also affects the abortion. The abortion of people at low education level is relatively high, but people with elementary school graduation have the lowest rate of abortion. The Northwest had the highest abortion rate, the lowest rate belonged to the South Central Coast. The abortion rate depends on each couple's number of alive children. The highest abortion rate is of couples with one or two alive children. The majority of couples only have one time of abortion for 12 months before research timepoint.

#### **4.6. Contraceptive using in recent years Vietnamese families**

One of the targets to assess the success of the policy of population and family planning is the improvement of couples' awareness and the rate of couples using contraceptive methods. How is the real situation of using contraceptive methods in Vietnamese families? Are the sources of means and services of contraception in Vietnam convenient and ensured to meet people's demands? This part will answer these questions.

#### 4.6.1. The rate of contraceptive using

Based on the result of changes in population and family planning survey in 2005 as well as the result of 2006 Household living standard survey, it can be seen that the rate of married women aged 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods<sup>171</sup> was very high and increased each year.

**Table 4.9. The rate of using contraceptive methods (2001 - 2006)**

(in: %)

Year	The rate of using contraceptive methods	Categories	
		Modern	Non- modern
2001	73.9	61.1	12.8
2002	76.9	64.7	12.2
2003	75.3	63.5	11.8
2004	75.7	64.6	11.1
2005	76.9	65.8	11.1
2006	81.7	68.4	13.3

Source: - Survey about changes in population and family planning in 2005:

*Main results, pp. 45.*

- Self - calculation based on results of 2006 Household Living Standard Survey, pp. 180.

There were about 73.9% of married women during the age of 15 - 49 using one certain contraceptive method in 2001, in 2002 this rate increased to 76.9%. In 2003, this proportion was likely to decline a little, but reached the rise a year later. Until 2006, the rate of couples using contraceptive methods achieved the top rate at 81.7%. Thus, generally the rate of using contraceptive methods rised by 7.8% from 2001 to 2006. Corresponding to the increasing rate of using contraceptive methods, it can be seen that couples' rate of using modern contraceptive methods has the rising trend. The proportion of married women aged 15 - 49 using modern contraceptive methods was 61.1% in 2001, increasing to 64.6% in 2004, 65.8% in 2005 and 68.4% in 2006. About non-modern contraceptive methods, we can realize that the rate of using this group of methods had a declining tendency through the years in the period of 2001 - 2005 (in 2001, the rate was 12.8%, in 2002: 12.2%, in 2003: 11.8%, in 2004: 11.1 %

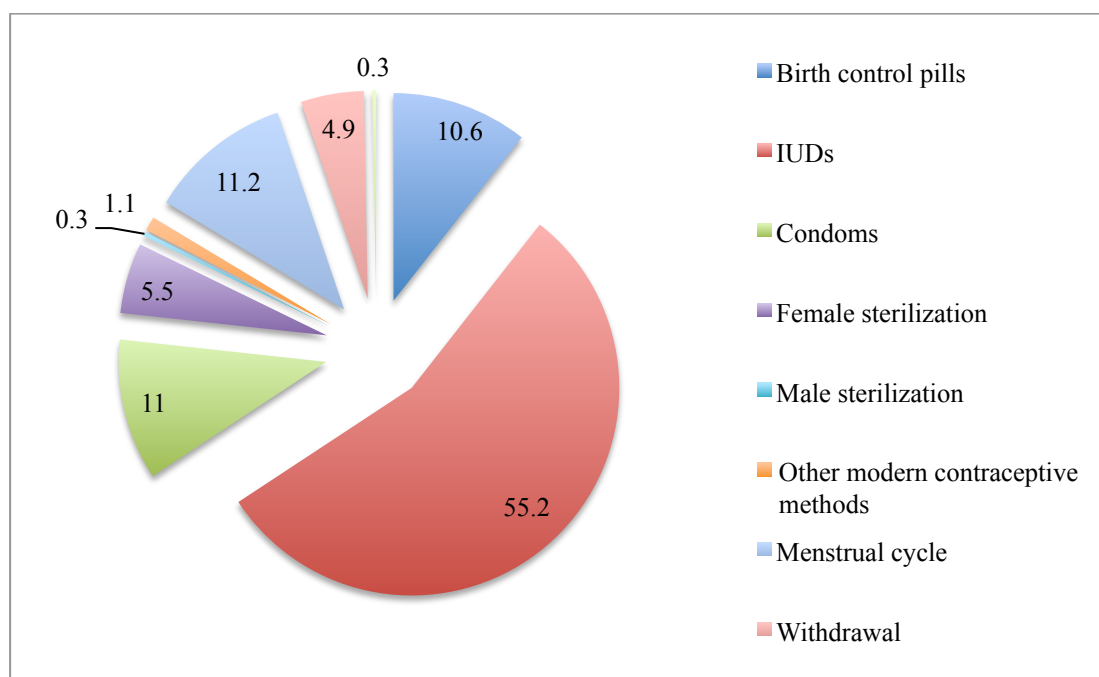
<sup>171</sup> There are no surveys allowed to collect the rate of couples using two contraceptives and more. Consequently, in the results there are no data about combination of contraceptive methods.

and in 2005: 11.1% as well). The rate of using non - modern contraceptive methods slightly increased in 2006, at 13.3%. Through the above data, couples are very aware of using contraceptive methods; it is indicated in the rising trend of using contraceptive methods. The majority of couples choose the modern contraceptive methods and it has had an increasing tendency. About non-modern contraceptive methods, couples do not use a lot, and in some years it was likely to gradually decline. Perhaps the reason is that the effectiveness is not high so couples have to consider whether to use non-modern contraceptive methods as a main method or not.

About the structure of using contraceptive in Vietnam, it is shown that due to the promotion of the practice of population communications, education to change behavior along with services of reproductive health care - family planning, especially the program of bringing services of family planning and reproductive health care to poor, difficult and remote areas; the use of contraceptive methods have been diversified in stead of monotonous program of family planning by using IUDs 3 decades ago (Van, 2004). Nowadays, people can use a variety of contraceptive methods, including modern contraceptive methods: IUDs, birth control pills, injectable contraceptives, vaginal methods (effervescent tablets), condoms, male or female sterilization and other traditional methods as menstrual cycle, withdrawal, etc.

Among the above-mentioned methods of contraception, IUDs was dominant (accounting for 55.2%). This is the most common contraceptive method because when using this method, women only come to a hospital or medical clinic and doctors will put a contraceptive instrument into their neck of the uterus. If the IUDs are accurately placed and their qualities are good, this method has the most effective ability of contraception (up to 100%) and the period of time using this method is from three - five years. IUDs have an advantage that do not reduce the pleasure in couples' having sex and do not cause pregnancy. When couples want to have children again, they only need to remove the IUDs. Thus, there is a trend that many couples choose IUDs as the main contraceptive method.

**Fig. 4.18. The rate of married women aged 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods (2006) (in:%)**



*Source: 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey, pp. 180.*

The second method that many couples choose is the method of menstrual cycle, accounting for 11.2 % of people asked. This is a traditional contraceptive method because it is based on daily life experience of people, especially of women. The advantages of this method are that couples do not need to prepare any contraceptive devices or put any device into their body like the method of IUDs so it is very comfortable for both husband and wife. However, this method is totally dependent on experience so it can cause pregnancy when the counting<sup>172</sup> is not accurate. Thus, although this method ranked secondly among all the contraceptive methods, it can be recognized that the rate of using this method was much lower than the method of using IUDs (11.2% to 55.2%).

Using condoms is the third choice of couples in contraception, accounting for 11% of people asked. Condom is a contraceptive method used rather popularly now because of its convenience. Condoms can be used at any time when users want and it is easy to carry them along. Condoms are only used for male and its effectiveness of contraception is very high. Not only effective in contraception, condoms can help

<sup>172</sup> Menstrual periods usually occur every 28 days but commonly vary from 21 days to 35 days and last from four days to seven days.

preventing HIV and some sexually infectious diseases. If these advantages do not play any special roles in husband and wife's relation, they are really important for sexual relation outside family. Because nowadays, it is quite common for people to have sex outside their marriage, so condoms have their own advantages and they are also able to prevent AIDS - a century's disease. Nevertheless, using condoms is faced with certain limitations which make couples have to consider using them, that is using condoms can reduce the pleasure in having sex for both so many men do not like wearing condoms. It is the reason why only a certain rate of couples chooses condoms as a main contraceptive method.

Another modern contraceptive method used by 10.6% of couples in 2006 was taking birth control pills. The side effect of birth control pills may be one of reasons that makes many women afraid of when carry on using. In a recent research carried out by Vietnamese women's organization, the world organization of population and development with the cooperation of the international research central of women about the choice of contraceptive methods, there have been very obvious ideas about the side effect of birth control pills. Most people are afraid because taking these pills is very hot, complicated to use and causes putting on weight, nausea, headache, stress, etc. (The Committee of Population and Family planning, 2000). In some cases, birth control pills can reduce women's pleasure in having sex. This explains why not many couples use birth control pills for contraception. However, this method is more chosen by couples than other contraceptive methods as withdrawal or male, female sterilization. Only 4.9% of couples used the method of withdrawal. With this method, penis will be drawn out of vagina before ejaculating. At the same time, men have to notice so that sperm does not run into vagina. With this method, both husband and wife do not need to use any contraceptive devices or supplementary methods, but the biggest disadvantage is causing stress in men and women's nerve system. Men cannot comfortably follow his pleasure, because he has to pay attention to the end of intercourse. Women are even more uncomfortable because in almost all cases, they are taken away their intercourse completion ability. The curve, which indicates their orgasm, is increasing higher and higher suddenly ends. Sexual organs are full of blood, but because the intercourse is incomplete and it has not come to the relief period so blood is stuck and can not escape. Women cannot go to sleep; they feel unpleasant and only come back to normal state after a

certain period of time. Thus, interrupted intercourse cannot take place regularly with the purpose of contraception. Furthermore, this contraceptive method does not have high effectiveness, because if the husband does not draw his penis out before ejaculating, it will lead to the woman's pregnancy. All the above-analyzed things help to realize the reason why only 4.9% of people asked use the method of withdrawal as a main contraceptive method.

There is one more contraceptive that couples can use, it is male and female sterilization. For this method, it is impossible for them to have children again, so not many couples use it. Especially men do not want to use this method because they think they will lose their manliness, and their male physical features will be reduced. It is the main reason causing only 0.3% of couples in Vietnam use male sterilization.

### **Conclusion**

The most widely used contraceptive method in Vietnam is IUDs. Over half of married women aged 15 - 49 answered that they have been using this method. The next are methods of menstrual cycle and using condoms. Other methods as male or female sterilization, and withdrawal are less often chosen by couples.

Some socially demographic features affecting the use of contraceptive methods by married women aged 15 - 49.

#### *Firstly, couples' residence*

As shown in the survey result, the rate of rural couples using contraceptive methods was a bit higher than that of urban couples (82.1% to 80.6%). However, the difference between rural and urban areas is mainly because in rural areas, the use of IUDs is much higher than in urban areas.



**Table 4.10. The proportion of married women aged 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods by rural - urban areas and geographic regions (2006) (in:%)**

	Rate of using	Birth control pills	IUDs	Condoms	Female sterilization	Male sterilization	Other modern methods	Menstrual cycle	Withdrawal	Other methods
Areas										
Urban	80.6	10.8	42.9	18.1	5.1	0.2	0.5	15.1	6.7	0.6
Rural	82.1	10.5	59.4	8.6	5.7	0.3	1.3	9.9	4.2	0.3
Geographic regions										
Red River Delta	80.8	7.6	65.7	10.2	3.1	0.1	0.2	7.3	5.6	0.2
Northeast	82.0	9.0	58.0	10.6	4.8	0.1	1.7	10.2	5.4	0.1
Northwest	84.0	11.3	65.8	3.7	8.6	0.2	1.1	4.6	4.8	--
North Central	80.7	4.5	69.5	10.5	5.4	0.2	0.7	5.7	3.5	--
South Central Coast	87.7	7.3	42.0	21.5	7.5	1.0	2.6	9.5	8.4	0.2
Central Highlands	80.0	12.6	40.9	10.2	9.3	--	3.5	19.0	4.2	0.3
Southeast	77.8	13.7	42.2	14.0	8.5	0.3	0.3	15.8	4.6	0.6
Mekong River Delta	83.8	17.0	49.4	7.6	4.4	0.3	1.0	16.0	3.5	0.8

*Source: 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey, pp. 180.*

59.4% of rural women used the method of IUDs while this rate in urban area was only 42.9%. This difference is attributed to a main reason that urban women have many choices of contraceptive methods due to more developed conditions in urban area. Moreover, urban couples' awareness of contraceptive methods is better than rural ones' so they can safely use other methods besides using IUDs. This obviously leads to the lower rate of urban women using IUDs than that of rural ones. The rate of urban men using condoms was higher than that of rural ones (18.1% to 8.6%). This can be explained with the reason that in urban areas, it is easier and more convenient to get access to population-family planning services than in rural areas. The method of menstrual cycle used by urban couples was also higher than by rural couples. Obviously, the higher understanding and awareness of urban people have resulted in the difference in the choice of this contraceptive method compared with rural people. Apart from the above differences in using contraceptive methods, we can recognize that there exists almost no remarkable difference between rural and urban areas.

It can be concluded that the most obvious difference between rural and urban area in using contraceptive methods is that, in rural area the proportion of couples using modern methods, specifically IUDs is excessively higher than that of urban ones.

Urban households with experience and better awareness often choose traditional methods like withdrawal, menstrual cycle more than do rural households.

The difference in the rate of using contraceptive methods categorized into geographic regions has been reduced and this difference is not very clear. The region having the highest rate of using contraceptive methods was the South Central Coast with 87.7% and the lowest rate belonged to the Southeast with 77.8% (the difference was 9.9%). Other regions had the approximate equal rates and at around 80%. Using IUDs is the most common method in geographic regions. The region using this method the most was the North Central with 2/3 of couples (69.5%). This means that in three couples using contraceptive methods; there are two using IUDs. This is a relatively high proportion. The Central Highlands was the region using IUDs least, with 40.9%, meaning 28.6% lower than the region with the highest rate - the North Central. The Central Highlands was also the only region with no male sterilization case. With traditional contraceptive methods, the difference between the Northwest, the North Central - the regions having the lowest rate (both at the rate of 9.2%) and the Central Highlands - the region with the highest rate (23.2%) can be clearly shown. These are relatively poor, slowly developed economic regions of the country but there exists a very clear difference in using traditional contraceptive methods. Does the factor of tradition and customs of each region affect this?

#### *Secondly, women's age*

Table 4.11 presents the current rate of using each contraceptive method categorized into different age. Nevertheless, we can combine the above ages into three main age groups: 15 - 24, 25 - 39, 40 - 49. These groups of age are considered to cover the main periods in the process of getting married. The youngest group is in the period of building family, the mid-group is practicing fertility and the oldest group has finished their target of childbirth. Hence, we can clearly see that the use of contraceptive methods is lowest for the first group of age, then it rises to the top for the second age group and it is likely to decline for the third group.

**Table 4.11. The rate of married women aged 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods (2006) (in:%)**

	Rate of using	Birth control pills	IUDs	Condoms	Female sterilization	Male sterilization	Other modern methods	Menstrual cycle	Withdrawal	Other methods
15-19	57.1	26.7	37.8	21.1	0.8	--	--	10.8	2.8	--
20-24	75.3	20.6	53.5	11.8	--	--	0.8	7.0	5.0	1.3
25-29	84.9	14.8	56.4	13.1	1.0	--	1.6	9.2	3.6	0.3
30-34	88.7	12.2	57.0	11.2	2.5	0.2	1.2	10.2	5.5	--
35-39	91.0	11.4	55.5	10.4	6.3	--	1.3	10.8	4.2	0.1
40-44	84.8	7.7	53.8	10.1	8.2	0.7	1.0	13.3	4.5	0.6
45-49	65.1	3.8	54.9	10.5	10.0	0.5	0.4	13.2	6.5	0.3

*Source: 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey, pp. 181.*

Based on the above table, we can realize that the rate of women aged 15 - 19 using contraceptive methods was lowest (57.1%), the next was the age group of 45 - 49 with 65.1%. These are obviously the most typical age during the fertility period of women. If the age group from 15 - 19 is the first stage of the fertility period, surely these women cannot complete their childbirth function so the rate of using contraceptive is not very much. If they use contraceptive methods, it is only for canceling the birth of the first child. At the age of 45 - 49, they are at the final stage of fertility so their pregnant ability is not high so it is not necessary for them to use contraceptive methods. Moreover, during this period the sex demand is not high and this influences their low demand of using contraceptive methods. The number of people applying contraceptive methods reached the top rate at the age group of 35 - 39 with 91%, the next was the group of 30 - 34 with 88.8%. This is the most vigorous period of couples in intercourse. During this period, normally they have enough number of children according to their demand and the social regulation, so the demand of using contraceptive methods is naturally very high. Furthermore, in this period they can apply contraceptive methods to enlarge the distance between the different times of childbirth.

Using birth control pills most belonged to the group aged 15 - 19 (26.7%) and group aged 20 - 24 (20.6%), the lowest rate was of the group aged 45 - 49 (3.8%). This is absolutely reasonable because young people are inexperienced in having sex, so they do not know how to have safe contraception and it leads to the worry about

pregnancy. And the method they choose to solve the problem is taking emergency birth control pills. Despite knowing that taking birth control pills can leave side effects and harm their health, they do not have any other choice. For women aged 45 - 49, they have passed through a quite long sexual life, so their experience in contraception is a lot and they do not use birth control pills much, except in emergency. The age group of 15 - 19 using condoms had the highest rate among age groups (26.7%), and this rate drastically dropped with the next age groups. The general trend is that the younger the group age is, the more they use condoms, apart from the group of 25 - 29 having a bit higher rate than the group of 20 - 24. This difference can be explained with the reason that young people do not have enough experience in contraceptive methods, especially traditional methods so they have to use condoms because as analyzed above, this is an easy-to-use and highly effective in contraception method. Consequently, young people often choose this method. For the older group, they have more experience in contraception so they have many other contraceptive methods to choose. They can choose modern or non-modern methods better than young people. Moreover, the young age group's frequency of having sex is quite a lot, whereas the older age group's is not much, this obviously affects the young age group's higher demand of using condoms than the older age group's.

The younger the age group is, the less they accept female sterilization method. If there was 0.8% of the group aged 15 - 19 using this method, the age of 45 - 49 had the rate of 10% using this method. Clearly, young people do not want to be sterilized because their sexual life still lasts long so they can use and choose other contraceptive methods to have more effectiveness. In addition, if their children have accidents or die, they will have to give birth to have other children. But with sterilization, they cannot have children anymore so people at young age do not accept female sterilization. Separately with male sterilization, almost no age groups choose this method. The difference among age groups hardly exists because the rate of using male sterilization was too low for all the age groups (from 0% to 0.7%).

Almost all the age groups apply traditional contraceptive methods at a certain degree. People at older age with their own experience often use traditional methods more than do younger people (see table 4.11).

### *Thirdly, education level*

Women's education level has impact on their contraception behaviors. Really, people with low education levels accept family planning methods less than people with high education levels. Only 78.7% of women who have not finished the 1<sup>st</sup> grade or have never been to school accepted family planning methods, whereas 83.7% of women with high school graduation accepted this. With the method of using IUDs, the lower the education level is, the more this method is used (apart from people graduating from secondary school who had the higher rate of using IUDs than people graduating elementary school). The rates of people who have not finished the first grade or have never been to school and who have graduated from elementary school, secondary school, high school, college and university using IUDs were respectively 59.3%, 53.1%, 62.1%, 52.8%, 43.7%. In contrast, with the method of using condoms, the lower the education level is, the less couples use it. The rate of using condoms gradually increases by women's education levels. Specifically, the rate of people who have not finished the 1<sup>st</sup> grade or never been to school using condoms was 4.1%, elementary school graduation 11.1%, secondary school graduation 10.1%, high school graduation 12.6% and college, university graduation 21.1%. This may be because people with high education level accept the use of condoms more easily than people with low education level. They have more knowledge and realize advantages of this method better so their rate of using condoms is higher.

The rate of using the method of menstrual cycle by women with high education level was much higher than women with lower education level (13.4% of people graduating from college, university used this while only 6.0% people who have not finished the 1<sup>st</sup> grade or never been to school used this). This is based on the principle that the use of traditional methods only takes effect when its mechanism is thoroughly understood and only people with high education level can understand about this more clearly.

### *Fourthly, couples' current number of children*

Couples' current number of children is also a factor affecting a lot the use of contraceptive methods. The result of sociological study in 2006 showed that families with two children used contraceptive methods most (85.5%), the next were families

with three children and more (79.3%), families with one child had a rate of 63.4%, and families without children accounted for 11.4%. This is easy to explain because families with two children are families having enough number of children as the law, so they need to use contraceptive methods to prevent the ability of having the third child. For families with one child, they have to give birth to one more child if they have demands so their use of contraceptive methods is lower than families with two or three children. As for families without any children, the use of contraceptive methods is reasonably lowest because they still have the responsibility to give birth.

*Fifthly, the fertility rate and the expected distance of fertility*

Normally, when a woman wants to have children, they will not want to use any contraceptive methods. The research data shows that women's rate of using contraceptive methods is due to different fertility rates expected.

The model shown in table 4.12 is quite tightened (for both any contraceptive method and modern contraceptive methods).

**Table 4.12. The rate of using contraceptive methods by expected fertility rates (2000)**

	Using contraceptive methods (in:%)	Using modern contraceptive methods (in:%)
Desire to have children		
Having more children	55.4	40.2
Having not decided	75.3	54.9
No desire to have more children	81.1	57.7
Want a child		
Within 2 years	22.2	12.1
After 2 years	64.8	48.4
No specific period of time	64.4	43.6

*Source: The Committee of population - family planning, 2000, pp. 72.*

Women who do not want to have more children had the highest rate of using contraceptive methods (81.1%). The next were women who cannot decide their fertility behaviors (75.3%), the lowest rate belonged to women who want to have more children (55.4%). The differences based on the distance of fertility expected is

also confirmed, women who want to give birth within two years are likely not to use contraceptive methods, whereas 2/3 of women who desire to have children after two years want to apply contraceptive methods. Women who want to have more children but do not confirm about when to have children often use contraceptive more.

*Sixthly, other features*

The acceptance of contraceptive methods due to some features of women aged 15 - 49 is presented in table 4.13. Obviously, the use of contraceptive methods has a connection with having or without electricity and having or without television. Women living in households with electricity or T.V accept contraceptive methods more than others. This proves that the factors of development and communication programs have great influence on the behavior of family planning.

**Table 4.13. The rate of using contraceptive methods due to some factors (2000)**

	Using contraceptive methods (in:%)	Modern contraceptive methods (in:%)
Electricity		
No	66.4	46.6
Yes	77.8	58.4
TV		
No	71.1	55.1
Yes	79.1	56.4
Transportation		
Roads available in 4 seasons	77.6	59.5
Roads seasonally available	63.2	49.3
Others (waterway/ railway)	70.3	41.2
Pathway	67.1	47.2

*Source: The Committee of population - family planning, 2000, pp. 74.*

The data in table 4.13 reports that the transportation conditions also affect women's behavior of contraception. Women living in the places with convenient transportation accept contraceptive methods more.

## **Comment**

The above analysis shows that women's use of contraceptive methods is closely connected to some individual and public features. As the results given, couples' residence has impact on the choice of contraceptive methods. In rural areas, couples choose modern contraceptive methods, specifically the method of IUDs, much more than urban households. Urban families with better life experience and awareness usually use traditional contraceptive methods as withdrawal, menstrual cycle more than households in rural areas. In terms of geographic regions, the difference in the rate of using contraceptive methods has been reduced and the difference is not very clear. The age using contraceptive methods is likely to increase and women at the age of 35 - 39 reach the top rate, then this rate has the declining trend when women get much older. Education level is always considered as one of the factors affecting individuals' behavior. As can be seen from the research result, different education levels have different impacts on contraceptive methods used by women. The higher the education level, the more contraceptive methods are used. People with high education level are more and more likely to use traditional contraceptive methods. IUDs is a contraceptive method mostly chosen by people with a low education level and the rate of using this has a decreasing trend when the education level rises. Couples' current number of children affects the choice of contraceptive methods, as well. Families with two children use contraceptive methods most; the lowest rate belongs to households without children. The demand of giving birth and the distance of fertility do an impact on the rate of using contraceptive methods. When people have demand of having children, the rate of using contraceptive methods is lowest and women who want to give birth within two years tend not to want to apply contraceptive methods. Women living in households with electricity and T.V accept contraceptive methods more than others. Similarly, women living in places with convenient transportation condition accept contraceptive methods more.

### ***4.6.2. Provision sources of family planning devices and services***

Whether the implementation plan of population and family planning policy is successful or not depends a lot on the ability of providing contraceptive devices as well as the quality of family planning services. For the past years, the quality of family planning services in Vietnam has seen a great progress. Medical and family



planning services have been brought to remote areas of the country. The number of medical clinics in districts has continuously increased year by year. If in 2000, there were 10,271 medical clinics in districts throughout the country, in 2007, this number was 10,851 (2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey). Besides, the number of doctors, nurses has also continuously raised (table 4.14). This contributes to fostering the increasing ability treat and care about people's health, also actively contributes to the target of family planning in Vietnam.

**Table 4.14. The number of medical staff (2000 - 2007) (Thousand persons)**

	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Doctor	39.2	50.1	51.5	52.8	54.8
Nurse	46.2	49.2	51.6	55.4	60.3
The number of doctors over 10 thousand people (persons)	5.0	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4

*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

Table 4.15 presents the data about the provision source of contraceptive methods and services in 2005. As years before, the main provision source of contraceptive methods is the medical network: medical clinics in towns/ districts/ intertown centers, this accounts for the highest proportion in all the methods (46.1%), the second source is hospitals (district hospitals: 13.7%, provincial hospitals: 5.1%). The survey result also shows that for recent years, the network system of population - family planning has become a main provision source of contraceptive methods and currently ranks the third position with the total proportion of 14.3%.

**Table 4.15. The rate of married women aged 15 - 49 currently using contraceptive methods by provision source (2005) (in:%)**

Provision source	Any methods	Modern methods
Provincial hospital	5.11	5.94
The center for children protection and family planning	1.21	1.37
District hospital	13.66	15.91
Medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers	46.1	53.36
Medical and family planning staff	2.18	1.78
Family planning group	2.63	2.68
Collaborators	9.46	8.75
Chemist's	6.9	8.00
Private doctor	1.7	1.88
Friend/relative	9.64	0.16
Others	1.35	0.16
Unknown	0.06	0.00
Total	100.0	100.0

*Source: Survey about changes in population and family planning in 2005, pp. 49*

For modern contraceptive methods, the main provision source was town/district medical clinics (53.4%), dropping by 2.1% compared with 2004 (55.5%); next, hospitals accounted for 21.8%, ranking the third was collaborator (8.75%) and the fourth position belonged to doctors (8%).

Table 4.16 indicates that most provision sources of contraceptive methods see the difference in rural and urban areas. The biggest difference is that medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers had a proportion of over 2 times as high as in urban areas, in contrast, chemist's in urban area had a proportion of nearly 5 times as high as in rural areas. Most provision sources of contraceptive devices and services in urban areas have differences higher than in rural areas. The provision source having the highest proportion was medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers, which only accounted for 24%, while in rural areas there is a big difference among provision sources, medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers had the biggest proportion, at 53.8%. In urban areas, the provision source from chemist's was situated at the second position (16.8%), but in rural areas, this source did not have a big rate (3.4%). Medical and family planning staff and family planning group in rural

areas had the bigger rate of providing contraceptive devices and services (2.2% and 3%) than in urban areas (2.2% and 1.7%).

**Table 4.16. The rate of married women aged 15 - 49 currently using contraceptive methods by rural or urban provision sources (2005) (in:%)**

Provision source	Area	
	Urban	Rural
Provincial hospital	11.92	2.74
The central of children protection - family planning	2.62	0.72
District hospital	13.70	13.65
Medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers	24.04	53.78
Medical and family planning staff	2.22	2.16
Family planning group	1.66	2.97
Collaborators	8.24	9.89
Chemist's	16.84	3.43
Private doctor	2.34	1.47
Friend/relative	13.91	8.15
Others	2.39	0.99
Unknown	0.11	0.05
Total	100.0	100.0

*Source: Survey about changes in population and family planning in 2005, pp. 50.*

Table 4.17 shows that the main provision of contraceptive devices and services in eight regions in the country is medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers, but there is a big difference: the Red River Delta had the rate of 64.3%, the North Central: 56.9%, while the Southeast only had 27.4%. The Northeast and the South Central Coast had the approximately equal rates (the Northeast: 45.6% and the South Central Coast: 44.3%). The rate of the Northwest was approximately equal to that of the Mekong River Delta and the Central Highlands had the approximately rate equal to the Southeast. District hospitals accounted for the lowest rate in the Red River Delta (5.54%) and the highest rate belonged to the Northwest (26.0%). Other provision sources begin to have the obvious differences among the regions. Particularly in the Red River Delta, the provision source had the second biggest ratio was collaborator (7.16%), in other regions it was district hospitals. The provision source having the third biggest proportion was collaborator in three regions: the

Northeast, the North Central and the South Central Coast; in the Central Highlands and the Southeast, the third biggest provision source was friend and relative.

**Table 4.17. The rate of married women aged 15 - 49 currently using contraceptive methods categorized into provision source and geographic regions (2005) (in:%)**

Provision Source	Red River Delta	Northeast	Northwest	North Central	South Central Coast	Central Highlands	Southeast	Mekong River Delta
1 Provincial hospital	3.85	3.73	2.57	1.98	4.11	6.08	11.24	5.27
2 The central of children protection - family planning	0.66	0.96	0.74	1.01	2.18	1.72	2.44	0.78
3 District hospital	5.54	14.34	26.00	17.99	12.39	19.39	15.17	15.81
4 Medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers	64.26	45.60	38.78	59.61	44.30	28.08	27.36	38.36
5 Medical and family planning staff	2.11	2.37	2.71	1.41	2.82	3.23	1.44	2.51
6 Family planning group	1.69	4.63	11.34	4.78	3.12	0.86	1.69	0.89
7 Collaborators	7.16	13.77	9.06	6.29	11.41	10.62	7.39	11.76
8 Chemist's	6.49	2.75	1.64	2.62	7.85	6.70	14.70	7.19
9 Private doctor	0.50	0.59	0.27	0.29	1.20	3.59	3.19	3.32
10 Friend/relative	6.58	10.02	6.10	3.74	9.16	16.22	12.88	12.88
11 Others	1.11	1.25	0.78	0.28	1.24	3.48	2.35	1.17
12 Unknown	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.22	0.04	0.16	0.04
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source: Survey about changes in population and family planning in 2005, pp. 51.*

Table 4.18 indicates that public medical sector is dominant in providing IUDs and sterilization services. Of modern contraceptive methods, nearly 70% of IUDs were put in towns/districts/intertown centers and above 22.4% were put in hospitals (district hospitals: 17.25 and provincial hospitals: 5.3%). The main provision source of birth control pills was collaborator (33.6%), the next was in towns/districts/intertown centers (30%) and chemist's (24.1%). The biggest provision source of condoms was chemist's (37.7%), and then collaborator (30.6%) and in towns/districts/intertown centers (19.4%) and the fourth position belonged to medical - family planning staff (5.2%). The main provision source of sterilization service was hospitals (district hospitals: 55.7% - 57% and provincial hospitals: 30.3% - 25.2%), the next was in towns/districts/intertown centers (female: 7.3% - male: 7.6%). It is clear that in the case of using male or female sterilization, hospitals from the level of district and higher have enough medical devices and qualified doctors to carry out this method.

**Table 4.18. The rate of married women aged 15 - 49 currently using contraceptive methods by provision sources and modern methods being applied (2005) (in:%)**

Provision Source	Birth control pills	IUDs	Condoms	Female sterilization	Male sterilization
1 Provincial hospital	0.60	5.32	0.59	30.31	25.24
2 The central of children protection - family planning	0.43	1.58	0.48	2.31	4.92
3 District hospital	1.62	17.15	0.93	55.70	56.96
4 Medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers	29.93	69.97	19.44	7.26	7.58
5 Medical and family planning staff	4.95	0.59	5.15	0.30	0.42
6 Family planning group	2.39	2.59	2.91	3.81	3.80
7 Collaborators	33.59	0.40	30.63	0.06	0.68
8 Chemist's	24.14	0.13	37.75	0.01	0.00
9 Private doctor	1.89	2.07	1.19	0.06	0.00
10 Friend/relative	0.23	0.07	0.69	0.00	0.18
11 Others	0.22	0.13	0.24	0.17	0.21
12 Unknown	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source: Survey about changes in population and family planning in 2005, pp. 52.*

## Conclusion

The principal provision source of contraceptive methods is in towns/districts/intertown centers, the next is district and provincial hospitals. For recent years, the network system of population and family planning has been a main provision source of contraceptive methods for couples and probably also abortions. The main provision source of contraceptive methods in rural area is medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers whereas chemist's in urban area plays a big role in providing these methods beside medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers. In the public sector, provincial, district hospital or medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers keep an important position in providing services of IUDs and sterilization for people.

## **Chapter 5: Role of family education for the formation and development of children's personalities<sup>173</sup>**

### **5.1. Role of Vietnamese families towards educating - socializing children**

Each person was born twice: biological and social person. In terms of biology, the birth of human is not different from that of other animals. The research of anthropology, sociology, linguistics has proved that if one baby is separated from the society and its culture, he is no more than weed in the fields or other animals<sup>174</sup>.

The process of changing a baby from a natural organ to social person happens through educating - socializing. This refers to the second birth. In spite of being humanly born, the baby will never become human if he is uneducated and entirely separated from society. According to the famous American sociologist, Robert Park: "Human born is not already human, he only becomes human in educating process". Similarly, the French sociologist, Sabran said: "Society is like a ship, individuals must step on social ship to become social person. If not, he will still stay at the harbor" (Van, 1996:7, my translation).

The important position of the family education can't be denied because it is the first and lifelong for each person (Chuong, 2000; Lan, 1994; Xuan, 1997). Different children from different families bear sophisticated characteristics. The Vietnamese sayings such as "*such fruit, such tree*" or "*like father, like son*" and "*such beef, such broth*" is absolutely right to talk about the important role of the family in rearing and educating children. Families are home where people are raised, taken care of, educated and matured. It is in the families that people absorb life experience, moral

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<sup>173</sup> This chapter consists of three papers published at International Journals: 1) Some parents' activities in educating children: The Vietnam case. Journal of Educational and Social Research. Vol.2, No.1, January 2012, pp. 199 - 205; 2) Contents of child education by Vietnamese families at present. Journal of Educational and Social Research. Vol.2, No.1, January 2012, pp. 207 - 213; 3) The role of family in educating-socializing children: The case of Vietnam. Current research journal of Social Sciences. Vol.4, No.2, March 2012, pp. 173 - 181.

<sup>174</sup> The missionary Sigh (Indian) discovered two girls Amala and Camala among a herd of wolf, and both were rescued. Shortly after Amala died, Camala was raised by her for another 9 years. At first, she walked with four legs, wandered at night, roared like wolves and gradually she was able to walk with two legs, practiced drinking with glasses. Regardless of patiently bringing her up, she enables to know no more than 30 words. Another example, in April 1967 the death of a human-wolf named Ruma was announced by British and French journalists. On January 17<sup>th</sup> 1957, he was seen accidentally. He was unable to walk with two legs or speak human language, only eat raw meat. In the hospital, it was very difficult to teach him how to eat vegetables. From 1966, Ruma's health suddenly became worse and then died. He was determined to be 27 years old by scientists.

and cultural standards of societies. The first roots of one's personalities, hobbies, attitudes towards life, etc. are shaped in families (Lich, 1990). According to Macarengo: "What parents do for children before the age of 5 is 90 percent of the educating result" (Chuong, 2000:15, my translation). Therefore, wanting children to fully develop their character, and not opposed with social requirements, families must educate children from the early age: "*Make hay when the sun shines. What learnt in the cradle lasts till the tomb*". However, families play an important role not only in the early period of human character building (provide social experience, rear, look after and train habits and skills from the early age) but also for the whole life as a successive process because people always have to learn how to adapt to new situations and environment in which families are the link between individuals and societies. Families take part in all the process of educating and socializing in human circle. At any period the role of families is clearly identified.

At infancy, families are the first socialized environments of a child. Shortly after the birth, newly - born babies are inclined to the surroundings and begin the acquisition. The senses such as ears, eyes, mouth and skin of the child show the feeling of hearing, sight, eating, drinking, cold and heat, etc. The care of family members (dad, mum) such as feed, bathe, get dressed, hold, etc. and the way they take care of such as regular hours for sleep and meal, accustom children to eating foods beside mother's milk has helped children get into the habits. At this period, families are almost the only and very important socialized environments to children.

At the kindergarten time, besides continuing making habits, children begin to play adult's roles. They characterize activities and adult social relationships through games of sellers and buyers, teachers and students, doctors and patients, drill in cooking with tiny kitchen ware, or drivers with toy cars or trains, etc. Thus, children learn by imitating through games. While playing, children develop original personalities: sensing, singing, drawing, qualities such as politeness, cleanness, silence, discipline, honesty, love for parents and friends, tolerance, and courage, etc. Beside families, at this period, children begin to have external social relationships, i.e., playmates, schoolmates, and teachers. The children of this period also begin to be influenced by TV, pictures, etc. At this period, children are very pure, naive, easily told and taught. Therefore, families play an important role in organizing and

guiding the children's activities: who to play with, how to greet, offer food, which book to read, which school to attend, when to watch TV and which programs to be allowed to watch, etc. Families help children be aware of the rights or wrongs, must or mustn't by encouraging, stimulating, praising children on doing right, for example, greeting parents when they come home from work, giving feet and hands a clean wash, taking medicine when sick, lend friends toys, etc. or stopping, displeasing when children do something wrong, make children feel guilty or ashamed of breaking household regulations, help children build sense of responsibility by specific activities such as helping mothers with household chores, baby sitting, etc.

At teen period, children set up relationships with people around, firstly are family members, and gradually build their own characteristics. At this time, families help and provide children with social experience in contact and behaving to people around, motivate, sympathize, comfort them when they are defeated, discouraged, help them with knowledge, essential understanding to be self - controlled at the pre-puberty when the body sees great changes.

At the age of adulthood, individuals develop their selfness; build social experience to join working groups, social organizations or new communities. At this age, people's character is basically formed. At this time, families play a role in orienting individuals with basic issues, namely: which jobs to do for a living (job orientation), which lifestyle to follow (value orientation), whom to love (marriage orientation).

At the pre - marriage and parentage, the awareness of roles as wife, husband, mother and father has existed from families through behaviors between parents, attitudes and emotions of parents to children. Families give individuals motives, desire for marriage and help them know how to behave when they are married. Before getting married, each person has long observed his parent's marriage. The marriage roles are learnt mainly from the roles shown in parents' marriage. The marriage pattern of parents plays an extremely important role in educating - socializing marriage roles of children. For example, parents' happy marriage will be a good foundation for children's marriage afterwards. Unguaranteed parents' marriage such as divorce, separation or at lower levels like frequent argument, fighting will have a big impact on children's marriage. The doubts about marriage life, everlastingness and



endurance in marriage will always exist in the children's mind of those families. Therefore, building a happy family life will have good influence the children's awareness of marriage at this age.

At the age of agedness, the young can see what their lives will be like when they are getting old by observing the life of the elderly in their families (grandparents, parents). Thus, people know how to prepare for the agedness. On the other hand, people manage to learn how to be the old, even the way to live on others after many years with their independent life. Families help each person face up with the agedness.

At the age of the last life circle, families also help family members to welcome the death in a more relieved way because they have a chance of witnessing the death of others. The formalities of funeral that are more meaningful to life than the dead, help people be aware of the death as an objective rule, and welcome their death before it comes. Families help individual overcome sadness, loneliness because the dead are naturally talked about in the relationship with the living to make the death normal. The love and worship of the family to the dead cause individuals to admit their death more easily when they know that despite of passing away, they still stay in the heart of their relatives.

It can be seen that the family carries out the function of educating through the whole life of each person, and it does not separate from people at any age of each person's life circle. One question raised is that why families execute the role of educating - socializing people during their entire life. In my opinion, perhaps there are some basic causes followed:

*First*, the family is a cell and social institution. As one of the basic social institutions (Dong & Hung, 2001; Tam, 2001), families reproduce people not only in terms of physical appearance but also emotional spirits, soul, culture - it means socializing - the process changing a child from a creature into social person. The child who lacks education from families or are brought up in an improper family will be a challenge and difficulty in educating and training him into an ordinary person.

*Second*, families are a special social group because family members are close - knit by marriage, blood or adoption relationship. Therefore, families educate children through special relationships among roles of family members. They are blood relationship between parents and children as well as love among siblings, grandparents and parents for children. The position and role of each individual with the child are identified after his birth at which the process of educating - socializing for the child happens. Each family member at his own position becomes an example for the child to follow and imitate. The social behaviors the child perceives, learns in the family are not only an experience of adults but also love of the most beloved people. Therefore, the child easily perceives and imitates. Families tactfully teach children etiquette to behave in families and societies through attitudes, emotions, psychology and sustainable and frequent relationship. Only by the particular relationship through attitudes, psychological emotion do families gradually shape the children's misbehaviors, and prevent demeanors against the standards of society.

*Third*, families are micro social environment - directly surrounded the child that the child must attach to whether he likes or not. Those are material and spiritual conditions of families interact with the child, through which the child perceives the influence of the environment. The impact of macro environment must be through this small environment so families are becoming more and more important to the process of educating - socializing children. The chief feature in families is the close - knit among family members and between those members with children. Through families, children learn models of behaviors and standards for the roles that children may have in the future.

*Fourth*, a family is a group of social psychology. In the family, children can be themselves naturally, fully and clearly showed their needs, personalities, trend, etc. and it is in the family that brings the most favorable conditions to practice, adjust and self - adjust. In this environment, material conditions also influence children. For example, a low living standard, lack of daily material and spiritual living means, etc. may cause certain limits to the children's personality building.

*Fifth*, families are the cultural environment for educating people because family culture, a part of social culture, which is selected, perceived shapes and develops for

generations, suit the family living conditions, family members. The individuals growing up in family culture bear that characteristic.

As a result, educating in families has characteristics, which is brimful of love from parents to children. Parents are willing to sacrifice material and spiritual conditions, spare all advantages for educating as long as their children become good people. Simultaneously, education in families is an ideal, concretized, and highly individualized one with the characteristics of own families. However, it is noteworthy that conducting of educating - socializing of families occurs not only in unique families but also stay in the whole education of schools and society because the process of educating - socializing of families have particular characteristics related to sensation - emotion, specialization - individualization, reality. Besides advantages, it has certain limits and needs to self - supplement from other educating environments such as schools and societies. School education is purposeful, conscious, disciplined, organized, and highly planned with specialized means and trained professionals, etc., which are positive characteristics of schools. However, school education is a part because both families and schools are parts of the society. The spontaneous, direct and strong influence of social factors on families and school education currently causes families and schools to face great difficulties, or become powerless and isolated. The increasing development of social life in terms of economic, science, technology, information, etc. will increase individual exchanges and activities beyond the limit of families and school. Therefore, the combined and united co-operation, supplementation and mutual adjustment among social institutions, and the consistent impact of environments are compulsory requirements for the process of individual educating - socializing of the society in general and families in particular.

### **Summary**

Many educating - socializing factors get involved in the process of human character - building: families, school, group of friends, mass media, social and political institutions, etc. Nevertheless, families are the first, primary and deciding factor to educate - socialize each person. It is through families that people can learn the standards, values approved by the society. Families are the first human group, which people are raised, looked after, educated and grown up. During childhood, children

living in families and learn a lot by observing and teaching. They know exactly what is wrong or right, should or shouldn't. According to Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist: "Children born do not know what to do, are educated to a good people, grown - up. From a selfish creature, they become the people who know how to cooperate with others" (Xuan, 1997:3, my translation).

## **5.2. Roles of fathers, mothers and other members in educating - socializing children**

### ***5.2.1. The role of father, mother in educating - socializing children***

Each family is a cell of society. Many families make a society. The good families bring good societies, so any societies pay attention to strengthen families. This is a long - standing and relatively common concept in Vietnam from the past to the present. In the feudal society, families are responsible for training, perfecting and developing personalities for families' members. At present, Vietnam also pay attention to families and requires every family to be responsible for building their own families into cultural ones, raising children with good health and teaching with good personalities in order to provide the country with good citizens. This is the lofty and noble duty, which any father and mother must make perfectly, and not allowed to evade the important responsibility for any reasons. Those fulfilling their duties are praised and meritoriously valued. Uncle Ho once said: "Our people are thankful to the mother of both the South and the North who bear and rear heroic generations of the country", or the poet Maxim Gorki also said: "No mothers bring neither poets nor heroes" (Xuan, 1997:61, my translation).

Therefore, educating children is the most important thing for parents to have a respectable family. That is the father's responsibility - take care of the family, have a sense of responsibility, be a model, just with prestige. The whole family must respect the father's power. In educating children, fathers must be strict, quiet but right, fair and decisive, loving but not cheeky, or let them do whatever they like. Mothers play a very important role in educating children but in another way: educating with love, tenderness. Strict fathers make children frightened, tender mothers make them affectionate, from which children neither dare nor have the heart to do the wrong things.

Admittedly, parents are always in the leading influence and direct impact on the character building of children. According to the survey results by Nguyen Duc Manh (2003) about twenty qualities of children, it can be remarkably seen that 10 children's qualities are the most influenced by fathers. They are: 1) self - confidence (61%); 2) law respect (59.7%); 3) courage, bravery (56,9%); 4) honor respect (49.3%); 5) patience (48.8%); 6) senior - respect (40.8%); 7) modesty (32.2%); 8) curiosity (27%); 9) liberty and liberality (19.1%); 10) riskiness and aggressiveness (16.1%). Only five out of the qualities mentioned are most - influenced by mothers, they are: 1) filial piety (64.5%); 2) honesty and truthfulness (58.3%); 3) hospitality (55.5%); 4) calmness and neatness (54%); 5) dislike having a wide circle of acquaintances (15.2%). Apparently, the influence of gender on the roles of father and mother has greatly affected the character building of children. Without that influence, the development of the child will certainly have deviation, either too manly or too womanly.

The specific roles of mothers and fathers in educating children in the present Vietnamese families will be analyzed to clarify that view.

#### *5.2.1.1. The role of mother in educating children*

The mother's first role is to bring love to the child. Holding, lulling, looking after, and worrying about children when giving suck shows the mother's love for children. Mothers are interested in every child's behavior such as to be full, hungry, hot, cold, comfortable, uncomfortable, crying for sulkiness, laughing. When the child is healthy and diverting, the mother is happy otherwise she is worried. That love which is not only born by instinct but also by educating - socializing about the mother's roles by families and society. Unlike many creatures, the infant is unable to be independent. His life totally depends on his mother. Mothers raise children with her sweet milk; teach them with caress, and tenderness. Thanks to great care and educating with unlimited love of mother, children restrain natural aggressiveness of human - being. That dependence enables mother to cover all the problems of family relationship with children. When the children grow up, mother's roles will bear different aspects, however, stay in children's mind. No matter how troublesome, grievous it is, the Vietnamese often shout for help: "*Oh, my mum!*" or "*Good heaven!*". This help means that the mother is as important as heaven, ranking at a

high position and important to children's thoughts. Many scientific researches have proved that the earlier separation between the mother and the child is, the more missing he feels about emotional life. As a result, the child will have an imbalance spiritual life with quick - temperedness and lack of love, etc. in the future (Xuan, 1997).

It can be concluded that mothers play a special important role in bringing up children. With their love for the children, the children personalities are gradually built, developed and perfect.

Secondly, mother is the first children's teacher. Mothers teach children behaviors towards all family members (aunts, uncles, grandparents), neighbors and everyone. The mother's dignity and behaviors towards their children influence their future psychological life. On the other hand, the mother's behaviors mainly depend on her relationships with others in the family, especially with her husband. Therefore, the child's first relationships outwardly seem to focus with mother but in fact they depend on all internal family relationships. However, the mother's role is crucial to bring up children in the family. At first, the child begins to imitate his mother's behaviors to everybody. Then, she teaches the child to speak, walk, sit, eat and drink, and daily polite behaviors with others. Therefore, the child's dignity will depend much on the mother's spirit and mind. Mothers should train and perfect their personality to perfect their children's in the future.

#### *5.2.1.2. The father's role in bringing up children*

Comparing the importance of the fathers and mothers to children in their development, a rule can be clearly seen: from the child's birth to adulthood, the mother's role decreases gradually from the peak. Meanwhile, the father's role is tiny at the child's birth but it will increase steadily with the fall of mother's. From the age of 7, the role of fathers and mothers are equal and bear a parallel fall until the child reach the goal to desire for completely independence (Xuan, 1997:72). At that time, the relationship between parents and children is adult to adult.

The child expects love from the mother and power from the father. Those are two out of essential foundations for the child to balance firmness and gentleness. However,

fathers also have love and mothers have power with lower rate. Power and love do not contradict but harmonize, support and influence with each other sometimes. Power is not dictator and oppression but strictness and justice.

Behind the power, another father's role is to coordinate and support mother in bringing up children. At the beginning of the childhood, the father's behaviors towards children is not more important than other relatives such as grandparents, maid, etc. In fact, mothers occupy almost all the child's sentiment then and father can show his impact on the child indirectly through the mother. For instance, if the father loves, helps, takes care of, brings happiness, security and no worries to the wife, the mother then will spare all her love and the best for the child. Conversely, the husbands cold - treated with insufficient love, the wives are always hard, worried and certainly they will not spare all her healthy love for their child. Apparently, fathers are always beside or behind mothers to educate children when they are young. This is their indirect role in bringing up children. When the child grows up, the father's third role is direct, which is also the important factor in building and developing children's character. Any fathers who do not fulfill this duty, he will be an irresponsible person. Father's power is clearly shown by direct interference, which is the key to family harmony but it requires tactful adjustment. The intelligent father educates and controls children by imposing thinking ways on them, simultaneous feeling ways, forget himself and put himself into the child's position to sympathize, explain, advise or punish. Fathers need to bring their intelligence and experience to children. If so, the conflict between father and children can be avoided. It should be noted that in direct educating role, apart from intelligence, lucidity and subtlety, fathers are required to be quick, decisive, spontaneous and have definitive attitude towards the children's wrongdoings. Fathers should avoid mentioning the children's past mistakes as well. Usually, father is the person who keeps power and simultaneously keeps justice. Thus, if fathers educate children on dictator and dogmatic rules, the idea freedom and dynamic personality of the child will be prevented or limited. Too easy fathers will not be good for the child character - development in the future as well.

**In conclusion**, fathers are breadwinners in the family, the core and steady support for wives and children. The father's roles have been summarized in Vietnamese

proverbs as followed: “*Children have fathers like the house has a roof. Conversely, a child has no father like the house without roof*”. Fathers are both physical power and spiritual power for children to live happily. If the father misses this role, his children will usually be spoilt or face difficulties in life.

In order to improve parents’ educating roles effectively to children, in my opinion parents should lead a model life to be a good example for children to follow as specified:

*First, parents must create the harmony in family.*

*Second, parents must have an honest life.*

*Third, parents must appear to be educated and polite people.*

*Fourth, parents must sacrifice for children.*

### **5.2.2. The role of other members in family in educating children**

#### *5.2.2.1. Grandparents’ roles in bringing up grandchildren*

According to Vietnamese culture, besides parents, grandparents and relatives also play an important role in rearing children. According to the result of the survey conducted by the research group including Doan Thi Binh Minh, Nguyen Thi Minh, Phan Thi Hoa and Cao Hong Minh, 46.3% out of those asked say that the role of grandparents and relatives is very important; 48.3% say it is important, only 2% consider it unimportant and 3% think that grandparents almost have no role in educating children (Minh, Minh, Hoa, Minh, 1998:14).

As a result, the majority thinks that grandparents play an important role in educating children, which is appropriate with the result of the research given by Nguyen Duc Manh (2003). According to the author, the elderly in family hold a special position in terms of many aspects. At first, as grandparents (in three - generation families) or great grandparents (in four - generation families), they own a lot of precious life experience, which can be imparted to their descendants. However, the influence is different, and clearly shown through the gender analysis between grandfathers and grandmothers. Comparing with grandmothers’, 10 out of grandfathers’ qualities have bigger influence on children, as follows: self - confidence (10.9% to 3.8%); law - respect (26.1% to 22.7%); bravery (11.4% to 5.7%); honor - respect (24.2% to



20.9%); patience and determination (16.6% compared to 12.8%); inquisitiveness (8.1% compared to 6.6%); riskiness, aggressiveness (4.7% compared to 3.8%); dishonesty (2.4% compared to 1.9%); greediness, envy (2.4% compared to 1.4%); arrogance (2.4% compared to 1.9%). Meanwhile, comparing to grandfathers', out of 6 qualities have bigger influence on children, as follows: independence, generosity (22.7% compared to 4.7%); filial piety (28% compared to 22,3%); honesty, truthfulness (23.7% compared to 21.8%); hospitality (29.9% compared to 23.7%); calmness (17.1% compared to 12.3%); modesty, tolerance (20.4% compared to 12.8%).

From the above research results, we can clearly see the role of grandparents in rearing children in family. Actually, grandparents can still tutor, remind children of studies, bathing, eating and drinking, suitable rest, teach and adjust the deformity in spoken language, behaviors, etc. and lead children to shape and develop essential human qualities of a good citizen in the future as required by societies. The role is more if grandparents live with children under the same roof. If not, the grandfather and grandmother are also responsible for teaching children personalities.

#### *5.2.2.2. Brothers and sisters' roles in bringing up younger brothers and sisters*

Ranking the second to parents, siblings in families have great influence on children's personalities because they live under the same roof, eat and drink, live, play together for a long time before one of them is married and moves to their own family. However, there is a certain difference in the roles of brothers and sisters to the children's character - building, which is shown through the survey results by Nguyen Duc Manh (2003). Thirteen manly qualities of children are more influenced from brothers than from sisters as follows: self - confidence (14.2% compared to 7.1%); law - respect (16.6% compared to 15.6%); bravery (23.7% compared to 7.1%); patience and determination (13.3% compared to 10.4%); inquisitiveness (20.9% compared to 16.6%); independence, generosity (15.2% compared to 9.5%); riskiness, aggressiveness (18.5% compared to 6.6%); dishonesty (10.0% compared to 8.5%); greediness, envy (10.9% compared to 10.0%); arrogance (9.0% compared to 5.2%); thievishness (10% compared to 6.2%); tease (13.3% compared to 11.4%); hospitality (15.2% compared to 14.2%). In contrast, womanly personalities are more influenced by sisters, four out of which are followed: modesty, tolerance (23.7% compared to

16.1%); honesty (18.5% compared to 13.7%); calmness (11.4% compared to 6.6%); honor respect (10.9% compared to 10.4%).

The result above shows that it is obvious for children to be more influenced by brothers' personalities than sisters'. Comparing to mainly influence from fathers, brothers' keep some remarkable attention. For example, riskiness and aggressiveness from brothers are higher than from fathers (18.5% compared to 16.1%), honesty (10% compared to 6.6%), greediness, envy (10% compared to 5.7%), arrogance (9% compared to 5.2%), thievishness (10% compared to 4.3%), teasing (13.3% compared to 3.3.%). Out of the personalities above, some behaviors opposed to society's standards are mainly influenced from brothers not fathers, which is a remarkable discovery to the families of bad children with many siblings. Therefore, parents should educate children to build entire character, especially with the eldest in families, as a role of brothers and sisters, from whom children learn some of whose personalities more than from fathers or mothers. The concepts of Vietnamese society "*siblings like arms and legs*", shows the undivided relationship between siblings. Therefore, siblings need to clearly show their roles, and responsibility in educating children to shape and develop character. Simultaneously, brothers and sisters should be good examples for children to follow. For example, those studying well will be encouraging motive for children to follow. In terms of conduct training, those who are well - behaved and grateful, etc. will be good foundation for children to build the entire character afterwards.

### **Comment**

From the analysis above, the importance of parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters in socializing - educating people can be shown. Fathers play an important role in family education. They symbolize intelligence, will, and family's discipline to unite children - especially sons. Therefore, the father needs to participate in bringing up children since they are small, spend time for and looking after them, etc. In fact, the fathers have managed to educate their children to be a good and successful people by combining traditional experience and modern conditions. No matter how far they are, the father always stays in family. But some of those who evade their responsibility or are unaware of their role, entrust their wives with children when they are small, and with school when they grow up. The fathers only pay attention to

their career, promotion or earning a living, give excuse for no time for children, etc. Gradually, fathers and children don't understand or love each other. When women join social activities, the participation of husbands in educating children is essential and urgent. It's necessary to overcome the concept that raising children is women's work. This is the responsibility and necessary right of husband and wife, both of whom join forces in raising children. Thanks to it, children have love and strong attachment to both father and mother. Father's feebleness, slackening or over strictness to children also cause failure in raising children.

Mothers play an important role in raising children from infancy to adulthood. The relationship between mother and children lays foundation for the relationship with family and society. Mothers who are often careful, close to children everyday, find out and timely shape misleading, and better at raising children lifestyle, conduct and human life. With tender and tactful attitude, mothers convert, persuade and teach children to love even when they grow up. However, in the modern time, only when they have a common necessary knowledge of culture and psychology of children-age do mothers fulfill their duties.

In raising children, it is necessary to combine the entire power of family as a united team, and agree on aim and teaching methods, prove the roles of grandparents, siblings beside parents' responsibility. It should be clearly aware of abilities, strengths, and weaknesses of different family members in raising children.

### **5.3. Some of the parents' activities in educating - socializing children**

#### ***5.3.1. Parent-teacher meeting***

It is an inevitable activity of parents, showing their deep consideration to their children's studies and conduct training at school. Parent-teacher meeting is a constant relationship between families and school.

In Vietnam, there are often three parent-teacher meetings in a school year. The first one is held at the beginning of each school - year (by August annually). At the meeting, parents will be noticed the studying plan of their children for the whole school year, the amounts of money to pay such as fees (if yes), money for support the building of infrastructure, parents' fund, etc. Parents also know who their children's

form teacher is and who are the teachers of different subjects. In here, a parent committee will be set up, playing the role as connecting with teachers and school. At the second parent-teacher meeting, usually held at the end of the first term (often by January), parents will be notified the children's academic<sup>175</sup> and moral result<sup>176</sup> of the first term. These are very important in educating children at schools in Vietnam. From the children's academic results, parents know which subjects their children are good at or not and then have specific orientation for their children. For example, some ways to help their children with the subjects the children are not good at are to invite tutor, send children to extra classes at school or centers, etc. With the subjects they are good at, parents encourage them to try more and lay orientation for them to take university entrance exam in the future. The third parent-teacher meeting in a school year is the last one (often in May every year). Parents will get exact information about their children's academic result and conduct of the school year. They will also be notified their children's summer plan, extra classes for subjects in summer, remedial classes for weak students, etc. Basing on the school's official announcement, parents draw the specific plan for the children's summer reasonably. With urban families, the children can be arranged to visit grandparents and relatives, or take part in outdoor courses such as guitar, singing, sports (for example football, swimming, etc.) or travel with families. For rural children with the lower living conditions comparing with urban families, their summer activities are not as various as those of urban families. Their main summer activities are traditional games such as flying kite, swimming in nearby rivers, etc. Beside, during summer holiday, the rural children may have to work to support families such as driving buffalos, cutting grass, seeking crabs, catching shellfish, etc. The activities such as joining extra classes, travelling, and taking outdoor courses may be almost impossible to rural children.

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<sup>175</sup> The results of children are calculated base on general basic mean of all subjects. Base on the basis, learning aptitude of children is ranked from highest to lowest, included: excellent, good, fair, mean, feeble, bad. If pupil gets kind of study feeble or bad when school year finish, the pupil could not move up to the next grade. If any their subject is feeble or bad, then they usually study again the subject in summer holidays (from June to August).

<sup>176</sup> Ranking pupils' moral exercise is based on very many factors: study awareness of pupil in class at all subjects, numbers of time off school of pupils in term, awareness of taking part collective activities of the class, school, etc. Through all the indexes, the head teacher will be a person who decides qualities of the pupils, included: excellent, good, fair, mean, feeble, bad. Normally pupils have the qualities are fair or good. The rest qualities win few rate.

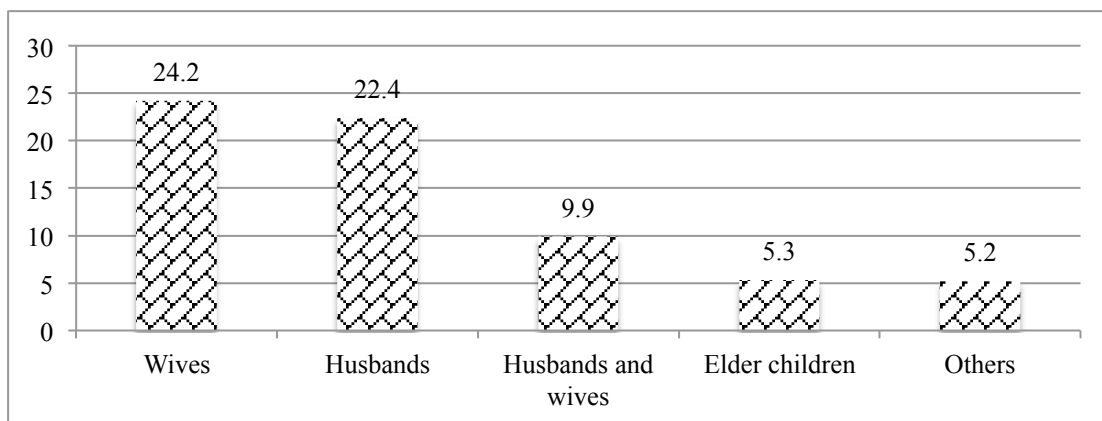
**In summary**, parent-teacher meeting is usually considered parents' task in working with school to supervise and raise children. This activity shows parents' consideration to educating - socializing children. Almost every parents pay attention to their children's studies because it will affect the prestige and honor of the families. The children who study well, their family is proud, and raises the head up wherever they go to. Conversely, if the children are not good at studying, especially bad children, their parents will be ashamed with neighbors and others. They feel uncomfortable whenever and wherever they go. The reason is for the Vietnamese culture. For Vietnamese, when meeting they often ask some questions like how are you? How's working? How's your family? If someone is married with children, they certainly ask about the children's studies, do they study well? Which school do they go to? That information will be foundations to assess whether the family is happy or not. No Vietnamese people show off the amount of money or the number of flats they own, etc. when meeting but always show children with good studies, good students, high national entrance exams scores, scholarship to study abroad. Obviously, children's studies play an important role in Vietnamese families. The whole families take care of it, especially parents. Therefore, parents are rarely absent from parent-teacher meeting. The in-depth interview results show that parent-teacher meeting is essential to parents "...parent-teacher meeting must not be ignored, however busy it is, we attend it" (Hoa, 2007). Parent-teacher meeting is reliable means of communication for them to get their children studies and conduct training. The result of a sociological research shows that mothers (wives) in family are often the most frequent attendees at the parent-teacher meeting (34.8%), followed by husbands (fathers) make up 24.2%, even about 8.4% of husband and wife as attendees. In few cases, other family members are attendees (2.8%) (Hoa, 2007). It means that parents directly participate in parent-teacher meeting for their children, which is a good signal to show their roles, responsibilities in educating- socializing their own children.

### ***5.3.2. Helping children study at home***

Studying at home is a compulsory task to students, but reminding children to study for parents is like a habit. According to the result of the survey, mothers play a role as being close, reminding and helping children study more than fathers do. However,

fathers are always affirmed when sharing the work of helping children study at home.

**Fig. 5.1. Who helps children to study at home? (2007) (in:%)**



*Source: Project of interdisciplinary research "Vietnamese rural families during innovation, 2007", pp. 142*

The figure above shows that the help children with home studies take place with the appearance of new factor - adult members in families. Traditionally, the elder brothers and sisters in families always help parents take care of children when they are small. When they grow up, the elder brothers and sisters are responsible for helping children with their studies especially when parents are not home. This cultural tradition should be preserved and developed in Vietnam.

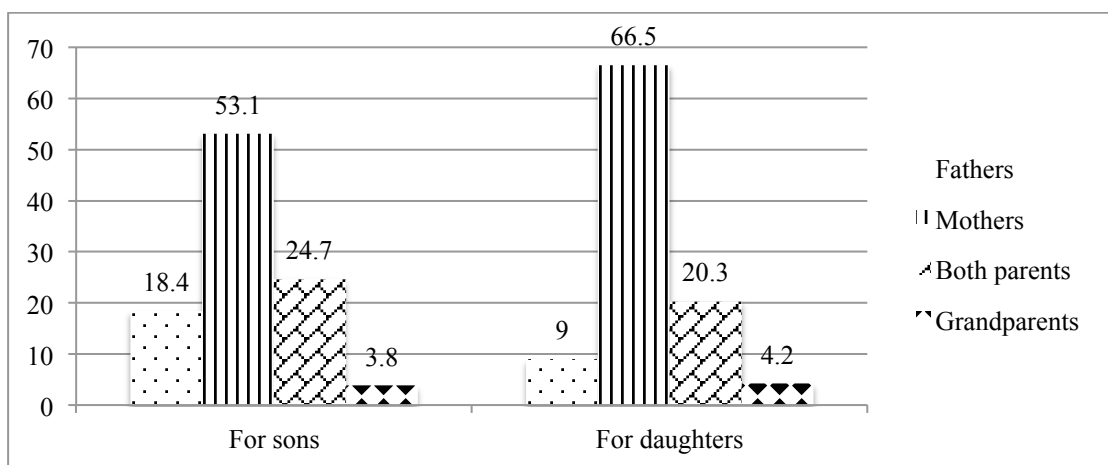
In intellectual families, tutoring and helping children with home studies have more advantages than in others because they have enough knowledge and skills to lecture for their better studies. Nevertheless, this actually happens at primary school. When children study at higher levels, from secondary school, parents play a role as reminding and encouraging them to study but helping and tutoring children are less because parents do not have enough necessary knowledge to help children solve the problems of all subjects. As a result, the solution given is to fetch a tutor, or send to extra classes at teacher's houses, school or centers, etc. However, this solution takes place in urban families - those with financial favor. For the rural families, it rarely takes place. For rural children, parents play a role of reminding children to study, pay attention to lessons in class, do homework on their own. The activities like lecturing, hiring tutor, sending to extra classes, etc. hardly happen.

### 5.3.3. Spare time for children

This is an activity aiming at educating - socializing children in families. By playing with children, parents can catch their feelings, desire, hobbies and fully aware of their children. The good or bad characters are shown during the interaction between parents and children at this age. Therefore, parents need to take opportunities to deeply understand their children. It is when sparing time for children that children can evaluate their parents' love for them. In many families, the parents do not spend time taking care of children, playing with them, their children always look bored, and depressed, even commit crimes in some cases. It has been recently shown in the Vietnamese newspapers that in some cases parents have no time to be close to children, and think the best is give them much money. That is the reason why it is until their children commit crimes, they realized that a lot of money is not all, the hereby problem is to spare time for children, take care of them to realize the inadequacy in their personalities and find the suitable solutions to raising them.

The results of resent survey shows that although fathers are considered more important than mothers but the majority admit mothers are in charge of educating children. The duty of earning, breadwinner in families causes fathers to spend little time bringing up children. For both sons and daughters, mothers spare most of their time (53.1% and 66.5% of respondents, respectively) (Minh, Minh, Hoa, Minh, 1998).

**Fig. 5.2. The people spare most time for children (in:%)**



Source: Minh, D.T.B., Minh, N.T., Hoa, P.T., Minh, C.H. (1998). Roles of families in educating - socializing children, pp. 16.

The result of fig. 5.2 shows the certain difference in sparing time for children from fathers and mothers. As detailed, fathers spend more time looking after sons than daughters (18.4% compared to 9%), and mothers take more care of daughters than sons (66.5% compared to 53.1%). The main cause is from gender. It is easier for mothers to be close to daughters; similarly, fathers are closer to sons. Children often ask their same sex parent about their wonders, especially those of sex, which leads a general rule in Vietnamese society that sons often talk, learn from fathers but daughters learn from mothers. Therefore, the time for children from parents is different depending on whether the child is a son or a daughter.

A high rate of both fathers and mothers spend time looking after and playing with children. This rate bears little difference between sons and daughters, which proves that nowadays parents pay certain attention to taking care of children when they are at home. This promotes the children entire character development because their parents are always side - by - side to educate children.

In terms of the time family members spare for children, as shown from the result of the survey:



**Table 5.1. The specific time for children (in:%)**

	Almost no	Less than 30 minutes	From 30 minutes to 1 hour	From 1 hour to one and a half	From one and half to 2 hours	Over 2 hours
For 0 to 6 year old sons						
Fathers	8.0	20.5	14.8	11.4	9.1	36.7
Mothers	1.1	0	16.8	3.2	4.2	74.7
Grandparents	44.1	8.8	8.8	5.9	2.9	29.4
Brothers and sisters	71.1	4.8	9.5	9.5	0	4.8
For 0 to 6 year old daughters						
Fathers	10.5	22.4	26.3	9.2	6.6	25.0
Mothers	1.2	1.2	12.8	12.8	10.5	61.6
Grandparents	26.7	26.7	10.0	6.7	3.3	26.7
Brothers and sisters	46.2	15.4	23.1	7.7	7.7	0
For 7 to 15 year old sons						
Fathers	3.7	15.4	21.6	10.5	9.9	38.9
Mothers	2.9	4.1	14.0	16.3	8.1	54.7
Grandparents	47.9	31.3	4.2	0	6.3	10.4
Brothers and sisters	61.5	17.9	15.4	2.6	0	2.6
For 7 to 15 year old daughters						
Fathers	10.3	19.2	22.6	11.0	6.2	30.8
Mothers	1.3	1.9	15.2	12.0	9.5	60.1
Grandparents	44.3	26.2	6.6	4.9	6.6	11.5
Brothers and sisters	79.4	8.8	5.9	2.9	0	2.9

*Source: Minh, D.T.B., Minh, N.T., Hoa, P.T., Minh, C.H. (1998). Roles of families in educating - socializing children, pp. 16.*

The result from Table 5.1 shows that the majority of mothers and fathers spare time playing with their children. A minority of fathers spends no time playing with their children, so do only a few mothers. However, some fathers spend too little time for children everyday (below half an hour account 15.4% to 22.4%). Beside, many fathers spend over two hours for their children every day. Mothers spend over two hours for children everyday account for the highest rate of the respondents. This proves that parents are aware of the necessity of closing to children in educating

children. Fathers often spare more time for sons than daughters at both ages from zero to six years old and from seven to 15 years old.

Brothers and sisters do not spend much time looking after and playing with children, either. If yes, the rate is not much and often less than one hour. Similarly, the role of grandparents in family is not clearly shown in spending time playing with children. Grandparents spend more time for children when they are small.

The pressure of market economy and stress of earning have controlled time and energy of many families, which causes them to forget their responsibility. Therefore, families need to raise their responsibility in spending time taking care of children and mobilizing all members to take part in raising and educating children, educating - socializing will certainly get better results.

#### ***5.3.4. Career orientation for children***

It is a very important task and parents' responsibility to help children grow up with stable job and have their own career by themselves. That whether their future is good or bad is influenced by their career afterwards. Therefore, parents always consider carefully when orienting career for children.

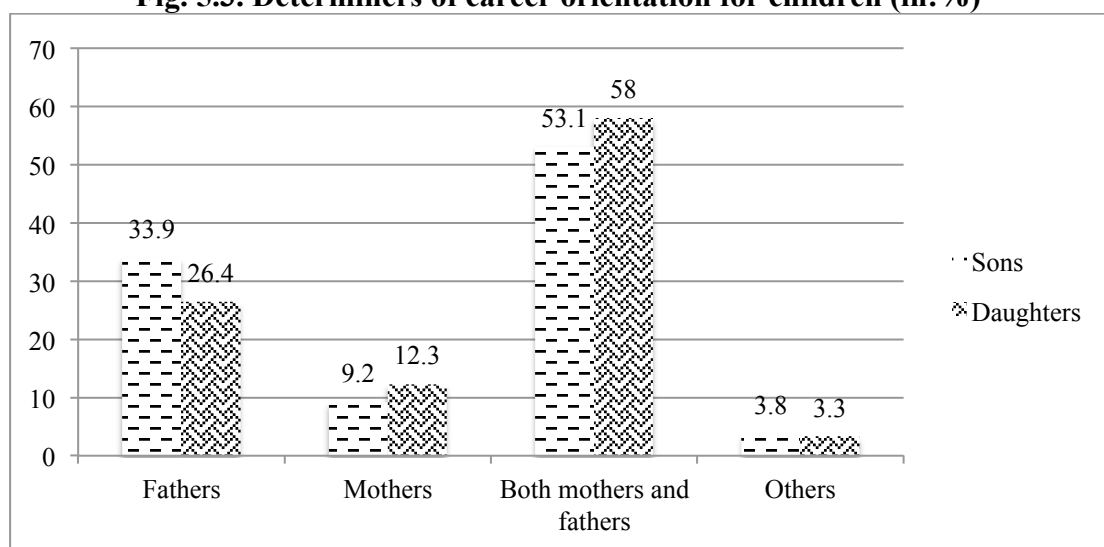
Today, career orientation for children is different from it used to. If in subsidized time, the only aim is to become officials, and state workers, in present market economy, there are different ways for children. The variedly - developed market economy with well-paid jobs is so attractive that people find that it is not necessary to become state employee. Children can become businessmen, good technician, skilled workers, etc. in any producing industries and have many chances of showing their talent at competition. It is the market economy that creates a bigger place for career orientation for children. Many parents have already paid attention to explore and understood the demands of the market economy to make a choice, orient, early invest and help children access to the fields, which the market demands for in terms of labor, intelligence and especially high income such as information, technology, foreign languages, law, economics and transportation, etc. Some of the well-conditioned families have endlessly invested energy and money in training children with knowledge, intensive profession and numerous career promotions. It is more

favorable and for intellectual families with information and deep understanding career orienting to children than others. Similarly, urban families easily access to information sources, so their career orientation for children is easier than rural ones.

Normally, parents orient children basing on their strengths and high school academic abilities<sup>177</sup>. Patents also orient children with traditional jobs of the families, for example, with business fathers; children are often oriented to take exam in economics or finance, etc. Teacher fathers or mothers also orient their children to become a teacher. Notably, children’s gender will be influenced in career orientation.

As analyzed in chapter two, daughters are often oriented to follow the courses with tenderness qualities and harmonizing with their character for example teaching, social sciences, languages, etc. Meanwhile the sons are guided to study technology, economics, etc.

**Fig. 5.3. Determiners of career orientation for children (in:%)**



*Source: Minh, D.T.B., Minh, N.T., Hoa, P.T., Minh, C.H. (1998). Roles of families in educating - socializing children, pp. 18.*

As shown from fig. 5.3, both fathers and mothers will career orienteers for children make up the highest percent. Obviously, children future career depends so much on

<sup>177</sup> After grade 12, Vietnamese students will experience a tough university entrance exam to be a university student. They are allowed one of four main exam groups: Group A (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry), Group B (Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology), Group C (Literature, History, Geography), Group D (Literature, Mathematics and Foreign Languages). Group A and B are for candidates who sit for the exam of natural sciences, technology, medical and pharmacy, etc. Group C is for the jobs related to social sciences and humanities. Group D is for those who sit for language, international relation, etc. Besides, some specialized majors require examinees to sit for talent exam such as pre - school teaching, music and art, etc.

their parents' orientation. Therefore any parents worry and think about choosing the suitable industry for their children.

Fathers' role in career orientation is higher than mothers' (33.9% of fathers orient career for sons and 26.4% for daughters while mothers account only 9.2% for sons and 12.3% for daughters). As a result, fathers play a more important role in career orientation for children in families. The percentage of fathers taking part in career orientation for sons is higher than that for daughters. While mothers take part in career orientation for daughters more than for sons. The main reason may be the gender closeness and intimacy lead the control of career orientation for children in families. Other member families such as grandparents, brothers and sisters or relatives make up a small percentage in career orientation for children (for son and daughter with 3.8% and 3.3% respectively).

#### ***5.3.5. Family career for children***

In Vietnamese present society, as analyzed in chapter two, parents almost hardly arrange marriage for children as in traditional society. However, parents still have certain family orientation for children. For example, during love time, parents give some advice about whether children should choose him/ her as spouse or not basing on some factors such as personalities, present job, family origin, age, etc. because parents have certain experience in this aspect; additionally they have experienced marriage, so they can help their children succeed in that marriage.

Both fathers and mothers playing a role in family orientation rank the first (accounting for 71% of respondents), followed by the role of fathers (13.8%), and next is mothers (9%). Others have no significant role in family orientation for children (5.3%) (Minh, Minh, Hoa, Minh, 1998:18).

#### **In summary**

Families play an important role in educating-socializing children, which is shown by parents' specific activities for children. The most frequent activities showing parent's care for children are the ones aiming at educating-socializing children, helping them with good future orientation, they are: parent-teacher meeting, helping children with home studies, spare time for children, job orientation and family orientation.

#### 5.4. Educational content in family

Children are happiness, future hope of families, thus any families desire, expect to their children, too. Family's expectation to the children is not only goal but also motive of struggle how to become a reality. Conception about educating children in family not only reflect awareness but also orient deed in process effect on taking form and development of children's personality. Those are two problems, which have important meaning in promoting family perform educational function. However, the desires still depend on fixed social historical conditions, specific situation and factors directly effect on family.

The result of some recent scientific research about family shows that most families put expectation on growth afterwards of children. For example, up to 86.2% parents desire children have simple, economical virtues; 74.6% desire children are dutiful; 69.3% desire children are modest; 78.6% desire children know to respect everyone; 82.1% desire children know to be interested in others (Dong, 2001). Even families have spoiled children, which also lay very much good expectation to the children. According to Nguyen Duc Manh survey of 211 families with bad children aged from 11 to 16 at nine wards of six inner districts of Hanoi shows that there are some ambitions about children as followed: education with high degree (89.1%); honesty (78.7%); useful citizen (78.7%); filial piety (78.2%); stable job (77.3%). Meanwhile, some ambitions such as wealth, power and fame make up a very low percentage (11.4%, 13.3% and 33.6%, respectively) (Manh, 2003).

Because of the different situations and awareness among families, each family has the different ambitions on children. The reason is that besides economic factors, the ambitions are determined by cultural factors. Some families respect for traditional culture, some are with the thought of progressiveness, and others' concept is to harmonize both. However, the majority of families think of teaching children to be inclined to tradition and origins, which are accepted by society and suitable for social progress. The main contents are followed:

- *First*, the majority of families put ambitions on children in terms of human desire such as: have a good education, high degree, jobs and honest life, be useful to society, and grateful to grandparents, parents. This reflects the nature of Vietnamese

and the tradition of Vietnamese families. The hope on children with social positions, as well as wealth and power are not the desirous and foremost to almost every family at present. Therefore, parents pay attention to educate children nice traditional morals with national feature: “*benevolence, politeness, right conduct, knowledge ability, sincerity*” or “*run a household (effectively), appearance, speech, behavior*” with the aim of making children good and truthful citizens and partially bring happy families and society.

- *Second*, the concept of families towards educating children has two clear trends. Only long standing traditional values such as filial piety, kindness, modesty and honesty, etc. are kept and progressive things in educating children such as independence and sex education are added.

Basing on the hopes on children above, Vietnamese families should select primary and necessary matters for children to learn and practice. Out of them, I think the essential matters are followed: moral education, attitude and working skills and independence education for children and sex education. These matters of education will be analyzed in turn as followed.

#### ***5.4.1. Moral education***

Moral education is one of the very important issues of family education. It can be said that moral education at the early age in families will be initial step to build human character. Therefore, teaching children moral is always highly valued in Vietnamese families.

Moral education for children in families includes lifestyle, attitude, manner, and behavior - teaching children “*learn to eat, speak, pack and open*”. It is not unreasonable that traditional Vietnamese families think moral is the core, origin of family education, from which a system of moral rules, duties, behaviors in tight order and discipline has been formed and preserved for ages.

During a long time of the subsidiary system, moral education in families seemed to be mentioned less because the educational function of family had been mainly transferred to school and society. The change of economy and open policies, which have brought the poisonous puffs of wind to every family, every member especially

children, forces us to look back on the role of family education ignored and rank moral education in families again.

Human history saw many different concepts of moral, but generally moral are rules used to adjust interpersonal relationships in society. Along with the development of society, moral also does not stop changing and evolving. At first they were moral standards with the least use is to ban members on violating and then at the higher level of development, the value to encourage people to voluntarily act for the good, benefit community and humanize society added. Thus, the connotation of moral becomes more and more perfect and widen. Nowadays, moral is seen as a system of rules, standards showing people's spontaneousness, self-awareness in the relationship between human - human and human - society. To evaluate whether a person has moral or not, his behavior is based on. The moral behavior is usually shown through communicating behaviors, lifestyle, style, gestures, speech (Chuong, 2000).

From the concept above, the detailed issue of moral education for children in families will be analyzed through providing life experience, action skills for children, and teaching children practical, specific and real daily things.

#### *5.4.1.1. Educating children behaviors towards family members*

Both traditional and modern Vietnamese families pay special attention to educating hierarchy order and family ranking, among which, grandparents, parents, elder brothers and sisters are superior and younger children are inferior. At the early age, those hierarchy orders were taught to children. Children are taught to be aware of their position in the family, behaviors, and actions suiting to their status. Children have to learn who are in the relationship with family, and relatives, i.e., who are ancestors, uncle, aunt, and who is on father's side and who is on mother's side, who is superior and who is inferior, etc. People are aware of seeking opportunities (death anniversary, New Year' day, funeral, and festival, etc.) for family members and relatives to meet each other and get to know relatives to address, behave rightly, and avoid "*Not until fight to death did realized that are blooded brothers*".

In vertical family relationship, special attention is paid to educating members' awareness of respect and worship for ancestors. According to Vietnamese's belief, the daily incidents in one's life (success or failure, lucky or unlucky, etc.) partially depends whether their ancestor support and help or not. Thus, descendants must "try their best and obey previous generations when they are alive, and worship and admire when they are dead, and provide them with every symbolic essential daily items in order to remain their different survival in after life" (Bich, 1993:48).

Filial piety education is an important matter in educating children behavior in families. Grandparents and parents - the eldest in families, spend the whole life working hard and fulfilling career and raising children. Thus, educating respect and gratefulness to grandparents, parents have long been considered the most important moral factor to children in families. The result of a sociological survey has shown that the number of families which educate children to take the living aim of having moral, gratefulness is highest (76.3% for sons and 66.3% for girls) (Minh, Hoa, Minh, Minh, 1998:21). A person without filial piety means that he has no respect, tolerance, care of grandparents, parents who have given birth to and raise them and of course they will not be able to love for community, nation or kindness to human, either. Or as said by the Vietnamese: "*Con người bất hiếu thường cũng bất nhân*" (*Who live without filial are bad people*). Grandparents, parents at the old age are slow and hard movers, sometimes have diseases, children must be happy and cheerful to give them frequent help with every aspects in daily life such as moving, eating and drinking, bathing and washing, etc. The respect for grandparents and parents must be shown at behavior such as polite saying without anger and despising attitude when they make mistakes or fault. If knowing grandparents and parents at the old age have strange nature, descendants must know how to pamper, not to resent or use libeling words "*mutter, nerve, etc.*" causing them writhe and sadness which affect their health and spirit. Under any circumstances, even when parents give wrong conclusions, impose unsuitable conditions, etc. children must be calm to explain the wrong or right reasonably as the Vietnamese concluded "*truth will conquer*". Therefore, it is absolutely compulsory not to answer back or show cruel behaviors.



Educating behaviors in families must also guide children to behave in relationship with siblings. The concept of valuing man above women of traditional society should be criticized and condemned. No matter who the siblings are, they are equal in rights and duties, and responsibilities in building warm home. At first, parents must be fair at every duty and responsibility between sons and daughters, and raise awareness of protecting and helping mutually “*when the lips are gone, the teeth are cold; when the blood sheds, the heart aches*”. The love among sibling comes from blood relation, with the same parents and ancestry, “*siblings like arms and legs*”, “*the elder fall, the younger help to stand up*”, etc. The relationship among siblings even more valued than husband and wife relationship. Arms and legs are used to refer to inseparable among siblings. Meanwhile the relationship between husband and wife is compared to “*shirts*”. Lost wife can be replaceable by another but lost sibling is not.

Parents educate children awareness of respecting and protecting the hierarchy order in family shown by behavior and address. The elder brothers and sisters must be generous, tolerant “*as sister be kind, as brother be generous*”. The younger should pay love and respect to the elder brothers and sisters, conform the elder to the rights to keep family moral standards.

In addition, families also educate children the way to behave towards their relatives such as aunt, uncle, who are consanguineous, once born and grew up under the same roof, share kitchen with their parents, experience hardship together during childhood. Therefore, children must be taught to respect, love and sympathize educating children at any time; when talking to, they must be polite and modest. Relatives who can be on behalf of parents are close to children as proverb “*Dad away, uncle in, mum away, aunt feed*”. When uncles and aunts are in trouble, children must help and share with them according to their abilities but not ignore, stay cold or show scorn and conceitedness to make blooded affection fainter and fainter.

#### *5.4.1.2. Educating children how to behave towards others*

From the birth to death, everyone is attached to two kinds of relationship: relationship with grandparents, parents, brother and relatives by birth (called family relationship), and the second kind with friends, community and nation called social relationship which is more various and complicated than consanguineous

relationship. Thus, from the early age even mostly with families, children should be taught and trained basic moral behaviors for social relationship.

### *Benevolence*

Anyone born feels prosperity, happiness, honor or misery and humbleness. Certainly, the evident needs are for prosperity and happiness, and no one wanted to be miserable, poor, ashamed or humble. Anyone having to admit unlucky, or unhappiness is for “*No living man all things can*” and inability to get away from in their life. Thus, benevolence education is to teach children the love for people.

The main difference between human and other animals is the ability of sympathy and share those special emotions. According to Confucianism moral “*benevolence*” ranks the first out of human moral standard on earth. The benevolence theory of Confucius has generally shown that anything making us unhappy, lost, disadvantaged, etc. by natural disasters or other, people should not want other to suffer from. Moreover, anything we wish such as prosperity, good health or bright career, etc. should be wished for others to fulfill their dreams. That’s the reason why he gave a short, simply sentence of advice with much human significance of kindness “*Do as you would be done by*” and concretized by moral behaviors in daily life such as sharing, helping of one’s own free will with others in misfortune and unlucky as well as disapproving and criticizing the behaviors out of kindness.

Living in any societies, people must have kindness, love and sympathy with others. Thus, families are responsible for educating children that moral behavior at the early age shown in the behaviors to be respectful to others, not greedy or wicked, dishonest or deceitful to others to be good citizens without wondering and worrying about “*social court*” or “*conscience court*” calling as “*no one avoiding worries as relaxed as the person with pure conscience*”. With the condition of market oriented economy development, it is becoming more and more important to educate benevolence to younger generations in families aiming at helping them building and developing a citizen’s qualities, knowing to harmonize individual and collective, family and society benefits, partially build a fair, civilized and progressive society.

## *Modesty*

Nguyen Trai - the Vietnamese great author said: “Anything unknown is unknown can be called knowing” (Nguyen Trai, 1927). It is modesty, and honesty - a very important quality of Vietnamese character.

Children must be educated to be modest and not subjective and arrogant that they are better and know more than others by families. Modesty is often shown through polite behaviors in communication with everybody, for example:

- Meeting the elderly, teachers, respectfully ask, give way and show respect.
- Do not use bad words, be aggressive to anybody.
- Do not laugh to discomfort others on the roads or in public places. If making a slip of the tongue or trouble others, please make an apology. Say thanks to anybody who helps us even with tiny things.

Modesty not only helps people learn good things from other but also form the behaviors with care, respect, calmness without rivaling for speech, boast, and show off their own competence. Thus, they are trusted and admired.

## *Honesty*

That people must communicate, behave to other is a rule for survival and evolution. Whether the relationship of communication and behavior meets the needs or convince other mainly depends on honesty of each individual.

Honest people - the people always respect their own qualities and do not let others despise them as well as keep their reputation, considered the root of all relationships, are trusted. Honesty is a nice human feature but it is complicated and hard to train and educate. Therefore, parents must pay special attention to helping children try their bests, win themselves by the expressions followed:

- If guilty, admit the fault bravely and do not deny or blame others for it.

- Respect the truth, do not change right from wrong even in one's disadvantaged situation.

- Unite words with actions, keep promises, do not intrigue or cheat others and appropriate other's fortune.

It is imperative that each individual exercise honesty to make the relationship between people long lasting, reliable.

All the content of moral education in families above mentioned is carried out through socializing children with different forms. 87.2% of the children listen to the stories about grandparents and parent's misery, 81.3% listen to good examples, and 73.7% listen to family ethical behaviors (Manh, 2003). Obviously, the educational content with the lively stories about life examples of grandparents, and parents has become living materials influence properly and directly children's awareness and emotion. Only deeply understanding the merit and learning from the examples surpassing hardship of grandparents and parents, do children gradually form and develop their own character.

#### ***5.4.2. Educating working attitude and skills***

Human working is an unchangeable law to survive and develop individuals and societies. It is the first standard to evaluate one's moral and talent in any underdeveloped or civilized societies. The first nature of working and working people is to raise themselves without depending on families and societies.

Educating working attitude, skills and habits must start from infancy as detailed:

*+) First, parents must teach children about working attitude, including:*

- Respect for both manual and intellectual work as long as it is legal, bringing material and spiritual products essential to people's life and society.

- Respect, love every worker for any job is essential to social life. Be respectful, modest, patient to learn and follow the examples of good workers. Be creative, hard to overcome difficulties with the will of standing on their own feet.

- Work with self - awareness according to their duties and responsibilities and support other members for the shared family life.

+) *Second, parents must teach children working skills and habits as detailed:*

- Basing on the maturity of different ages, parents teach children suitable working skills and habits from the simple to the complex such as how to brush teeth and wash face or make the bed when getting up, how to cook, do the washing and cleaning, etc.

- Educating children to finish what they do from the beginning to the end, and hold responsibility for completing the work according to their own abilities when assigned by parents. Educating children the habit of preserving, arranging their own personal belongings neatly such as clothes, shoes, schoolbags, toys, etc. or household tools like knives, scissors, saucepans, etc.

Parents should pay special attention to educating attitude, skills, habits towards working accompanied by responsibility of respect for working products - use products and daily tools of individuals and families at reasonable rate. In other words, it is compulsory to teach awareness of working hard at work, saving at expense without using and spending wastefully. Especially in the market economy the models of clothing, shoes, daily tools frequently changed at speedy rate easily tempt children to indulging causing waste for families. Thus, parents need educate and persuade children to use reasonably.

Comparing with city children, rural ones have many conditions to exercise working attitude, skills, habits through the work they can do in their families such as driving buffaloes, cutting grass, seeking wood, weeding and harvesting corn and potato, etc. However, with city families, if taking it into consideration, parents are able to organize working activities for children according to a daily and monthly schedule such as helping parents with meals, houses cleaning and taking part in residential cleaning, etc.

In families, parents should pay attention to educate daughters working according to their gender character such as sewing, embroidering, knitting, cooking, processing foods, etc. aiming at promoting hand skillfulness, hard working, tenderness,

carefulness and tidiness, which gives them more favorable conditions when coming into life.

**In summary**, determining the extremely important role of working for children at present and in the future, families need pay attention teaching children to love and respect working, from which they raise awareness of gaining happiness in life on their own.

#### ***5.4.3. Educating children independence quality***

The demand of market mechanism and current society is requiring each individual to prove himself by his qualification, intelligence, moral and take his own ability as support. Thus, the current orientation of human character building must create the people who have ability to survive and develop on their own, adapt to changing society. It is the difference from traditional education whose products are the people who only know how to comply, lack personality or creativity. Educating children to build independence and creativity early are conditions and foundation for them to get access the current society. Activeness, creativity, quickly catching up with and adapting to the changes of age are necessary standards for people develop independence, which is different from passive, state and collective dependent lifestyle in the subsidiary time before.

To educate children for independence, parents should teach and guide them to be independent from the early age, self - serve without depending on others and self - study at school age and raise awareness of self - orient of their own studies and future career. Children are raised awareness of self - study, self - adjust their behaviors. In addition, in order to help children independence personality, parents often play a role as organizers, guiders, and helpers providing children with both material and spiritual conditions to self - develop but not replace or impose on. However, education of independence quality requires parents with knowledge, methods and art of teaching children which not all parents own. Thus, with the requirement of new age of educating children independence quality, parents must continuously widen knowledge and teaching methods to get the best effect on bringing up children.

#### **5.4.4. Sex education**

Sex education is a part of personality education. Sex education of traditional families bears specific features because of the profound influence of Confucianism. In this part, we will consider the original of traditional families in terms of: education of sex character and sex communication. From that, we will find out the limitations of sex education for children in traditional Vietnamese families, and prove that it is necessary to change the concept of sex education in families and teach children sex in current Vietnamese families.

It can be said that sexual education - a part of sex education was not basically mentioned in traditional Vietnamese families. It was not considered a matter of family education. Even people condemned of mentioning sex, considered “*shameful*”, secret and banned talking about in crowd. For children, parents never mention sex because it is “*Bring grist to somebody’s mill*”. This is originated from the common concept about family of Confucianism. Families are places where individuals carry out duties to community but not satisfy individual needs and personal happiness.

##### *5.4.4.1. Educating sex character in traditional Vietnamese families*

Educating sex character is to make each sex aware of their own characters. Women are female and men are male. But sex character which traditional Vietnamese families teach children is not based on nature but society. A society with inequality between men and women, emphasizing the difference between men and women according to Confucianism “*men are better than women*” in which sons are more powerful than daughters. Sons are the head of the family, owner, heir of the family’s legacy. Sons is given priority of “*schooling*” while daughters have no right to legacy, no study and exams, or participation in social activities and state machinery of government.

Sex education is to make sons aware of “*role*”, “*mission*” and daughters admit that men are more powerful, agree to sacrifice and keep lower place in family and society, which is thought as natural. Daughters are educated in families to become dependants on men: at home depend on father, at marriage follow husband, and after

husband's death, follow her son. Daughters are people who are educated by families most. They are educated by fathers and brothers at home, and by husbands and husband's family after marriage. To be faithful, worship husband and shoulder the duties of husband's families - women's character - are highly respected by traditional Vietnamese families. When a daughter gets married, she joins a new family, where she spends the whole life. This family may be absolutely different from her original one. In the new family, almost every relationship is rebuilt. They are very new relationships which the daughter faces after leaving her own family: husband and wife relationship, daughter - in - law and mother - in - law, sisters - in - law with brothers and sisters on husband's side, relationship with close relatives on husband's side, and husbands' neighbors, etc. No matter how carefully daughter are taught, these new relationships make them hardly avoid surprise, embarrassment when enter real life with husband's family. In reality, the daughter becomes educating object of husband's family. The aim of this education is to make the new member integrate into husband's family. Husband and his family (husband's parents) consider educating new daughter - in - law responsibility, duty and necessity. If there is not education as soon as the daughter enters husband's family, the bad effect will be brought to. The Vietnamese saying: "*Train up a child in the way he should go*" always remind of family's responsibilities for blooded children as well as daughter - in - law. The daughter is never allowed to react against husband and his family. Her duty is to obey her husband and his family as destiny. Their sex character simply is long - suffering, bearing, sacrifice and tolerance.

#### *5.4.4.2. Educating communicating with members of different sex in traditional Vietnamese families*

Educating communicating with other sex is an important part in communicating among people in society. It is to make individuals of this sex understand the sex character of other sex, bringing advantages in communicating, exchanging with other sex in daily life, respect the values of other sex in communicating to, bringing communicative culture with people of different sex. In Vietnamese traditional families, it is a ban that mature sons and daughters communicate with other sex. Girls are taught not to communicate with boys, especially have private meeting because it is considered improper and even illegal. The emotional relationship among



different sexes is not allowed. Love between man and woman is not admitted. Daughters are not allowed to choose who to marry at their own wishes. Children's marriage is parents and relatives' work. Children are only obedient and not allowed to marry the person who parents turn down. Against parents and relatives' ideas, they become bad and ungrateful children.

Educating sex communication in Vietnamese traditional families to some extent is counter - communicative because it is not aiming at bringing advantages, mutual understanding in communicating with different sex. That education does not meet the needs for communication with different sex but adversely prevents communication with different sex, and brings gap of culture in communicating with different sex and make it a burden on people's psychological and emotional life. Individuals in Vietnamese traditional families are not taught to have full and proper awareness of communication with different sex, or satisfaction with natural needs - contacting people of different sex, exchange emotions and feelings, seeking personal happiness, love and happy family. They can grow up in terms of biological sex but never mature in terms of social sex - sex character.

With the present development of socio - economic condition in Vietnam, we can see the limitations of sex education in traditional families. Thus, many changes about the concept of sex education in both Vietnamese families and society appear. For example, forbid girls exploring their friends of different sex is no longer seen or the concept that women totally depend on men has gone. In addition, sexual relation before marriage accompanied by abortion at the teen age and the boom of the pandemic HIV/AIDS in recent years forces Vietnamese families and social institutes involved must consider sex education for children.

The present sex education in Vietnam starts with the form of health education and life skills. However, the programs are trial and haven't proved the effect to the public. According to Hoang Ba Thinh, an expert studying families and sexes, comments "Although society worries about teen girl's reproductive health, such as sexual relations before marriage, marriage and early birth, no attention is paid to

educating teen girls sex problems and man and woman relationship”<sup>178</sup>. The research by Khuat Thu Hong shows that almost everyone undervalues the role of family in sex education to girls. The most seen behavior of parents is to avoid it. Responding to the questions that what parents say to daughters about their body changes at puberty age, few say parents actively discuss these problems with them. Most keep silent, avoid or delay, and even refuse to give answer to their children’s wonder. She has given two examples of avoidance in educating children sex. The first is H, 20 year - old - student in Hanoi said: “My parents are difficult. Some times having trouble I ask 1088<sup>179</sup>. I often ask 1088 if trouble arises, it is easy to talk to”. “I don’t know” is often answers at home. Normally, at school age I do not wonder much. I often ask friends and 1088 about emotions and love respectively”. The second one, T, a 15 year old girl student, in HCM city said “I sometimes ask my mother little about love, but she said the children don’t need to mention the adult’s matters” (Hong, 2003)<sup>180</sup>.

Another research of the group Doan Thi Binh Minh, Nguyen Thi Minh, Phan Thi Hoa, Cao Hong Minh (1998) also give the same results, that is sex education has been initially paid attention by parents. They have thought that sex education should be taught for children not to be bad or some realize that teaching children sex education to help them prevent unexpected trouble because of the complicated society. However, the figure is not very high in Vietnamese families. As shown from the survey, parents still find it embarrassing to talk about sex education to children. It is considered secret, bad matters, which should not be spoken out. When children grow up, they will know by themselves as grandparents never talked about it. On the other hand, parents lack knowledge of sex education. The research of this group shows that about 25% of the local families interviewed do not understand what sex education is, mainly rural families in remote areas or areas with poor socio - economic conditions and ethnic minorities. In addition, the content of sex education in families have not been clear or specific, just common reminders and inclining to moral teaching more than specific guidance on sex, sexual relation. Some families

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<sup>178</sup> [http://suckhoesinhsan.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1506:giao-dc-tinh-dc-cho-lp-tr-trach-nhim-thuc-v-ai&catid=220:giao-duc-ve-skss&Itemid=674](http://suckhoesinhsan.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1506:giao-dc-tinh-dc-cho-lp-tr-trach-nhim-thuc-v-ai&catid=220:giao-duc-ve-skss&Itemid=674) (accessed in 3.11.2011).

<sup>179</sup> 1088 the service answering wonders about sex, reproductive health, contraception, etc.

<sup>180</sup> [http://suckhoesinhsan.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1506:giao-dc-tinh-dc-cho-lp-tr-trach-nhim-thuc-v-ai&catid=220:giao-duc-ve-skss&Itemid=674](http://suckhoesinhsan.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1506:giao-dc-tinh-dc-cho-lp-tr-trach-nhim-thuc-v-ai&catid=220:giao-duc-ve-skss&Itemid=674) (accessed in 3.11.2011).

mistake sex education for moral education. For example, 14.9% say that sex education is to teach children to know how to behave, live independently, which is moral education not sex education, 14.6% of the families remind children not to be allowed to have early sexual relation, 12% talk to children about sanitation and puberty psychology, 45% talk to children about friendship and love, 1.5% tell children about diseases contracted from sexual relation. The rest cannot answer what they teach children. As a result, sex education is a new and hard issue to families, which make them embarrassed, sometimes they do not know what to do (Minh, Minh, Hoa, Minh, 1998:29).

From the analysis above, it can be concluded that, there is demands for exploring the issues related to sex among children, but families still avoid answering to some extent. Schools have not met their needs, because the content of subjects does not refer to this issue<sup>181</sup>. This causes the lack of knowledge about sex, reproductive health, contraception, etc., which is one of the main causes of the increase in abortion in Vietnam in recent years, especially at minor age.

To eradicate the limitations above mentioned, and satisfy the children's needs for sex issues, I think the current Vietnamese families play a more positive and active role in educating children sex, change attitudes, awareness of sex education. It is necessary to focus on the content of sex education appropriate for different ages of children and personally I think the following items should be focused:

*Firstly*, answer all wonders related to reproductive health, and unusual changes in children's body. The first and foremost responsibilities are for parents and then teachers at school.

*Secondly*, educating children healthy lifestyle, should not allow them to contact bad problems and debauchery. Guiding children to go at crowd, and get away from the isolated areas. At night, children should travel in the dim - light places, etc.

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<sup>181</sup> Currently, the content of sex education is attached to Civic education and biology at high school. However, from studying the textbooks above, I realize that the issue of sex education is theoretical. For example, the textbook of Civic education only gives a definition of friendship, love, etc. but the detailed content has not been introduced to children such as how to have safe sexual relations, contraception or providing children with knowledge related to human body development when mature, etc.

*Thirdly*, providing children with basic contraception, which can be used in case, for example condom, contraceptive pill, etc.

### **In summary**

Out of the content items to educate children at present, parents should take care of moral education, education of working attitude and skills, education of independence character and sex education. All the matters above have an important role and certain influence on the development and perfection of children's personalities.

In moral education, parents should focus on the following basic content, for example: teach children to behave with responsibility, respect for those giving birth and raising them, first and foremost they are their father, mother and next are grandparents, siblings and relatives: aunt, uncle, etc. Besides, some matters of moral education, which should be taught now when contacting others in community are kindness, modesty and honesty.

In terms of education of working attitude and skills, parents should teach children to respect all kinds of work as long as it brings legitimate income. Similarly, parents should educate children to actively take part in working activities appropriate at different age levels and gender of children.

At present, it is very important to teach children education of independence because people of modern society - the civilized society cannot rely on or become passively under any circumstances. Parents must teach children to be independent from the early age without depending on others. When they grow up, they know self - study and self aware of their study and future career. Children should raise awareness of self - education and self - adjustment of their behavior.

Sex education is to aim at providing children with a basic knowledge of sex, reproductive health. However, the family's role in educating children about sex in Vietnam has had many limitations recently, so have the responsibilities of school. Therefore, in the near future, Vietnam need to promote educating propagandizing for families to be aware of their important responsibilities in teaching children sex education. Comparing other countries policies and results I think this task should be assigned to school-teachers to teach children before they undergo puberty.

## Chapter 6: Function of taking care of elderly people in Vietnamese families at present time<sup>182</sup>

### 6.1. An overview of elderly people in present day Vietnam

The elderly populations in many countries are growing and will continue to grow in the coming years, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population. According to the medium-variant population projections of the UN (2004), there are about 610 million people aged 60 and over (or 10 percent of the world population in 2000). The number of elderly people reached 672 million in 2005 and this number is expected to grow to around 1.9 billion people (or 22 percent of the world population) in 2050. Vietnam is experiencing the changes just described.

**Table 6.1. Elderly people in some countries (in: %)**

	1950	1975	2000	2025	2050
Japan	7.7	11.7	23.2	35.1	42.3
Singapore	3.7	6.7	10.6	30.0	35.0
Thailand	5.0	5.0	8.1	17.1	27.1
USA	12.5	14.8	16.1	24.8	26.9
China	7.5	6.9	10.1	19.5	29.9
Laos	4.6	4.6	5.6	7.0	13.3

*Source: Van, P.T., Tram, B.T.H. (2007). The role of social networks in health care for elderly people in Vietnam, pp. 5.*

In Vietnam, people aged from 60 years or above<sup>183</sup> are defined as older persons or elderly people (Clause 1, Chapter 1, The Ordinance on Elderly). In 1979, there were 3.71 million men and women age 60 and above, representing 6.9% of the total population, and in 1989 the total of elderly people estimated 4.64 million accounted for 7.2% of the total population. In 1999, the percentage of older people reached 8.2% or 6.19 million. According to the statistics from the 2008 Vietnam Household

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<sup>182</sup> This chapter consists of two papers published at International Journals: 1) Elderly people in Vietnam at present time. International Journal of Social sciences and Education. Vol.3, No.2, April 2012, pp. 277 - 284; 2) Function of taking care of elderly people in Vietnamese families at present time. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences. Vol.2, No.4, April 2012, pp. 49 - 54.

<sup>183</sup> In the world report on the ageing population for the period 1950 - 2050, the age of 60 years is applied as a milestone for both males and females to assess the ratio of ageing people to the total population of a country (World population ageing 1950 - 2050, Department of economic and social affairs, Population division, UN, New York, 2002).

Living Standard Survey, the total of elderly people estimated 9.47 million accounted for 11% of the total population. By the year 2020, Vietnam is expected to have more than 12 million older persons. The importance of the issue becomes clearer<sup>184</sup> when the projected increases in the numbers of elderly people are (i) compared with those in the past and (ii) seen within the context of the growth in the total population.

**Table 6.2. Vietnam's elderly people by number and percentage**

Year	Population (Million)	Elderly people (Million)	Elderly people in total population (in:%)
1979	53.74	3.71	6.9
1989	64.41	4.64	7.2
1999	76.32	6.19	8.2
2002	79.73	7.37	9.24
2004	82.03	8.12	9.9
2006	84.14	8.75	10.4
2008	86.21	9.47	11

*Source: - Authors' calculation using National Committee for Population, Families and Children, Country Report, December 2002*

*- 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey and Statistical Yearbook of Vietnam 2008*

The number of elderly people increased by 5.76 million during 1979 - 2008. By the year 2008, with the elderly population of 11%, Vietnam population starts ageing<sup>185</sup>.

### **6.1.1. Age and gender distribution of older persons**

Table 6.3 shows the distribution of the Vietnamese ageing population according to the age groups 60 - 64, 65 - 69, 70 - 74, and over 80 following two censuses conducted in Vietnam in 1999 and 2009. The table also shows the ratio of ageing males in comparison with that of ageing females.

<sup>184</sup> The same as fast population growth, fast population aging creates various pressures on the economic growth, as well as on the existing infrastructure and health care services. In addition, it has effects on family relationships, lifestyles as well as on the social protection system, especially the pension scheme (UNFPA, 2009).

<sup>185</sup> According to UNESCAP, population starts ageing when the percentage of older-age persons to the total population represents more than 10%.

**Table 6.3. Distribution of Vietnamese ageing population by age and gender (1999 and 2009) (in:%)**

	1999			2009		
	Total	Gender		Total	Gender	
		Male	Female		Male	Female
60 - 64	28.5	30.1	27.3	26.0	28.6	24.2
65 - 69	26.8	28.8	25.5	20.9	21.7	20.3
70 - 74	19.7	19.8	19.7	18.9	18.9	19.0
75 - 79	13.4	12.2	14.2	16.1	15.9	16.2
80+	11.6	9.1	13.3	18.1	14.9	20.3
Total:	100	100	100	100	100	100
Rate of gender by age (male per 100 female):						
60 - 64	77	--	--	80	--	--
65 - 69	79	--	--	72	--	--
70 - 74	70	--	--	79	--	--
75 - 79	60	--	--	67	--	--
80+	48	--	--	50	--	--
Total	70	--	--	68	--	--

*Source: Author's calculation based on the 1999, 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result*

Comparing the rates of the ageing population in 1999 and 2009, it is possible to see the rate of ageing population in the age groups 60 - 64 and 65 - 69 in 2009 showed a decrease when compared to the figures for 1999 (it was 28.5%, 26.8% in 1999 and 26%, 20.9% in 2009 respectively). However, the ratio of the ageing population at older ages (from 70 years of age onwards) in 2009 is higher than in 1999 (see table 6.3). It is possible to conclude that Vietnamese female elderly people are living longer and this is one of the factors that makes the average life span of Vietnamese people tends to be greater over recent years.

Regarding gender, the survey results show in the age groups 60 - 64 and 65 - 69 the ratio of elderly males is higher than that of the elderly females. However, in the age groups of 70 - 74 and 75 - 79, and over 80 years old, the ratio of ageing females is higher than that of the ageing males. The higher the ages, the more different they are. The biggest difference is seen at the age of over 80 with the ratio in 2009 being 20.3% for females and 14.9% for males. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the older the age the more females are represented. The reason for this situation is that the average life expectancy of females is often longer than that of males and for the case of Vietnam it is possible that the prolonged war may have taken the lives of many men, and as a result the number of men still left alive is low.

Following the ratio of gender by age (ratio of males to 100 females), the survey results show in 1999 that the highest ratio of males to 100 females is in the age group of 65 - 69 (77 males to 100 females) and the lowest ratio is at the age of over 80 (48 males to 100 females). In 2009, the highest ratio of ageing males to 100 females is in the age group of 60 - 64, and the lowest ratio is also at the age of over 80, with 50 males to 100 females.

As shown in table 6.3, in 1999, there are 70 elderly males out of every 100 elderly females but in 2009 this ratio reduces by 68 males on 100 females. This means elderly females account for a higher ratio compared to males, and the ratio of widows would account for a higher rate compared to widowers.

**In short**, the rate of the Vietnamese ageing population by age varies in terms of size. The ageing population is focused mainly at the ages of 60 - 64 and 65 - 69. There are more ageing females than males. The rate of ageing males at lower ages is higher. But the rate of ageing females at higher ages is higher than that of the ageing males.

#### ***6.1.2. Marital status of the Vietnamese ageing population***

Presently as in the past, Vietnamese people see marriage as a permanent institution. There are very few Vietnamese people who have never married. Similarly, divorce and/or separation are not common in Vietnam. Accordingly that is why most aged Vietnamese people are either married, or widows or widowers (see table 6.4). Most of the ageing Vietnamese people in the age group of 60 - 64 is married. In 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008 it was respectively: 74.9%, 60.3%, 76.4% and 77.9%. The rate of the ageing widows and widowers older than 65 years is: 42.5% in 2002, 43.5% in 2006 and 43.6% in 2008.



**Table 6.4. Marital status of ageing Vietnamese by age (2002 - 2008) (in:%)**

Marital status	2002		2004		2006		2008	
	60 - 64	+65	60 - 64	+65	60 - 64	+65	60 - 64	+65
Never married	1.5	0.8	1.0	--	2.0	0.8	2.3	0.9
Married	74.9	56	60.3	--	74.6	54.9	77.9	54.6
Widowers/widows	22.2	42.5	37.6	--	19.6	43.5	18.2	43.6
Divorce	0.7	0.3	0.5	--	1.2	0.4	1.0	0.5
Separation	0.8	0.4	0.6	--	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.4
Total	100	100	100	--	100	100	100	100

*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

### **6.1.3. The involvement of ageing Vietnamese in economic activities**

In accordance with Vietnamese law, women retire at the age of 55 years, and men at 60 years. This means that when they enter their old ages, ageing Vietnamese do not need to be involved in economic activities. However, in reality, ageing Vietnamese are involved in various forms of economic activities to earn income for themselves and/or their families. The survey shows approximately 0.3%, 0.4% and 0.5%<sup>186</sup> of aged people were involved in economic activities in 2002, 2006, and 2008 (2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey). Ageing Vietnamese rely mainly on agricultural related activities. Nearly 71 % were involved in agricultural production in 2008. This is understandable since, as analyzed in later parts of the study, we can see that most ageing Vietnamese live in rural areas. As they live in the countryside they easily get involved in agricultural production for income. Very few ageing people take part in forestry and construction activities, as these require a lot of physical strength.

<sup>186</sup> In fact, these numbers are much higher because there are certain activities that older people do not involve in directly generating income for their families but they are not complied herein. For example, in rural areas aged people do small activities to help their children and grandchildren such as plucking up weeds, seeding rice, etc. In urban families, ageing people may look after grandchildren and do housework, etc.

**Table 6.5. Rate of ageing Vietnamese working in the past 12 months by production sector (2002 - 2008) (in:%)**

Year	Agriculture	Forest	Aquaculture	Industry	Construction	Trade	Services	Total
2002	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2004	74.4	0.4	2.3	5.5	0.5	9.3	7.6	100.0
2006	72.0	0.3	2.4	5.5	0.7	10.2	9.0	100.0
2008	71.8	0.6	2.7	5.6	0.7	9.0	9.6	100.0

*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

#### **6.1.4. Education qualifications of elderly Vietnamese people**

The census in 2009 shows a majority of elderly Vietnamese is literate (81.6%). This reflects the endless efforts that Vietnam has made in education<sup>187</sup>. However, there is still a certain percentage of elderly people who are illiterate. Specifically, 18% out of the total elderly Vietnamese population is illiterate. There is a big difference between the illiteracy rates for males and females (7% male and 25.4% female). The reason could be that the male is more respected than female in traditional society and that prevented females from going to school resulting in more females being denied access to any educational services and therefore remaining illiterate. It is known that in traditional Vietnamese society, especially in feudal times, women and children used to have low positions in their families as well as in society. Women spent most of their time at home. They were hardly involved in any community activities, including going to school. Only men were encouraged to attend school. Vietnamese people were used to traditional images of a wife spinning and weaving silk while her husband is reading books by a light - preparing for his exams. The wife was hard working and sacrificed herself so that her husband could pass his exams and bring glory to his own and extended family. The wife didn't take any classes. She did all the housework and took care of her husband and children. This may be the cause of the high percentage of ageing Vietnamese females who are illiterate in comparison to the percentage of males who are illiterate.

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<sup>187</sup> See detail in chapter 2

**Table 6.6. Literacy rate of ageing Vietnamese by age, gender, and residence  
(2009) (in:%)**

	Total	Gender		Residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Literate					
60 - 69	89.8	95.3	85.5	95.0	87.5
70 - 74	83.3	93.7	76.3	89.5	81.0
75 - 79	77.8	91.4	68.7	84.9	75.3
+80	62.3	84.3	51.3	72.7	59.0
Total:	81.6	92.7	74.1	89.0	78.8
Illiterate					
60 - 69	10.0	4.6	14.2	4.8	12.2
70 - 74	16.4	6.1	23.3	10.2	18.6
75 - 79	21.7	8.4	30.7	14.7	24.1
+80	37.0	15.2	47.9	26.8	40.2
Total:	18.0	7.0	25.4	10.8	20.8
Unknown					
60 - 69	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
70 - 74	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4
75 - 79	0.5	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.5
+80	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.7
Total:	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4

*Source: Calculated by author following the 2009 Vietnam population and housing census: Total result*

At different ages, the rate of illiterate ageing people varies. At the higher ages, the rate of illiterate ageing people tends to increase. The rate of illiterate ageing people in the age groups of 60 - 69 is 10%, 70 - 74: 16.4%, 75 - 79: 21.7% and over 80 is 37%. This could be because of social and historical features. When society is more developed and advanced, all people, including the aged, have more opportunities to access educational services and this may have decreased the rate of illiterate aged Vietnamese.

The rate of literate ageing people living in urban areas is higher than those living in rural areas. Conversely, the rate of illiterate ageing people in rural areas is higher than in urban areas. Table 6.6 shows 89% of ageing people living in urban areas who are literate while only 78.8% of their counterparts in rural areas are literate. The rate

of illiterate ageing people in urban settings is 10.8%, which is much lower than the 20.8% living in rural areas. Clearly, the living standards in urban areas are higher, so educational services are much more available. These factors lead to an understandable situation where the rate of literacy for ageing people living in urban areas is higher than that of ageing people living in rural areas.

#### ***6.1.5. Health of elderly people***

According to a survey on the status of Vietnamese elderly, conducted in 8 provinces in 2007, about 95% of elderly people suffer from a disease. On average an elderly person suffers from 2.6 diseases, which are mainly chronic but with no risk of transmission, such as bones related diseases (about 40%), cardiovascular, blood pressure (about 45%). There is high percentage of elderly people with poor health (23%). The percentage of healthy elderly people accounts for about 5%.

With such a health status, about 23% elderly people have difficulties in their daily life, of which more than 90% need support from other people. The survey's results also show that communal health centers are the places where elderly people always go for their medical check-ups and treatments (about 45%). Next are hospitals (about 19%) and the rest are self-treatment, private health clinics and others.

The survey found no big discrepancy in the percentage of elderly people having regular check-ups (20.7%) or visiting doctors when falling ill (88.7%) in both rural and urban areas. Of the elderly people in the eight provinces, 60% in the urban areas and 50% in rural areas were provided with medical advice or health care instruction (Toan & Chau, 2007).

#### ***6.1.6. Religious adherence***

In many societies, older persons play an important role as religious leaders and old age is associated with increasing preoccupation with religious matters (1986). In Vietnam, however, as table 6.7 indicates, only a minority of the older people professes a religion, likely reflecting a de-emphasis of religion as part of the long-standing socialist orientation of the government. Overall, according to the 1999 census, only modestly more than a fourth (28%) of the older population professes a religion. There is only a slight tendency for the proportion doing so to increase with

age within the elderly age range. More pronounced is a gender difference with older women more likely than men to profess a religion. In addition, religious adherence is higher among urban than rural elderly.

**Table 6.7. Religious adherence by age, sex and residence (1999)**

	Total	Sex		Residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
% who profess a religion					
60 - 64	26.9	21.7	31.0	33.9	24.9
65 - 69	27.8	23.1	31.5	34.2	26.0
70 - 74	29.3	23.8	33.3	34.3	28.0
75 - 79	28.6	23.2	31.9	32.8	27.5
+80	30.1	27.5	31.4	34.6	28.9
Total	28.2	23.2	31.7	34.0	26.6
% distribution by religion among those who profess a religion					
Buddhist	63.8	56.5	67.6	68.6	62.1
Catholic	22.4	26.1	20.5	24.0	21.9
Cao Dai	6.0	7.0	5.4	3.9	6.7
Hoa Hao	6.2	8.4	5.1	2.7	7.5
Other	1.6	1.9	1.4	0.8	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source: Knodel, J. & Anh, T.S. (2002). Vietnam's older population: The view from the census, pp. 4.*

Clearly regional differences, not show in the table, exist with half (50%) of the older residents of the southeast region and over two fifth (43%) of those in the Mekong River Delta indicating a religious affiliation. Among elders who profess a religion, almost two thirds (64%) are Buddhists and over one fifth (22%) are Catholics. The remainders are accounted for mainly by two indigenous regional religious sects, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. Adherents of the former are largely concentrated in the Southeast and Mekong River Delta regions and the latter are almost exclusively restricted to the Mekong River Delta.

#### **6.1.7. Living arrangements**

In Vietnam as in many other Asia countries, living arrangements are closely intertwined with the support provided to older persons by their families. Co-

residence with a spouse and a married child is the social norm for older persons whose children are adults and constitutes an important part of the context in which intergenerational exchanges of support systems occur (Anh et al., 1997). Elderly, who live alone or with only their spouse, could be among the most vulnerable within the older aged population. Some who live alone or only with a spouse, however, may do so out of a preference for privacy, especially if they have adult children living nearby. In these cases, their ability to do so may reflect a greater physical and financial ability to live independently.

Several measures of living arrangements can be directly calculated or estimated based on census. These include co-residence with adult children (based on information on relationship to head of all household members) living alone, and living with a spouse only. Table 6.8 indicates that most Vietnamese elders in 1999 co-resided with their children. Over three-fourths lived with at least one child and just over half lived with a married child.

**Table 6.8. Living arrangements of the older population by age, residence and region (1999)**

	% living with any child	% living with any married child	% living alone	% living with only spouse
Total	77.6	53.8	5.8	11.5
Age				
60 - 64	83.4	46.2	3.4	9.4
65 - 69	77.8	51.3	4.6	12.6
70 - 74	74.0	56.7	6.8	13.8
75 - 79	71.8	60.6	8.6	12.9
+80	74.8	66.7	9.2	8.5
Sex				
Men	78.0	47.4	2.7	14.7
Women	77.2	58.4	7.9	9.2
Residence				
Urban	82.7	59.3	3.9	7.3
Rural	76.2	52.3	6.3	12.7
Regions				
Northern Midlands and Mountain	82.7	63.7	8.5	18.2
Red River Delta	68.6	46.1	3.4	9.7
North Central	73.5	48.8	6.3	16.3
South Central Coast	75.9	46.5	8.2	10.3
Central Highlands	85.2	56.2	2.5	8.0
Southeast	83.9	58.6	4.4	5.9
Mekong River Delta	83.9	60.0	3.9	5.3

*Source: Knodel, J. & Anh, T.S. (2002). Vietnam's older population: The view from the census, pp. 5.*

Co-residence with any child is higher for younger than older elders undoubtedly reflecting a life cycle process for the family in which children move out of the parental house as they get older and as their parents age (Knodel, Chayovan, Siriboon, 1996). In contrast, co-residence with a married child is highest for the older elders again reflecting a life cycle process in which, as parent age, their adult children get married. There is little difference between men and women with respect to the percentages who co-reside with any child although elderly women are more likely than men to live with a married child. This difference largely reflects the fact

that women typically marry men who are older than themselves and thus, compared to men of the same age, have been married longer and have older children on average who in turn are more likely to be married. Hence more children of women 60 and over are married than of men at the same age.

Co-residence levels vary considerably by region and modestly by rural-urban residence. Co-residence is least common in the Northern regions of Vietnam, especially the Red River Delta, while the Southern regions in general exhibit the highest levels. Co-residence is higher in urban than rural areas, a common pattern found in a number of developing countries, perhaps in part reflecting differential costs of housing (Hashimoto, Kendig, Coppard, 1992).

Only a small minority of older persons in Vietnam lives alone and only a modestly higher percentage live only with a spouse. The proportion living alone increases with age, although even among persons 80 and older, less than a tenth live in solitary households. Living alone is more common for women while living only with a spouse is more common for men, reflecting gender differences in mortality and remarriage. In addition, as noted above, the children of women over age 60 are older on average than those of their male age peers and thus are more likely to have left the home.

Co-residence levels by gender and married status of child are shown in table 6.9. Summary ratios of co-residence with sons to daughters indicate the dominance of children of one sex over the other within each marital status category in the living arrangements of older Vietnamese. The summary ratios of elderly living with single sons as opposed to single daughters exhibit little gender preference on the part of the elderly parent. In contrast, Vietnamese elderly are almost four times as likely to live with a married son as opposed to a married daughter suggesting a clear son preference with respect to co-residence with a married child. This varies little with the age or gender of parent. Regional variation in this respect, however, is substantial. The preference for married son co-residence is much greater in the northern than the southern regions. Rural-urban differences in the predominance of co-residence with married sons rather than married daughters are pronounced. This regional variation in married son co-residency is consistent with other evidence indicating a greater



prevalence of patriarchal and patrilocal practices in the north of Vietnam than in the more Southern regions (Knodel et al. 2000).

**Table 6.9. Co-residence patterns of the older population by sex of co-resident child, age, sex, residence and region (1999)**

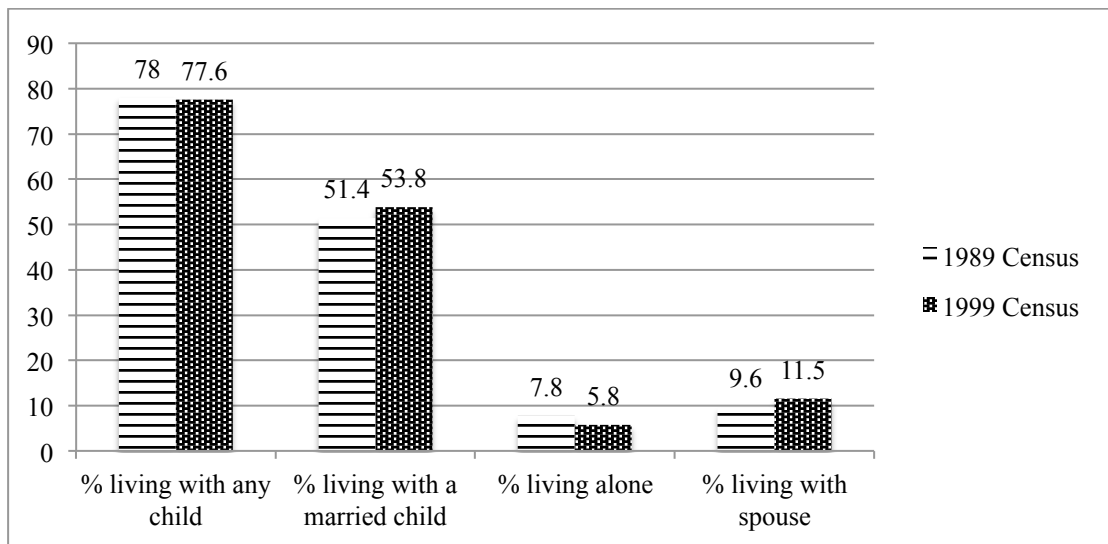
	% living with a single		Ratio of co-residing with a single son to daughter	% living with a married		Ratio of co-residing with a married son to daughter
	Son	Daughter		Son	Daughter	
Total	23.9	22.4	1.1	44.5	11.9	3.7
Age						
60 - 64	41.0	33.9	1.2	38.2	11.3	3.4
65 - 69	27.7	24.8	1.1	43.1	11.4	3.8
70 - 74	15.5	16.9	0.9	47.7	11.6	4.1
75 - 79	7.9	12.0	0.7	49.9	12.2	4.1
+80	3.3	8.5	0.4	52.8	14.8	3.6
Sex						
Men	31.8	28.7	1.1	39.8	10.5	3.8
Women	18.2	17.8	1.0	48.0	12.9	3.7
Residence						
Urban	29.7	26.8	1.1	43.8	22.1	2.0
Rural	22.4	21.2	1.1	44.7	9.1	4.9
Region						
Northern Midlands and Mountainous	19.0	15.1	1.3	57.6	7.0	8.2
Red River Delta	17.5	16.9	1.0	40.1	6.8	5.9
North Central	20.7	19.7	1.1	43.6	5.9	7.4
South Central Coast	30.3	27.9	1.1	35.9	13.2	2.7
Central Highlands	31.7	21.3	1.5	42.7	15.9	2.7
Southeast	32.7	31.2	1.0	42.2	24.0	1.8
Mekong River Delta	28.6	28.9	1.0	46.9	17.6	2.7

*Source: Knodel, J. & Anh, T.S. (2002). Vietnam's older population: The view from the census, pp. 6.*

Equivalent measures of living arrangements can be calculated from the five percent sample of the 1989 census and compared to those from the 1999 census, thereby providing evidence to judge the extent of change between the two censuses. Such a

comparison is of particular interest given that the intervening decade was marked by very substantial transformations in the Vietnam economy including the extension a series of free market reforms, commonly know as Doi Moi. As fig. 6.1 shows, living arrangements have remained remarkably stable. Co-residence with any child or with a married child remained barely changed over between 1989 and 1999 despite the dynamic social and economic environment that characterized the decade in between. While solitary living declined slightly between 1989 and 1999, living only with a spouse increased slightly so the combined percentage in these categories remained virtually unchanged.

**Fig. 6.1. Living arrangements of the older population (1989 and 1999)**



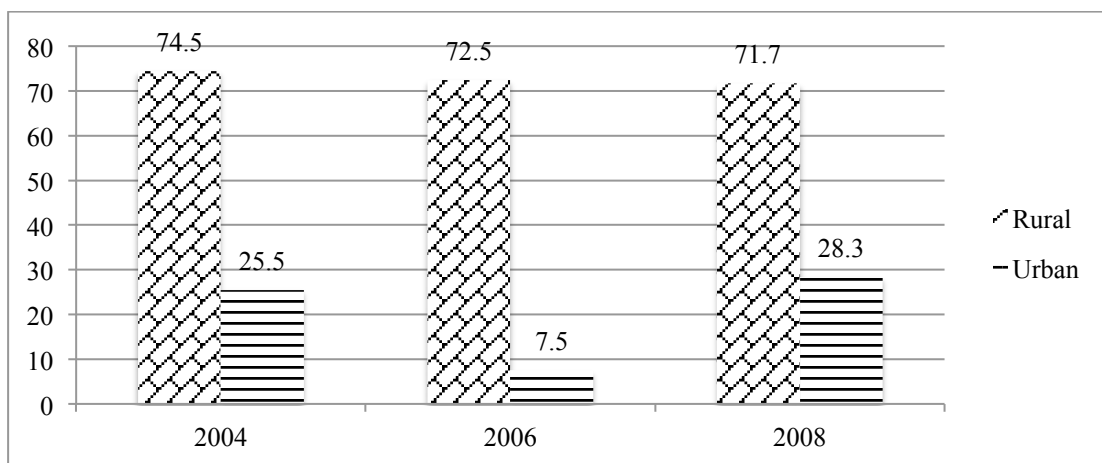
*Source: Knodel, J. & Anh, T.S. (2002). Vietnam's older population: The view from the census, pp. 6.*

### **6.1.8. Residence of ageing Vietnamese**

As surveyed, most ageing Vietnamese live in rural areas - accounting for 74.5%, 72.5% and 71.7% in 2004, 2006, 2008 respectively. It is possible to see that during the four years surveyed there is an annual reduction in the number of ageing people living in rural areas. This is due to the strong urbanization trend in Vietnam<sup>188</sup>.

<sup>188</sup> See detail in chapter 2

**Fig. 6.2. The rate of ageing Vietnamese according to urban and rural residence (2004 - 2008) (%)**



*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

Regarding geographic distribution, in 2008, the greatest number of ageing people lived in the Red River Delta (13.0%), followed by the North Central area (12.7%), and the lowest number lived in the Central Highlands (6.9%) and the Northwest (6.6%). So, the number of aged people who live in the Red River Delta is twice more than aged people in the Northwest. What causes such an uneven distribution of ageing people? In my opinion, it is because the living conditions in the Central Highlands and the Northwest are poorer<sup>189</sup>, birthrates however are higher<sup>190</sup> and the average life span<sup>191</sup> of the ageing people in those two areas is the lowest nationwide.

<sup>189</sup> See detail in chapter 3

<sup>190</sup> See detail in chapter 4

<sup>191</sup> Average life expectancy in Midlands and Northern Mountainous is 70 years, Central Highlands is 69.1 years, Red River Delta is 74.2 years, North Central and South Central Coast is 72.4 years (2009 Vietnam population and housing census).

**Table 6.10. Rate of ageing Vietnamese by geographic areas (2004 - 2008) (in:%)**

Regions	2004	2006	2008
Red River Delta	11.9	12.5	13.0
Northeast	9.0	9.3	9.8
Northwest	7.2	7.2	6.6
North Central	10.6	10.9	12.7
South Central Coast	11.1	11.7	11.9
Central Highlands	6.0	6.3	6.9
Southeast	9.3	9.7	9.7
Mekong River Delta	9.5	10.1	10.9

*Source: 2008 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey*

As shown in table 6.10, we can conclude that a majority of ageing Vietnamese live in favorable economic and social areas where there is good health care and good social services areas such as the Red River Delta. Conversely, there are much fewer ageing people living in geographically, economically, and socially disadvantaged areas. This causes uneven distribution of the ageing population across areas nationwide.

## **Conclusion**

Although Vietnam's population is quite young, the proportion of old people is rising sharply. The elderly population is focused mainly in the age groups 60 - 64 and 65 - 69. There are more elderly females than males. The rate of elderly males at lower ages is higher. But the rate of elderly females at higher ages is higher than that of the elderly males. Talking about the marital status of the Vietnamese elderly population, it is easily to see that most aged Vietnamese people are married or widows or widowers. Elderly Vietnamese people are involved in various forms of economic activities to earn income for themselves and/or their families, especially related to agricultural activities. The statistics shows a majority of elderly Vietnamese people is literate. However, there is still a certain percentage of elderly people who are illiterate. At different ages, the rate of illiterate ageing people varies. At the higher ages, the rate of illiterate elderly people tends to be higher. The rate of literate elderly people living in urban areas is higher than those living in rural areas. In Vietnam, only a minority of the older people professes a religion. More pronounced is a gender difference with older women more likely than men to profess a religion. In addition, religious adherence is higher among urban than rural elderly. Co-residence with a

spouse and a married child is the social norm for older persons whose children are adults. Co-residence levels vary considerably by region and modestly by rural-urban residence. Co-residence is least common in the Northern regions of Vietnam, especially the Red River Delta, while Southern regions in general exhibit the highest levels. Co-residence is higher in urban than rural areas, which is similar to pattern found in a number of developing countries. Elderly people mainly live in rural areas. Differences in geographical locations result in dissimilarities in elderly ratio among different regions. Generally, in urban areas and deltas, the ratio of old people is higher than that in mountainous, remote and far-flung areas. The highest rate of old people is in Red River Delta, the lowest in Central Highlands.

## **6.2. Current Vietnamese policies and laws for the care of elderly people**

As elderly people make effective contributions to their families and society, following fine Vietnamese traditions, the Vietnamese Communist Party, the State, citizens and society have always cared for elderly people and consider it a matter of national ethics, respect, and responsibility. One of the objectives of the National Action Program on elderly people (2005 - 2010) is to improve physical and mental health of aged people<sup>192</sup>.

Basically, Vietnam has had the following policies in place to protect and take care of elderly people:

- *Ordinance of the Communist Party of Vietnam*
- *Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*
- *Marriage and Family Law*
- *Civilian Law*
- *Labor Code*
- *Public Health Care Law*
- *Law of Crime*
- *Laws on Social Insurance*
- *Laws of Legal Aid*
- *Ordinance of special treatment of people with meritorious services to revolutions*

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<sup>192</sup> Prime Ministerial Decision No 31/2005/QĐ-TTg dated 25.11.2005 on approval of National Action Program on Vietnamese Ageing People in the 2005-2010 period.

- *Ordinance of Veteran*
- *Ordinance of Disabled People*
- *The Ordinance of Ageing People and the Guidance to implement some items of this Ordinance*

Although Vietnamese government stipulated a lot of policies for elderly people as analyzed above, but the public support that is currently available to the elderly is extremely limited. The state's inability to provide full support to elderly people so that the responsibility of taking care of them actually belongs to family. It is confirmed by the number of elderly people living with their children when they are old (see table 6.8) and a lot of policies required families take care of elderly people. The family undoubtedly continues to play a crucial role in providing older persons with care in Vietnam. This conclusion will be clarified in the next part.

### **6.3. Filial piety - a decisive factor for the care for ageing people in Vietnamese families**

#### **6.3.1. What is filial piety?**

“*Filial piety*” has a long history dating back to its association with ancestor worship. Later it was developed and institutionalized as a moral standard of Confucianism. Basically, “*filial piety*” is a positive sentiment, which means as a child you must show reverence and devotion to your parents. Regarding filial piety practices, despite the heavy influence of Confucianism, the Vietnamese have their own concept of “*filial piety*”, which is not as highly strict and fixed as expected by Confucianism. Particularly, the “*filial piety*” tradition of the Vietnamese people was taken up and improved in the idealism and code of conduct of Ho Chi Minh. For Ho Chi Minh, the concept of “*filial piety*” had been revolutionarily changed. In the current conditions, I suppose we should further emphasize the role of “*filial piety*” in the family as well as in society. Filial piety should be taken on board and developed according to the spirit of Ho Chi Minh in association with the development requirements of newly developed families.

In somewhat general terms, filial piety means to be good to one's parents; to take care of one's parents; to engage in good conduct not just towards parents but also

outside the home so as to bring a good name to one's parents and ancestors; to perform the duties of one's job well so as to obtain the material means to support parents as well as carry out sacrifices to the ancestors; not be rebellious; show love, respect and support; display courtesy; ensure male heirs, uphold fraternity among brothers; wisely advise one's parents, including sorrow for their sickness and death; and carry out sacrifices after their death. But a core ideal of filial piety is the fulfillment of child's obligations to the parent.

Filial piety is a social norm that parents should love their children and that children in turn should love and respect their parents (Lew, 1995) to repay the comfort and aid received:

“Children were made to feel keenly that they owed parents a moral debt so immense as to be unpayable. A child was supposed to try to please his or her parents all the time and in every way, to increase their comfort, to accede to all their wishes, to fulfill their aspirations, to lighten their burden of work and of worry, and to comply with their wishes in all matters, great and small” (Jamieson, 1993:17).

From that, we could define the filial piety is the responsibility of each person to respect their parents, obey them, take care of them as they age, advise parents, and of course to love them.

### ***6.3.2. The practice of filial piety in taking care of elderly people in Vietnamese families***

Since the old days, Vietnamese people attach very much importance to the man's morality education for their descendants; especially “*filial piety*” is on top. Among the relations in family, the relationship between the later generation and the preceding one is the filial piety. Although that relationship trends to be changed by social change, its core is unchangeable including gratitude, respect, obedience, support, taking care of parents who have given birth, fostered and educated their children. That is attention, care, wish good health, long life, and pleasure for parents. It is also the endeavor to keep and promote the family's order, discipline and tradition, gratitude to ancestors.

Filial piety in Vietnamese families is expressed in many ways but highlights are as follows:

*Firstly*, children must be grateful to and respect their grandparents and parents in families. When they are alive, children must give respectful support, care to them. When they are older, such support and care must be more thoughtful. When they passed away, children must bury them properly.

*Secondly*, a child with filial piety is the one who knows to protect himself, his moral behavior, health, especially to improve his moral behavior and knowledge to become the one with good personality, the person of great righteousness and generosity, bringing fame to his family. This child with filial piety must establish his position in life, have successful career of which his parents may be proud.

*Thirdly*, a child with filial piety is the one who never does anything which may cause negative influence on his family's honor, able to take over from his parents' career, continue their will, follow their good example, protect family's order, tradition and way of life.

In this part, we focus on the first way in realization of filial piety in Vietnam as this is considered prominent expression, the nucleus and basic meaning in the realization of filial piety in Vietnam families. It is children's care for the elderly in families. By that virtue, the filial piety in families is defined: "Filial piety is respect, taking good care of parents wholeheartedly"<sup>193</sup>. Parents' love and sacrifice to give birth, foster and educate their children is so great which can never be compensated, higher than sky and deeper than sea: "*Parents' love and sacrifice to give birth, foster and educate children / Never forget all day and night/ Higher than sky and deeper than sea*"<sup>194</sup>.

Children must show gratitude to their parents by performing specific action. When parents are alive, children must wholeheartedly support, always take care of, visit them; if unfortunately to live a beggarly life, hungry with only maize or manioc, children must try to provide parents with food and drink, give what more delicious,

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<sup>193</sup> Institute of Linguistics (2004). *Vietnamese dictionary*, pp. 439.

<sup>194</sup> Trai, N. (1952). *Family instructions*. (Corrected by Thi Nham Dinh Gia Thuyet). Tan Viet Book, pp. 35



better for parents, desiring parents to live longer to receive repayment: “*Old mother lives in a thatched hut/ Only visiting her day and night makes children’ mind easy*”. The family education of feudal system of Vietnam highlighted: “*Parents are the most respectable ones/ Providing them with support and requital when they are old/ Never forget parents’ grace/ Children must repay their parents*”<sup>195</sup>. Parents give birth, foster and bring up children, sacrificing their youth for their children's maturity, success. When children grow up, their parents are old, bad health, need good care from children. So many children are aware of this and repay their parents. They always pay attention, take care and encourage their parents, making them feel pleasant with their old age. There are the children who are very busy with their works but they have saved time to visit, to live with their parents, shared weal and woe with their old parents, learnt about their inmost feelings and expectation and repaid their parents.

*About the way of support:* The parents who are in good health, wealthy often live separately from their children. Those who are old and weak or poor live with their children. Children who are wealthy give their parents the best amenities; serve them the best delicious food and drink. Those who are poor still know to give their parents good meal. There are children who live and have meal separately from their parent but they give their parents money monthly as support. Those who live very far send their parents gifts or money sometimes.

In material term, when parents are old, children must serve their parents wholeheartedly. As a child, he/ she has to know their parents’ meal taste, depending on his/ her financial capacity, to cook what their parents want to eat. There are something to be noted that the elderly, with weak teeth and stomach, so children should prepare for them soft, easily digestive meal which is nutritious and suitable to parents’ taste. About clothing, elderly are easily affected by weather so children must prepare suitable clothing for their parents, wool clothing in winter, silk clothing in summer, help them feel strong enough to resist changeable weather. Special attention should be paid to parents’ sleep, it is very difficult for the elderly to have good sleep and easily awake by noise, children must prepare appropriate bedding for their

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<sup>195</sup> Cang, C.V. (2006). Filial piety and conduct in the past and present. National Cultural Publishing House, pp. 181.

parents' good sleep, quiet during their sleep, go to bed after and get up before their parents.

There are children who are wealthy, have provide for their parents both materially and spiritually. These children have build house for their parents, buy necessary amenities for them including good bedding to use in frosty winter, give medicine when they are ill. In some families, the children who are wealthy invite their parents to travel around the country or abroad. Some children who are not so wealthy but have repaid their parents with many deeds, which make others moved.

Everyone has to go through birth, aging, disease, and death. When parents are sick, children must take care of them conscientiously, invite doctor, buy medicine for parents. Some elderly suffer from hemiplegia, cannot take care of themselves, have meal and relieve themselves at the same place. The children who have parents like that should not be fearful of serving their parents, should remember that when we were a small child, our parents were not fearful of serving us.

In the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2007, the fourth National festival of dutiful children opened in Ho Chi Minh city. There were 196 delegates of so many dutiful children from many provinces and cities of the country, of whom 65 distinguished dutiful children have been awarded certificates of merit by the Central Committee of Vietnamese fatherland front<sup>196</sup>.

Mr. Vu Dinh Dau, 63 years old, living in Hoang Mai district, Hanoi has also been commended as a dutiful child. He has 3 children, 6 grandchildren but he by himself cooks meal for his parents who are 100 years of age. He shared the experience to take care of elderly: "The elderly are always fear of being stranded because they think they are unnecessary so we have to give them due attention, carefully explain for them to understand. Food must be soft, vegetable must be washed by ozone machine".

Mr. Bui Quang Tuan, a teacher in Binh Hoa commune, Chau Thanh district, An Giang province. He is 37 years old, not married. He said: "Everyone wants to get married but I am too poor, have not thought about getting married yet". His family

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<sup>196</sup> Dan Tri newspaper, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011.

has 6 children, 3 younger sisters got married, and two elder brothers have to earn living far away. Only Mr. Tuan stays at home to take care of his old mother.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam (28 years old, living in residential quarter 2, Thoi An ward, district 12) is another dutiful child. Everyday, he takes care of his adoptive parents as his biological ones. Since the day when his adoptive mother suffered from fatal disease, cannot sit or walk, Mr. Tam is both bread - winner and does housework. The daily unnamed works such as going to market, cooking meals, extracting medicine, washing their parents have taken all time of this young man. However, he always says with fun: “Not only girls are capable of doing housework, boys can go to market, cook meal, medicine, wash parents!”.

In the old days, it is said that filial duty a child must: “*fan parents when it is hot, warm up when it is cold, visit them day and night*”. Fan means in hot summer, children must stay up all night to fan their parents; warm up means in frosty winter, bedding is cold so children must lie down in bed to warm it up for their parents to have good sleep; visit day and night as the elderly are not as strong as young people. They may be in good health in the evening but may be ill the following morning; their health is changeable so children must visit their parents in the morning and in the evening to know their condition of health, to give them medicine in timely manner. Above is material repayment and about spiritual aspect, children must repay with all their heart. We have to understand that elderly always feel inferiority complex, self-pity when their children do not give them due attention. Therefore, children must conscientiously take care of sick parents and always talk with them. If children live far from parents, sometimes children must call to know their parents’ condition of health because if we don’t do so when our parents alive, we will have no more opportunity when they passed away.

Another reason, the elderly are always fear of sorrow and do not want nuisance to happen because it is very difficult for them to forget, to move such sorrow out of their heart once it happened. Therefore, children must try their best not to do wrong thing, which might cause their parents’ sadness.

It is said that: “*Grass grows on soil, bad habit in elderly*”, parents at old age always feel aches and pains, pull-brained, unpleasant, sometimes they scold their children

not for justified cause or even they have just been fed but said that they have not been fed, etc. Children must understand and sympathize with parents every time they changes their mood, not bear a grudge against parents. Filial piety, firstly, children must be always observe parents' intention and must not make them feel sad and worried.

Children must try best to live a moral life and studious, make parents feel pleasant because elderly are always happy when their children are dutiful and successful. Moral life and success of children are always invaluable gift for their parents, are happiness and pride for their parents at old age.

Children should respect their parents' pleasures and hobbies because young people have their own pleasures and elderly also have their own pleasures. For example, if the parents who settled down far from their homeland want to come back to their native land, children must save money, provide them with favorable condition, to satisfy their expectation. This means as a child, he or she must respect parents' hobbies and expectation and try best to meet their needs to make parents happy.

A higher level of repayment is spiritual repayment, a child with full filial piety is the one who become the spiritual support for his or her parents depend on.

Filial piety is one of moral standards, which must be done originated from the heart, voluntarily, regarding it as essential need. Public opinions always commend, encourage, wake up human conscience in realization of filial piety.

Over the current years, with the country's development, children have better financial condition to realize filial piety. Many children who have strength of will, great learning, high social position, have provided for their parents both material and spiritual life, help their parents spend their old age peacefully. Nowadays, in addition to good financial condition, many families are happy with their good spiritual and moral life, preserving their family tradition, which become the very strong support for each family member.

In every stage of history, Vietnamese people always attach very much importance to filial piety. In a festival of dutiful children held in Thanh Hoa province, a middle-age child said that:

“Love, respect old parents, aware of their great love and sacrifice. I always teach my children to be dutiful, grateful. I hope such dutifulness will make our parents live longer. I think: regardless of how old we are, if our parents passed away, we are orphaned. I am always awake of my duty as child, desire to provide for my parents and receive advices from them”<sup>197</sup>.

Or in history of Vietnam, the story “*Chung cake, Day cake*” has showed parents’ credit to give birth and bring up their children. Lang Lieu, the eighteenth prince, a dutiful, good-natured child has given his father, the King, Chung cake and Day cake. Chung cake symbolizes the earth, Day cake symbolize the sun, considering parents’ love and sacrifice as high as sun and as wide as earth, protecting their children to live a peaceful life. Therefore, Hung King agreed to entrust him with throne. Such awareness is a part of national culture to build a long-standing moral standards and principles. Chung cake and Day cake became one of traditional products, an evidence of moral standards. These cakes are always offered to ancestors in occasion of Lunar New Year holiday and annual holidays and festivals.

For all the children, the important thing is showing love and attention to their grandparents, parents both material and spiritual aspects, especially their spiritual life. As for the elderly, it is very important to take care of their spiritual life, encourage and console them. Only grandchildren and children can give the best consolation to their grandparents and parents. When parents are old and weak, sick, their children' care and help are much more valuable than tonic of any kind or expensive gifts. Meaning of support, repayment for grandparents and parents is not valuable over money but sincere heart. Love and respect are the most important for the children to foster and take care of their parents. Children’ love and filial duty, repayment make parents have peace of their mind, not feeling lonely. Parents find themselves in their children, their contribution to the society.

In Vietnamese fold verses, moral standards demonstrated the national cultural tradition have been agglomerated over many thousands of years. With simple and easily understandable words, parents’ love and sacrifice have been highly praised, fold verses are not academic literature but simple and popular over so many

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<sup>197</sup> Kiet, D.P. (2006). *Vietnamese Families - Traditional values and social mental - pathological issues*, pp. 120.

generations: *“Parents’ love and sacrifice are so great/ Fostered us since early days/ Children must show deep gratitude to parents”*.

If we wish our parents had creditability, we have to establish our position in life by learning a trade or pursue higher education, which will benefit the community and society, satisfying our parents’ expectation.

In the present context with so many complicated changes and difficulties, beside the dutiful children with benevolence and righteousness to their parents are the ones who are irresponsible for taking care of their parents, absorbed in pursuing personal purposes, not fulfilling filial piety as a child. These children are usually criticized: *“Why you leave your old mother alone/ Who tidy up bedding for her sleep/ Who make tea for her”*. Especially some children who have left their parents alone but when parents passed away, they organized luxury funeral have to come under heavy criticism by the community. These children are considered great filial impiety: *“Not feed parents when they alive/ Luxury funeral when they dead”*. In other words, they seemed not to know filial piety. They only know how to satisfy themselves, unintentionally or intentionally forget their responsibility to their parents.

Some children have understood filial piety as cold as marble. In 2008, in the media such as television, newspaper, etc. some heart-breaking stories about filial piety have been reflected, which make everybody, who has good judgment have to meditate. That is the son beats and ill-treats his biological mother when she was 85 years old<sup>198</sup>. Or Vinh Phuc Province People's Court has just heard and tried the last case, rejecting the petition submitted by Mr. Ngo Xuan Thanh who claimed his mother to repay him money that he has fostered his mother<sup>199</sup>. This may be the “rare” information that son claimed his mother for nearly VND 150 million and asked half of the house of gratitude presented by the local government for the martyr's mother. The case that Mr. Thanh claimed his mother, Mrs. Truoc for fostering money calculated from 1997 to 2005, VND 50,000 each day and total is VND 146,050,000, the Jury decided that children are responsible for fostering their parents, there is no regulation by law that mother has to repay fostering money for children, etc. For some people, is money more important than morality, ethics that make them forget core value?

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<sup>198</sup> News Program -Vietnam Television, evening 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

<sup>199</sup> Vietnam News Agency, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

Some people often blame on situation and cause many pitiful stories in relation to filial piety. In their opinion, nowadays children have no enough time to show their attention to, care for, and have happy meal with parents or stay with parents when they are sick. Therefore, they find it the best solution to hire helpers or take their parents to elderly centers so that they can spend all their time and effort to their work. Thus, many people who have a lot of children and grandchildren but have to live with helpers. Weekly or monthly, their children send them an amount of money as fulfillment of their obligation. However, for parents, money is not all...because the elderly do not have much material demand. For them, spirit is more important. Many people who have not cared for their parents when parents alive cried a lot and organized luxury funeral as consolation and repentance when their parents passed away... It is a pity that such late filial piety has been popular.

Negative manifestations relating to filial piety in the current society, which has caused many pressing and urgent issues, contrary to national fine habits and customs require the special attention and urgent solution.

The society is “aging” meanwhile population in each family has rapidly decreased (originated from guideline “*each married couple should have only one or two children*”). That means the number of people who shoulder the family affairs such as support grandparents and parents has been rapidly decreased also. In such context, it is supposed that the caring for the elderly cannot be fully taken by each individual family but it must be included as an important social policy. Thus, in Vietnam, paying attention to and caring for grandparents, parents and the elderly aiming at improving and promoting the elderly in Vietnam currently have become a significant and consistent policy of the Party and the State, responsibility of the whole political system, and obligation of each family, community as well as society. It is very necessary to issue the Law on elderly to form legal corridor for organization of the association, serve the lofty cause of caring of the elderly and make contribution to realize filial piety in the new context.

## **Conclusion**

We can realize that filial piety has a positive meaning, derived from human sacred, and from obligation as a child to repay for their parents' love and sacrifice. By

fulfilling filial piety in families, we shall succeed our family's business, bring fame to ancestry and make contribution to social stability and development. In the current situation, we should continually confirm the role of filial piety, attach it with establishment of "new cultured" families, satisfy requirement of social modernization and build a comfortable and happy life.



## Chapter 7: Conclusion and suggestions for further studies<sup>200</sup>

### 7.1. Conclusion

Vietnam's economic and social system has been significantly changing in the last decade under the fundamental reform of development patterns. With the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, Vietnamese families are changing, too. The economic reforms express in three aspects: number and rate of urban population in the country, the growth of GDP, and the shift of economic structures. Hand in hand with industrialization, Vietnamese families has many forms: nuclear family, making a separate home, extended family, family at husband's home, family at wife's home.

In spite of having the diversity of forms, almost of Vietnamese families implement their basic functions, namely: economic function, reproductive function, educational function and function of taking care of elderly people.

- About economic function of Vietnamese families, we can see that households' income has had a stable rising tendency. This demonstrates that households' living standard has been improved. Nevertheless, there still exists a quite big difference in the income of rural and urban households, as well as between the richest and poorest household groups. The Southeast is the region with households' highest income, whereas the Northeast has the lowest income of households. As for the structure of income sources, the biggest source is from salaries, the next is from agricultural activities. Meanwhile, the source from construction and forestry is lowest. There is a certain difference in the structure of income sources between rural and urban households. Rural households get the biggest source of income from agricultural activities; the next is the source from salaries. On the contrary, income from salaries is the main income of urban households. Income from agricultural activities only takes a small proportion in the structure of urban households' income. Quintile 5 (the richest group) has the biggest income source from salaries and others while the poorest group (quintile 1) has the main income source from agricultural activities.

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<sup>200</sup> This chapter consists of one paper published at an International Journal: Families: An inevitable institution in present day Vietnam. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research. Vol.3, January 2012, pp. 1 - 17.

The average expense of Vietnamese households was significantly improved in recent years. Average monthly expenses of households headed by women are higher than that of households headed by men. Average expense gap between urban and rural areas have decreased slightly but there remain large differences of the expense rate. The biggest expense of all the households is living expense, but the rate of living expenses in urban areas is always higher than that of rural areas. It is the same situation between the quintile 5 and quintile 1. Only the expenses on education show almost no difference between groups at different living standards. In daily expenses, women have the highest right of deciding, most men do not take part in this duty. With other expenses like children's education and disease treatment, men play a higher role in deciding. This is common in all the households in spite of rural or urban families. Nevertheless, in buying expensive things, the rate of both wives and husbands discussing on making decisions ranks highest. Meanwhile, this rate of only women deciding this expense is not high, especially in rural areas.

- About reproductive function of Vietnamese families, this study shows that Vietnamese households' fertility rate has substantially declined and reached the sub-replacement fertility rate over the past years. The fertility rate in rural areas decreases faster than in urban area, but it is still higher. The proportion of women having a third child decreases yearly. However, in some geographic regions, this rate tends to increase. The reasons for giving birth to a third child related to the implementation of population, family planning in local area such as: there is self-satisfaction about some achievement, the letting loose of leadership and population work conduction, the organization system of family planning staff has not been strong enough and overloaded with work, the propagandizing, educating, providing services and building policies-regimes face many problems, etc. The reasons for having a third child are also related to son preference of Vietnamese culture. Most of Vietnamese families want to have at least one son because traditionally the sons are responsible for caring for old parents, ancestor worship, continuity the lineage, etc.

The reduction of birth rate as well as Vietnam's population and family planning policy results in Vietnamese household size declining. It is also due to such negative factors as the increasing divorce rate of couples or the trend that a part of the population, especially young people do not want to get married or give birth in order

to enjoy their own life. Across the country, single households account for a very low proportion. Small household size (households with 4 members or fewer) is common in our country, especially in urban areas. Generally, rural household size is larger than urban one throughout the country. In terms of geographic regions, the Central Highlands has the largest household size, the second is the Northern Midlands and Mountain areas. The Red River Delta is the region with the smallest household size. Household size is inversely proportional to incomes of household. Households with the highest incomes (quintile 1) have the smallest size; in contrast, the poorest households (quintile 5) have the largest one. If the correlation between household size and gender of household heads is considered, female-headed households are smaller than male-headed households.

At present time, Vietnamese's mean age of marriage, especially men's is rising; for women, this trend has been likely to be stable compared with previous decades. Vietnamese men's mean age at first marriage is higher than women's in all the periods and regions. Urban young people get married later than rural ones because of the pressure of jobs, income, urban busy life; marriage is not regarded as important as other things. Kinh ethnic group - an ethnic majority in Vietnam, is considered to have more opportunities to get access to modern life, to know more about national policies so they have a trend to get married later than ethnic minorities. People working in the public sector are more likely to get married later than people working in the private sector or households because they suffer pressure from jobs they are in charge of in public sector, as well as seriously obey national policies related to marriage and family. People at low level of education and doing jobs concerning agriculture before getting married will often get married at a younger age.

The abortion rate in Vietnam has been likely to rise for recent years. In rural areas, this rate is a bit higher than in urban ones. Young age groups' abortion rate is relatively high and often higher than older age groups. The abortion rate of women at low education level is relatively high. The Northwest had the highest abortion rate, the lowest rate belonged to the South Central Coast. The highest abortion rate is of couples with one or two alive children, so this might be an indicator that people try to comply with state family planning.

The most widely used contraceptive method in Vietnamese families is intra-uterine device (IUDs). Over half of married women aged 15 - 49 answered that they have been using this method. The next are methods of menstrual cycle and using condoms. Other methods as male or female sterilization, withdrawal are less chosen by couples. The women's use of contraceptive methods is closely connected to some individual and public features. As the results given, couples' residence has impact on the choice of contraceptive methods. In rural area, couples choose modern contraceptive methods, specifically the method of IUDs, much more than in urban households. Urban families with better life experience and awareness usually use traditional contraceptive methods as withdrawal, menstrual cycle more than households in rural areas. In terms of geographic regions, the difference in the rate of using contraceptive methods has been reduced and the difference is not very clear. The age using contraceptive methods is likely to increase and women at the age of 35 - 39 reach the top rate, then this rate has the declining trend when women get much older. Education level is always considered as one of the factors affecting individuals' behavior. As can be seen from the research result, different education levels have different impacts on contraceptive methods used by women. The higher the education level, the more contraceptive methods are used. People with high education level are more and more likely to use traditional contraceptive methods. IUDs is a contraceptive method most chosen by people without education level and the rate of using this is decreasing when the education level rises. Couples' current number of children affects the choice of contraceptive methods, as well. Families with two children use contraceptive methods most; the lowest rate belongs to households without children. The demand of giving birth and the distance of fertility have influence on the rate of using contraceptive methods. When people want to have children, the rate of using contraceptive methods is lowest and women who want to give birth within two years tend to not apply contraceptive methods. Women living in households with electricity and T.V accept contraceptive methods more than others. Similarly, women living in places with convenient transportation condition accept contraceptive methods more. The principal provision source of contraceptive methods is in towns/districts/intertown centers, the next is district and provincial hospitals. For recent years, the network system of population and family planning has been a main provision source of contraceptive methods for couples. The main provision source of contraceptive methods in rural areas is medical clinics in

towns/districts/intertown centers whereas chemists in urban areas play a big role in providing these methods beside medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers. In the public sector, provincial, district hospital or medical clinics in towns/districts/intertown centers keep an important position in providing services of IUDs and sterilization for people.

- About educational function of Vietnamese families, parents play an important role in educating their children. Fathers symbolize intelligence, will, and family's discipline to unite children - especially sons. Therefore, the father needs to participate in bringing up children when they are small, spend time for and looking after them, etc. Mothers who are often careful, close to children everyday, find out and timely shape misleading, and better at raising children lifestyle, conduct and human life. With tender and tactful attitude, mothers convert, persuade and teach children to love even when they grow up.

Parents spend a lot of time and activities aiming at educating and socializing children. The most frequent activities showing parent's care for children are: parent-teacher meeting, helping children with home studies, spare time for children by that building up a job orientation and family orientation of their children.

Out of the content items to educate children at present, parents should take care of moral education, education of working attitude and skills, education of independence character and sex education. All the matters above have role and certain influence on the development and perfection of children's personalities.

In order to promote family's role in educating - socializing children, some solutions are suggested: i) consolidating family institution, ii) strengthening relationship between family and school in educating - socializing children, iii) combining between family and community in educating - socializing children, iv) making social environment healthy.

- About function of taking care of elderly people in Vietnamese families, this study shows that the proportion of old people is rising sharply in recent years. As the ageing population mainly the ages of 60 - 69 is meant. There are more ageing females than males. Ageing Vietnamese are involved in various forms of economic

activities to earn income for themselves and/or their families, especially related to agricultural activities. Statistics show a majority of ageing Vietnamese is literate, whereas only a minority of the older people professes a religion. Co-residence with a spouse and a married child is the social norm for older persons whose children are adults. Co-residence is higher in urban than rural areas, a common pattern found in a number of developing countries. Elderly people mainly live in rural areas. Generally, in urban areas and deltas, the ratio of old people is higher than that in mountainous, remote and far-flung areas. The highest rate of old people is in Red River Delta, the lowest in Central Highlands.

In spite of the fact that the Vietnamese government stipulated a lot of policies for elderly people as analyzed above, the public support that is currently available to the elderly is extremely limited. The state's inability to provide full support to the elderly people so that the responsibility of taking care of them actually belongs to family. It is confirmed by the number of elderly people living with their children when they are old and a lot of policies requires families to take care of elderly people. The family undoubtedly does still play a crucial role in providing older persons with care in Vietnam. The main reason for this situation is that the children want to compensate their parents' sacrifices for them. It is called "*filial piety*" (Dao Hieu in Vietnamese). In somewhat general terms, filial piety means to be good to one's parents; to take care of one's parents; to engage in good conduct not just towards parents but also outside the home so as to bring a good name to one's parents and ancestors; to perform the duties of one's job well so as to obtain the material means to support parents as well as carry out sacrifices to the ancestors; not be rebellious; show love, respect and support; display courtesy; ensure male heirs, uphold fraternity among brothers; wisely advise one's parents, including sorrow for their sickness and death; and carry out sacrifices after their death. But a core ideal of filial piety is the fulfillment of child's obligations to the parent.

Filial piety in families is respect, taking good care of parents wholeheartedly. Parents give birth, foster and bring up children, sacrificing their youth for their children's maturity, success. By fulfilling filial piety in families, we shall succeed our family's business, bring fame to ancestry and make a contribution to social stability and development. In current situation, we should continually confirm the role of filial

piety, attach it with the establishment of “new cultural families”, satisfy requirement of social modernization and build a comfortable and happy life.

## **7.2. Suggestions for further studies**

In the following, I make some suggestions for further studies:

- *Firstly*, studying the performance of the basic functions of families over different historical periods. For example, study in performance of functions of Vietnamese families over the important historical periods of the country: i) from appearance of Vietnam to 1945 (the time when Vietnam won independence); ii) 1945 - 1954 period (The Vietnamese people carried out a war of resistance against the French colonialists); iii) 1954 - 1975 period (The Vietnamese people carried out a war of resistance against the USA); 1975 - 1986 period (renovation period). By studying the functions of Vietnamese families over such periods together with results of this dissertation, we would have a full and comprehensive view on performance of the functions of Vietnamese families from the past to the present date.

- *Secondly*, compare the performance of the functions of Vietnamese families (a developing country in Asia) with the performance of the functions of families in a developed country in Europe (for example, Germany). Thereby, we can realize the similarity as well as difference in performance of the basic functions of families between a developing country and a developed country, an Eastern country and a Western country to figure out whether the industrialization and modernization process is following different or similar patterns when socialist or capitalist societies, and specific cultural traditions in Asian versus Western are under consideration.

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