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Original scientific paper

THE FAMILY IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA¹

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Abstract The entire transitional process in the Republic of Macedonia undoubtedly affected the status and the role of the family in the country in all the basic family functions. In essence, the elements of transition consisted of the fall of the collectivist social system, most apparent in the transformation of the ownership structure from state-owned to private-owned, pluralization of almost all society spheres (political system, culture, education, the sphere of conceptualization). These changes which mostly took place in the period between 1985-2005 affected the structure, the function of the family and family life in general. The family in RM was, for the most part, captured by pauperization processes, followed by the need and necessity to manage to function in market conditions, in a plurality political system, and the process of globalization that our country was part of. The family in RM was subject to changes in all its functions: economic, upbringing and educational, protective, in the function of creating relationships of understanding, solidarity and aid, as well as in the mutual relations of family members. The statistical data shows frequent occurrence of divorces, family violence, single-parent families, the existence of requests and practice of same gender families, and decline in marriage rates. We should also analyze the most common number of children in the families, which is between 1 and 3 and the married couples' renunciation of having more than one child due to the difficult economical, spatial, organizational conditions and hardship. The subject of analysis of this study shall be the aspect ratio between the basic transitional flows and functions of the family, its adaptation to the new conditions, which implies the elements of family crisis in the matter of the social processes and the relations within the family.

Keywords: transition, family in RM, changes in family functions, family crisis

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Introduction

The Republic of Macedonia began its economic and political systems reconstruction by declaring its independence in 1991. In the beginnings of the transition process, Macedonia was the most undeveloped republic in former Yugoslavia. The events that followed additionally pauperized the country and worsened the conditions of transformation into a prosperous and modern country. The Trade Embargo from Greece in 1993, the Trade Embargo from the United Nations imposed on Serbia in 1995 (which was a main trade partner of Macedonia at the time), the internal war conflict in 2001, the process of privatization i.e. the fall of the collectivist social system most apparent in the transformation of the ownership from state-owned to private-owned, pluralization of almost all society spheres (political system, culture, education, the sphere of conceptualization) are the main developments that marked that period. These changes which mostly took place in the period between 1985-2005 affected the structure, the function of the family and family life in general. The consequences are devastating: continued growth of the unemployment rate, pauperization, economic inefficiency, social insecurity of the residents, low standard of living, lack of regular resources for subsistence etc. The inconvenient economic and social situations undoubtedly affected all residents, especially the personal drama of the ones that were left unemployed. The feeling of apathy, worthlessness, lack of perspective, demotivation, loss of self-confidence and respect.... In general, feeling of hopelessness and despair were characteristics that accompanied the Macedonian nationals. Besides the main shifts that took place from economically-existential aspect, the long period of transition was also marked by many tectonic shifts caused by the process of pluralization and globalization that overwhelmed the Macedonian society. The accelerated process of industrialization and urbanization, the greater access to the internet, the mobile technology, cable television, the opportunity to buy products available to the consumers worldwide, to travel freely (visa-free regime) enabled people to follow western countries living trends. These events resulted with more frequent migration from village to the city, greater activity of women in the social life, greater education extent, labor market availability.... greater emancipation of women. It also enabled independence of young people due to the chances to study abroad, free lance work, etc.

All the changes characteristic for the period from the Declaration of Independence until now have caused transformation in the status and role of the family in the country in all basic family functions. The family in RM was, for the most part, captured by pauperization processes, followed by the need and necessity to manage to function in market conditions, in a plurality political system and the process of globalization that our country was part of. The family

in RM was subject to changes in all its functions: economic, upbringing and educational, protective, in the function of creating relationships of understanding, solidarity and aid, as well as in the mutual relations of family members. The day-to-day, professional and scientific communication lead to the conclusion that the family is increasingly in crisis, enfeeblement and even dissociation.

Content

The family is most commonly defined as the oldest, most permanent but changeable social group that is based on bio-reproductive, bio-sexual, bio-social, bio-protective and socio-economic relations between a man and a woman and their biological or adopted children, where the man and woman are gathered to alleviate the fulfillment of the various needs of the person, society and family.

The essence of the family is actually grouping with the goal to provide and satisfy:

- Natural sexual relations for bonding of (communication between) different sexes;
- Reproduction, creation of offspring (childbirth);
- Connection between family members in defined relations as social basis for approval or disapproval of sexual relationship
- Basic social activities for providing material existence of the group and its individuals;
- Upbringing, raising, educating and fostering (Chokrevski 1996).

Defined as such, the family is a complex structure that distinguishes two separate institutions: marriage and relationship as well as interconnected relations and relationships between the partners in marriage, with the kids and between the kids and with the society as functions being effectuated.

The development of the family in Macedonia in the past century was marked by very expressive patriarchal forms and contents. As a result of the various external and internal factors affecting its existence, the family in Macedonia undergoes gradual transformations but many elements maintain the patriarchal aspect to this day.

A characteristic form of the family in the Republic of Macedonia before the transition process was the patriarchal family, which completely realized the basic functions as a basic economic unit. Although the Macedonian family still demonstrates patriarchal elements, it gradually transforms into a modern family under the impact of the shifts.

Significant characteristic factors of the family organization and the family relations in Macedonia are the diverse ethnicity and religion of the population, the different types of settlements, agricultural development, industrial development, vocational education, scholastic formation and habits and traditions. It all contributes towards a parallel existence of various forms of family life (family communities, under-age partners marriages, prejudice over authority of the mother and father) and all forms of egalitarian, modern family, present in the city and industrial centers.

The family has always had many functions which, in different periods and in different places, were of greater or lesser importance. Some were reduced, some returned in a period of social crisis, whereas some functions remained universal.

The most common and most important functions that are present in all types of families are:

- Reproductive function that enables the continuation of the human race, basic material hypothesis for the continuance of the individual and social existence.
- The function of pleasing the sex instinct and the emotional function, through which the gender relations institutionalized in marriage are realized.
- The economic function that enables the basic material existence of the family.
- The protective function that is a result of the entire biosocial core of the family; it consists of making its members, above all, the younger ones, capable to live, support them, sustain, provide them with help in the case of illness or other accidents, etc.
- The educational function that consists of the upbringing of the children, teaching them and raising them to be prepared and to get involved in the social life. Although in modern society, the education and upbringing are more often given a social character, the basic processes of this function takes place in the family.
- The function of socialization of the person, which connects the individual to the wider social community. (Tonovski 1995; Chokrevski 1996; Petrovska 1998).

The family functions during the transition process in the Republic of Macedonia have been subject to changes characteristic for the basic transition laws and global trends. The adjusting to the new conditions indicates elements of family crisis in relation to both social process and internal family relations.

The functions are manifested differently depending on the type of the family and the internal relations, but they share a sole purpose.

The reproductive function of the family as the core function enabling the entire society to exist is subject to the greatest changes. The reproduction and the continuance of the offspring are no longer the basic motive for family formation. This attitude can be confirmed by the statistic data that show a continued fall of the birth rate in the Republic of Macedonia. According to the State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, in 1995, 32,154 children were born, 26,083 children were born in 2005, whereas in 2013, 23,334 children were born. The birth rate was 17% in the beginning of the nineties, decreasing to 11% nowadays (the birthrate is considered low if it is below 15%). This means that in the past twenty years, that is, since the beginning of the transition, the number of births has decreased for 9,000. The decrease of the birthrate has led to the decrease of the vitality index, meaning decrease of the number of births compared to deaths, which in the period between 2007 and 2011 was 121 births to 100 deaths and compared to the data in the last five decades, decreased by two thirds. The natural increase rate (difference between the births and deaths) decreased from 8.1 in 1994 to 1.9 in 2013. The total fertility rate (the cumulative rate of fertility) reached the limit of 1.46 children in average for a woman in the fertile period (15-49 years old). The minimum of simple reproduction, not for increase of the population is 2,1 children per woman, a percentage characteristic for the total fertility rate in 1994.

The data on marriage and marriage condition of the Macedonian citizens are not in favor of the reproductive function. The divorce rate is increasing, and the number of marriages is decreasing. In fact, the number of 710 divorces in 1995 increased to 2,045 in 2013. The number of marriages in 2013 was 13,982, in 2007 was 15,490 whereas in 1994 – 15,736 marriages.

The average age of concluding a marriage is increasing, which indicates that the couples marry later. The age at which couples marry nowadays is 25.8 for women and 28.6 for men, in 2004 it was 24 for women and 27 for men in average, whereas in 1994, the age was 23 for women and 25 for men.

Also, women give birth to their first child at an increasingly later age, so if the average age for giving birth to the first child was 23 in 1994. Giving birth to the first child is nowadays postponed to the age of 28. Almost 12% of the total number of children are born outside of marriage. This parameter has also noted an increase of 4 percent compared to 1994, when it was at 8%.

This data show that the reproductive function of the family has been subject to great changes since the beginning of the transition to present times, in the negative sense of the word. What are these changes caused by?

First of all, capitalism shifted the role of woman in the family and the society. The economic changes caused by the breakup of SFRY forced women to leave the home and work on equal ground as men or earn instead of them. Besides being in a situation to be economically active in that period, women also had to join the educational process in order to be competitive in the newly formed market. An illustrative example of this is the data that in 1994, 18 women acquired a PhD title whereas in 2013, 119 did (Statistical reports from 1994-2013 available on www.stat.gov.mk).

Maybe the greatest influence on the transformation of the family in this period is the massive inclusion of women in the educational process and the economic activity. Women began employment in the current and newly formed companies, but the privatization provided them with an opportunity to start their own small business or to be included in the family business along with the man. The new situation involving both partners working and earning or in the case when the woman supports the man or the entire family has led to a complete redefinition of the relations of power that were present in the family. The woman is not completely subordinate to the economic power of the man, she is more independent and may decide if and when wants to give birth.

Secondly, it may not be forgotten that the demographic transition had influence on the birthrate in this period, meaning that after the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Macedonia, the village to city migrations were intensified (since 1994 more than 150 villages have been completely depopulated), and the population transformed from dominantly farming into city population (depopulation of 147 settlements out of 1767.) This transformation changes the conditions of life and the reproduction itself, as it is well known that rural woman gives birth to more children compared to women in cities.

Besides abandoning the idea that marriage holds the primary function of providing generation continuance, the economic function is also questioned. The transition process and the new economic conditions in the country lowered the chances for economic survival of the average Macedonian family. On the one hand, the privatization, the collapse of many factories and the downsizing measures to keep the businesses running left many unemployed. According to the research, one out of four children lives in a family with no income. The pauperization of wide categories of people (including the already poor and also the middle class) is a continued process in the Republic of Macedonia, that has

been taking place ever since the beginning of the transformation of the socio-economic system in the early 1990s. In 1994, the unemployment rate in the Republic of Macedonia increased to 30%, and has not decreased since that period. What is especially alarming is the unemployment rate of young people (19-24 years old) which is at 53%. The implication of poverty is depression caused by the low standard of living, the social stress, the financial instability and low social activity. The low economic parameters have a negative influence on the decision of the partners whether to marry or not. The young unemployed people less and less frequently decide to conclude a marriage due to the bad material condition. Even the couples that have already formed a family, also due to the bad economic conditions, frequently enter into conflicts in everyday life that often end with divorce. In order for the economic function to be realized, the model of so called extended families (partners with their children and parents) returns, or the traditional-recomposed families where the single parent, in the effort to provide for the children, lives in a community with his/her parents.

In the last few decades, changes have occurred in the family model caused by the process of globalization. The traditional family model transforms into modern families. The number of mono-parenting families (children living with a single parent), recomposed families (one or two partners have children from a previous marriage), illegitimate communities, communities of same gender partners, etc. The pluralization of the family models is a product of the globalization and the effect of the Europization. In the countries of the European Union, this trend started a lot earlier as a consequence of the changes in the ethnical and the moral norms, dominance of the individualism, women emancipation, sexual revolution and the decreased influence of the religion. To illustrate, in the European Union, 40% of the newborn children are born illegitimately, and the number of divorces increased from 170,000 in 1960 to 1.040.000 (Statistical reports available <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>).

The educational function is increasingly receiving a social character. Not having enough time for the children, parents leave the educational process to the educational institutions. The function of socialization - Life pressures are greater nowadays. In order to provide modern conveniences for their children, or sometimes to provide even the most basic existential needs, parents spend most of their time at work. During the period of socialization, the average Macedonian family lived as in example 1: the mother does not work, the father works 8 hours per day from Monday to Friday; or as in example 2: both parents work from 8h to 15 h; or as in example 3: the father works 8 hours per day, the mother works 4 hours per day. In all three situations, the parents spend the remaining part of the day and the weekends by having lunch together, socializing with their children, with friends, meaning a continued realization of the protective, educational

function and the function of socialization. Nowadays, the average Macedonian family lives in an effort to outwit the twenty-four-hour routine in families where both of the parents are employed, work more than 12 hours per day, have overtime work and weekend work. The little time left is used for additional education and formation in order to be more competitive on the labor market. Simply said, the economic pressures do not permit parents to spend more time with their children. The reconciliation of family and professional life is a modern times enigma. Capitalism brought a common problem which developed countries are facing for years; loss of life balance (balance between family and work). Among the problems listed are: the lack of free time or fatigue from bad working conditions arising from long working hours (European foundation for improvement of living and working conditions 2010). In addition to this, there are changes in the manner of using the time spent together with family. The globalization and the fast technological growth has changed the routine of the family life. In this way, time that was previously spent for family activities is now spent on the Internet, on the phone, in the car, in a rush. So, except for the long weekly working hours, an additional problem is the "nonsocial" work time spent during the evening, night and the weekends. "The nonsocial" work time during the evening, as well as any unforeseen changes in the working hours increase the probability of occurrence of a conflict between work and family for men and women (Fagan 2004).

The number of working hours is one of the greatest problems of capitalism since with long working hours there is less time for family responsibilities. The new family adapts the family life to the profession. This condition has a destructive effect on the family functions, such as the educational and the social function, but if the solutions are in favor of strengthening the traditional distribution of labor in the family – "the man earns for living, the woman takes care of the household", then the economic function cannot be fulfilled. This means that if one of the parents is unemployed that would have negative effects on the economic function of the family, whereas employment of both parents impedes the educational function and the function of socialization. Can a balance occur?

The globalization and pluralism have affected the internal relations in the family and the authority. If we monitor the relations in the last few decades, it can be seen that there are significant fluctuations in the aspect of authority: from a situation in which the authority was strictly in the hands of the father (the family head) to a newly seemingly emerging authority in the hands of the woman/mother. As Andreevski points out, in a great number of families, during the transition process, the man has lost his place as a pillar of the family, the main authority and holder of power, so in thousands of cases, from a carrier of

almost all financial means in the family, he has become unemployed, redundant, insolvent person, very frequently an alcoholic and mentally sensitive (*Zivotot e preubav: Lelekot e lek* 2014:126). Furthermore, capitalism has increased the importance of authority. Securing conditions for the employment of few family members, as well as the formed family businesses, enabled some families to provide stable existential circumstances and progress, which decreased the possibility of one family member governing the whole family, and provided additional space for democratization and understanding. The economic base of the family, the role of individual members and the mutual relations between the family members change with the inclusion of woman and the youth in the social production, and at the same time, the independence of the members in the family increases (Radulovic 2014).

CONCLUSION

The entire process of transition in the Republic of Macedonia has undoubtedly affected the status and the role of the family in the country in almost all the basic family functions. Although the family is seen as a foundation stone, the oldest, the most permanent social group, it is not immune to the changes that occurred in the last few decades. It is a fact that in the last few decades, fast and deep changes affecting all aspects of marital and family life have occurred and these changes cause serious concerns for the future and persistence of the family.

The dynamic changes in the analyzed period have contributed to the disintegration of the family model of marriage between a man and a woman and their children in which the man is employed and in charge to handle the material needs of the family and the woman has the role of a mother and a housewife. In regards to this, it became necessary to study and research the "new" modern family and its remodeled functions. The process of destroying the traditional models of inequality and subordination of the woman in her own family has been changing with great difficulty and with a very slow speed. The patriarchal dependence of the woman on the man and the children on the father are gradually disappearing with the inclusion of women and the youth in activities beyond the family circle. In this way, the relations between the man and the woman in terms of unilateral dependence and subordination have transformed into a relationship of equality, and consequently, the independence of the family members increases. It may be the greatest, but also the most positive change brought by period of transition.

The most negative change is the weakening of the basic family functions of the family as a community opposite to the individual who is the center of the

Universe in nowadays. Tendency and practice to accent the individuality is noted. The Altruism from the past that is characterized by the fact that a greater number of children means a treasure is now substituted with the individualism that indicates greater commodity for men and women, greater independence, dedication to the career etc. We are under the impression that the reproductive, economic, protective, educational function are no longer the basic family functions but that the individual needs are. On the other hand, the disharmonized individualities function with greater difficulty in a family situation/atmosphere.

The analysis of the statistical data and the comprehension of the current situations indicate family crisis. The above noted alarming indicators that are listed as arguments, an increased percentage/number of divorces and a lower number of marriages, dissolution of already formed families, increase of the birthrate and the ideal of the families for desired number of children, illegitimate communities, transformed families from divorced family members, comeback of the trend of "extended families" (parents and spouses), a large number of singles that do not marry and do not form a family at all, "new" families of same gender marriages where there is almost no offspring, weakening of the family functions and loss of faith in the family as a pillar, protector and a safe place for realization of the individuality of each member. It can be drawn as evaluation that the transition is the main "perpetrator" of the destruction of the family because the conclusion arising from the comparison of the indicators referring to the period from 1994 to nowadays are in favor of this ascertain. All indicators referring to the family note a negative trend. It can be concluded that the changes in the role of the woman, the altered relations of the genders brought by the modern times, the information availability as well as the greater opportunities for single parents, meaning greater pluralism in regards to choices and relations are responsible for the changes in the family life.

However, the changes in the family models and the negative trends of birthrate, the marriage against the divorce, the weakening of the family as a community are perceived at earlier times in the European countries. The process of urbanization and globalization that are the key factors for the changes in the family take place in the Republic of Macedonia later in comparison to some European countries and the transformations in the family also occur later. It is a fact that, even though there are more conservative attitudes in regards to the changes in the marriage and family relations in RM compared to Western and Northern Europe, changes do occur here as well.

The general conclusion is that the family, no matter the extent of development of a society is of crucial and priceless meaning not only for each individual but each nation too. The Transition process has undoubtedly transformed the patriarchal family that had more than 8 members to a modern family that nowadays does not even have the standard 4 members, however, the cultural, economic and the social conditions in different societies do not decrease the general meaning of the family as a fundamental link in the human existence. The new era brings an additional impetus for research and analysis of the family science even though families become more vulnerable as a consequence of the external social influences and are more complex as analysis subject.

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