



The Positive Impact of the Family State Program on the Social Status of Large Families and the Encouragement of Birth in Georgia

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Abstract

The article is dedicated to ways of solving the demographic challenge in Georgia, effective implementation of family policy and development of incentive mechanisms for new large families, which will give the country the opportunity to solve the demographic challenge at a fast pace and promote the growth of the number of citizens. The article discusses the demographic challenges in Georgia, current state programs and their impact on the improvement of the social and economic situation of large families, and also studies the international experience using various scientific and legislative sources. Compare your socioeconomic status. The article summarizes the positive side of the implementation of mechanisms implemented in international practice in Georgia. The results of the study will be interesting for identifying the causes of the demographic challenge in Georgia, which require further study. The article will be interesting for representatives of the legislative and executive authorities, political entities, public administration specialists and experts.

Keywords: Family policy, multiple children, demography, well-being, social status, etc.

Introduction

According to the research of the National Statistics Service of the State of Georgia, the population as of January 1, 2023 is 3,736.4 million people. It is true that compared to the same period of 2015, this figure indicates an increase in the population (3721.9 million in 2015), but not by a large amount (NSOSG 2022). However, the slow pace of population growth is related to various circumstances, including socio-economic status, demography, and others. Therefore, in the process of solving demographic challenges, it is important to implement an effective state policy to encourage families and fertility, multiple children. According to the research of the same organization, the number of families with many children decreases every year in Georgia. However, according to the opinion of a certain group of scientists, the number of elderly people living in Georgia, at the same time the increase in the number of divorces in recent years and the low number of citizens of reproductive age will affect the decrease in the number of births and, accordingly, the number of workers in the country. According to the current birth rate, the birth rate in Georgia in 2022 will be 2024 births per woman. , which decreased by 0.49% compared to 2021 (Georgia Fertility Rate 1950-2023).

A study was conducted by the United Nations World Organization regarding the effectiveness of social economic support and state policies for families and large families in several countries. The research was carried out in 2 parts: the 1st part included the research of the state-responsible institutions and their programs, and the second part was the identification of the needs of families and their challenges. The data obtained as a result of the research were generalized and general recommendations were developed, which, if implemented, would improve the influence of the state policy on the improvement of the social and economic condition of large families. Strengthening families is also strengthening the overall socio-economic progress of society. Strengthening the family as an object of observation and support is related to specific, general public and social areas, including: child day care, daily family routine, child allowance or financial assistance for poor families, programs (eg education, health care). This includes all social strata (UNDF 2016).

Recent studies show that the importance of state policy in the process of encouraging families and multiple children is important. More and more scientific works appear in the modern scientific literature recommending the creation of state programs, since in most cases it is established that the strength of the family determines the social and economic strengthening of the country. However, some scholars discuss the existence of a "welfare state", where "a state or a state structure in which the state assumes greater responsibility for the social welfare of its citizens, for example, through

unemployment and health insurance (Webster's Dictionary, 1999). In other words, a welfare state is a social system in which the state is responsible for the economic and social welfare of its citizens. Basically, the state is the largest provider of social services, including: free education, free health care, unemployment benefits, social assistance programs, etc (Avalishvili et al, 2017).

As a result of the study of demographic data in Georgia, it was determined that the population of Georgia is not growing at a fast pace, the number of families with many children is decreasing, and the state does not have a social program for this stage to overcome the demographic challenge in the country and support the increase in birth rate. It is true that the country has a state program of various contents (both in the annual programs of the central and local self-governments), but it cannot have a positive impact in the process of solving the demographic challenge. The mentioned problem dictates the study of the issue and the formation of qualitatively new mechanisms, which will contribute to the improvement of the social program in the state and the introduction of new programs(Diakonidze, Julukhadze,2016).

The main issue of the article is to develop the forms of the demographic challenge in Georgia, the support of large families and the state's modern social program. It is permissible that the financial resources available in the state cannot cope with the expansion of the social program, however, at this time the state should use its function and determine the areas of support according to priorities. The analysis of the article is based on the review of the opinions, recommendations and works in the international scientific literature, the review of the existing social programs in Georgia and the questionnaire survey of representatives of different social strata with many children. As a result of the research, I present recommendations for new mechanisms and forms of the state's social program.

Main part

According to the opinion of a separate group of scientists, the welfare state, in a broad sense, includes monetary (pension, social assistance, etc.) and non-monetary goods and services. The latter includes various areas of direction: education, healthcare and, in general, care services for the vulnerable sections of society (persons with disabilities, children, the elderly, large families).

On the basis of the Resolution # 212 of the Government of Georgia of April 30, 2019 regarding the establishment and cancellation of the status of large parents and the approval of the procedure for the production of data on relevant persons, the conditions for granting the status of a large family were defined: the status of large parents (hereinafter - status) is granted to: or

more children and/or adopted children. b) A stateless person with status in Georgia who has four or more children and/or adopted children (Resolution of the Government of Georgia 2014).

A person seeking the status of a large family should apply to the State Service Development Agency of Georgia and submit the documentation defined by law. According to the data of this organization, the number of people seeking the status of large families in Georgia decreases every year (Appendix 1.), which once again confirms the fact that the existing social program does not correspond to the requirements and expectations of these families from the state, as well as if we generalize the data of the National Statistics Office of the National Statistics Service of Georgia on the number of citizens in Georgia , it is clear that new packages of social programs should be introduced in Georgia in order to encourage vulnerable groups, including large families(Database of State Services Development Agency of LSI 2019).

Table 1. Application for multi-child status seekers 07.05.2019 – 10.07.2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	total
Number of applicants	5137	2810	1945	2473	1105	13470
Positive decision	4984	2744	1880	2440	1085	13133
Half positive division	15	4	1	2	0	22
Number of rejects applicant	39	14	14	17	10	94
remained without consideration	5	4	4	3	3	19

Source : House of Justice Georgia 2023

In addition, it should be noted the active social programs in the state, which have had a positive impact on solving the demographic challenge in certain regions, although these serve vulnerable groups (targeted state program for promoting the improvement of the demographic situation and targeted state program for promoting the improvement of the demographic situation for persons permanently living in the highland settlement) whose goal in the regional sense Encouragement to reduce migration of citizens. The impact of the mentioned programs can be measured by means of the table indicated above, where it is clearly seen that after the state introduced the new program, the number of people wishing to register has increased. Accordingly, it is possible to assume that an adequate and needs-oriented state social support program to support large families will encourage fertility (OECD).

When discussing the influence of large families and state programs to encourage birth, we should pay attention to the practice of European countries. Since, the state family support program is one of the main components of the social policy of European countries. Based on the literature review, we can distinguish 3 main types of state family support policies: liberal, conservative and limited ((OECD)

Liberal social security state policy is characteristic of Ireland, Switzerland, and outside of Europe - USA, Great Britain and New Zealand. The main source of improvement of the socio-economic situation under liberal state policy is the self-regulating market economy. In this model, the state is assigned a supporting role in providing assistance to the most needy families. Under liberal regimes, institutional support systems for child care families are concentrated in the private sector, regulated by market relations. In countries implementing such policies, the largest share of social security comes from cash social assistance. During the last 30 years, the birth rate in most of the EU countries has been decreasing alarmingly. Among the 47 member states, the total birth rate fell to 2.1 in 19 states. It is true that the total birth rate increased in several countries at the end of the 90s, but Iceland managed to maintain the most stable demographic progress, where the total birth rate reached 2.07 (Irwin,2011)

Conservative state policy is implemented in several EU countries: Germany, France, Spain, Austria. The main distinguishing feature from liberal policies in this case is the primary goal of programs that serve to support child care and family routines.

The peculiarity of the state policy of limited state families and birth promotion lies in the existence of unbalanced state programs, which cannot have an appropriate positive impact in terms of the promotion of birth and improvement of the socio-economic status of families (Kälvesten 2006) .

A good model of a practical and effective state program to encourage large families and births operates in the Swedish state, which is one of the best among European countries. The program takes into account children's health, parental workload and childcare measures, the goal of which is effective socialization and development of children. One of the interesting findings is the different regimes of parental income taxation in the case of families with two children, which includes a 30% to 50% reduction in income taxation in proportion to the number of children. Also, parental leave, long-term paid holidays related to child care(Kälvesten 2006, Irwin,2011).

When analyzing international practice, the state policy of the Republic of Turkey on state support for families is interesting. The Ministry of Family, Social Security and State Support has been established in the Republic of Turkey, the main purpose of which is to implement the state

support policy in the country in order to improve the social and economic standing of citizens. The existing programs to support families and births are diverse and include both health protection, financial and property right acquisition mechanisms, including: free medical care, incentives for newlyweds, programs to encourage children and parents of large families, protection of the rights of the elderly, dependents and their socialization. In the modern world, the Republic of Turkey is one of the advanced countries in terms of birth rate growth and sustainable demographic development of the population(GDFSS 2018).

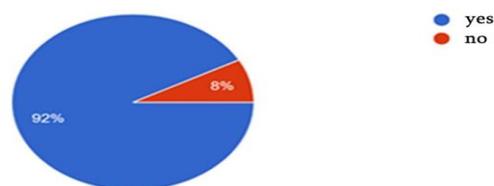
Research

In order to determine and analyze the causes of the problem, the opinions in the Georgian and foreign scientific literature were studied in order to develop family support programs, social assistance programs operating in Georgia were analyzed. A quantitative research questionnaire was also prepared and the large families living in Georgia were interviewed according to their social status (we are talking about the status corresponding to social points).

The aim of the study was to identify specific needs that would contribute to the quantitative growth of large families. Families with 4 or more children (and not only mothers) according to different age groups were defined as the study group. A questionnaire was prepared (the appendix is attached to the article), an online questionnaire was prepared through the Google platform and sent to the target groups, including the thematic groups on social networks.

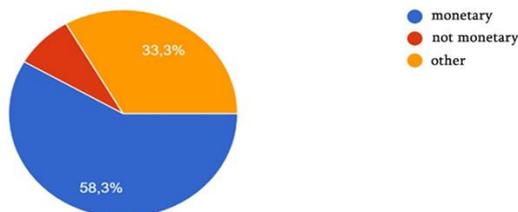
75 respondents took part in the research. The majority of respondents, 70%, including the age group of 36 to 45 years. The research revealed that the majority are families with 4 children (63.6%), 5 children 9.1%, 6 children - 18.1%. The number of children, more than 6 children - 9.1%. 72.1% of the respondents do not have the status of a large family granted by the state, which indicates that families do not see essential support or do not have information about positive feedback, therefore 91.7% of the respondents do not and have not benefited from the state's support program for large families.

Table 2.



Regarding the question whether state support for large families should be provided equally regardless of social status, 63.6% of respondents indicate equal access. During the research, an interesting circumstance was highlighted in relation to the forms of support for large families from the government, where 58.3% believe that it should be in monetary form, 33.3% in another form - it means the establishment of privileges, the establishment of preference during the queue, etc., only 8.3 % believes that it should be expressed in non-monetary form.

Table 3.



Recommendation:

- Create a new state social program for the purpose of encouraging large families - in this program, such forms of encouragement should be taken into account, which are not only expressed in financial assistance, but also give priority to the holder of the status in a certain situation. For example, reducing the working week from 1 to 2 days per month.
- The current state program should be improved into a complex assistance program, which reflects not only the issues of financial assistance, but also other measures of family support, for example: tax and utility benefits, improved health insurance package, access to education, co-financing of costs related to childcare and others.
- Self-governing cities and municipalities should create an additional assistance and assistance program - the state program naturally cannot provide the integration of all services, therefore, a program encouraging the use of municipal services can be created at a local level. For example: reduction of municipal transport charges, reduction of utility bills and others.
- The state aid program should be extended to all large families regardless of the age and social status of the children (socially vulnerable, disabled) - all large families should have the right to benefit from the aid program. It is up to the status maker to decide whether to use it or not.

Conflict of Interest: The author reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All of the data are included in the content of the paper.

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