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Women's Leadership in Vietnam's Public Sector

Vu Manh Loi

Abstract: Using existing data published by public agencies, especially websites of government organizations and agencies, and data from the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006, this paper presents analysis of women's leadership in Vietnam's public sector. The analysis in this paper shows the fact that women are far less represented among all kinds of leadership in all public sectors. Participation of women is not even across sectors and areas of social life. They tend to have more participation in areas such as cultural, education, and health care, and they have less participation in construction, transportation, and areas of technological nature, and they have no/little representation in defense and security leadership. Where they have more participation, women often do not keep highest positions. The low female leadership is widespread in all provinces and geographical regions. Scatter evidence from the Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006 suggests that to achieve the same position as men, women have to work harder and have to have higher education.

Keywords: Women; Women's Leadership; Women in Public Sector.

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There is no comprehensive source of data about current profile of women's leadership in Vietnam's public sector. Offices, ministries and agencies of the Vietnam's Communist Party and the Government at all levels, including local government keep records of all their staffs, including leaders at various levels. However, these data are generally not shared and not available for research and public use. It is not known also the way they collect and archive the data, and whether the data are readily disaggregated by sex. Yearbooks of General Statistics Office (GSO), other ministries, and provinces contain little useful gender disaggregated data, and almost no data about women's leadership in the respective sectors or provinces. In this context, the author used existing data published by public agencies, especially websites of government organizations and agencies, and data from the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006.

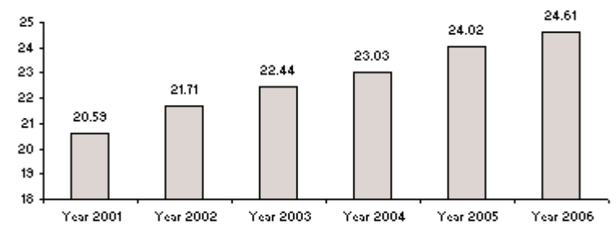
1. Women in Vietnam Communist Party[1]

In Vietnam, the Vietnam Communist Party is the only political party that plays leadership role of the country. Being members of the party will open wide access to become leaders in the government agencies and elected bodies at all levels. The gender equality status within the party will likely be translated into gender situation in the government hierarchy.

A general picture of women's leadership in Vietnam can be found in the Document of The X-th National Women Congress on 2nd October 2007 (Vietnam Women Union 2007). Cited data from the Organizational Department of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Communist Party (VCP), the document shows that the proportion of women among the Party members has increased from 20.6% in 2001 to 24.6% in 2006 (see Figure 1 bellow). However, women were under-represented in the Party leadership at all levels. For example, there was no woman in the Party Political Bureau, the highest leadership body of the party. In the IX term of VCP (2001-2005), in the Secretary Committee of VCP there was only one woman among 9 members, and only 13 women in the 150-members of Executive Committee (8.6% women) (Ibid 2007). In the X term (2006-2010), in the Secretary Committee of VCP there were only 2 women among 10 members[2], and only 13 women in the 160-members of Executive Committee (8.1% women) (Ibid 2007).

At lower levels of the party structure, women were also under-represented. Table 1 bellow shows that in general, women are very rare at such positions such as Party Secretary, Vice Secretary, or among members of

Figure 1. Percent of women among Vietnam Communist Party



Source: Documents of Xth Women National Congress 2007, p.114

Permanent Committee. They had more representatives in Executive Committees, but even here the percents of women were far less than their proportions in the party in general (see Figure 1).

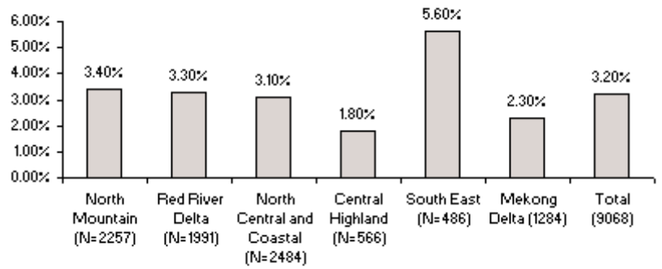
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006 is a rare source of data that provides data about age, sex, and education of Communist Party Secretaries at commune level in rural communes. This Census does not provide data for urban communes. According to this data source, out of 9068 rural communes that the data about rural commune Party Secretaries are available, only 3.2% of communes whose the commune party organization was headed by a woman in 2006. This figure is considerably lower than the figure of 4.6% for commune level Party Secretary in Table 1. The difference may be due to the higher proportion of women serving as commune Party Secretary in urban communes.

Table 1. Percent of women in the party leadership at provincial, district, and commune levels for the terms 2001-2005 and 2006-2010

	Provincial level		District level		Commune level	
	2001-2005	2006-2010	2001-2005	2006-2010	2001-2005	2006-2010
Party Secretary	1.6	6.3	3.7	4.5	0.9	4.6
Vice Secretary	6.6	3.9	5.1	5.5		7.3
Permanent Committee	7.3	7.9		7.8	3.7	5.8
Executive Committee	11.3	11.8	12.8	14.7	11.9	14.4

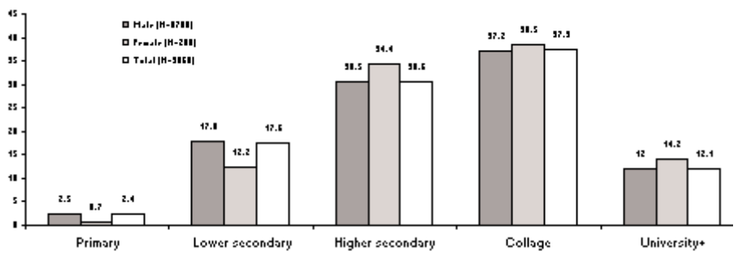
Source: reproduced from Table 7, page 115, in the Document of The Xth National Women Congress on 2nd October 2007

Figure 2. Percent of women among Rural Commune Communist Party Secretary by region



Source: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Cencus 2006

Figure 3. Education of Rural Commune Communist Party Secretaries by sex



Source: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Cencus 2006

Geographically speaking, the South East region was the area with the highest share of women among rural commune party secretaries, but it was only 5.6% (Figure 2), far less than 24.6% of female members of the Vietnam Communist Party in 2006 (see Figure 1). Central Highland was the region with the lowest proportion of women among rural commune party secretaries, with only 1.8%. On an average, age of rural commune party secretaries for men was 47.8 years old; it is slightly older than the average age of female rural commune party secretary which is 46 years old.

It is interesting that in term of educational attainment, rural female commune party secretaries appear to have higher educational attainment than

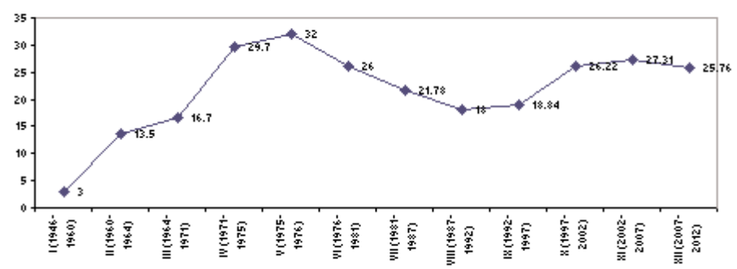
their male colleagues. Figure 3 shows that female party secretaries had higher proportions than male secretaries at higher secondary level or higher levels while they have lower proportions for primary or lower secondary levels. This difference is statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square coefficient=0.024), which means the difference is real and not a random outcome of data collection. It seems that for women to attain a position of commune party secretary, they have to have higher education to gain prestige among party members at the local level.

2. Women in National Assembly

Figure 4 presents percentages of women in National Assembly from the service term I to service term XII (2006-2010). The proportion of women in Vietnam National Assembly increased very fast from 3% in the first term (1946-1960) to the pick of 32% at the end of the American War in 1975 (in the West it is known as the "Vietnam War"). Then it decreased to 18% in the VIII term (1987-1992). During the Reform period, it increased again to 27.3% in XI term (2002-2007), and in the current XII term, it decreases slightly to 25.8%.

The website of Vietnam National Assembly (VNA) is a rare website among official websites of Vietnam that provides information of all members of National Assembly for the term XI and XII, including their birth dates, sex, and provinces that they represent. In the service term XI (2002-2007), female members of Vietnam National Assembly account for

Figure 4. Percent of women in National Assembly by service terms



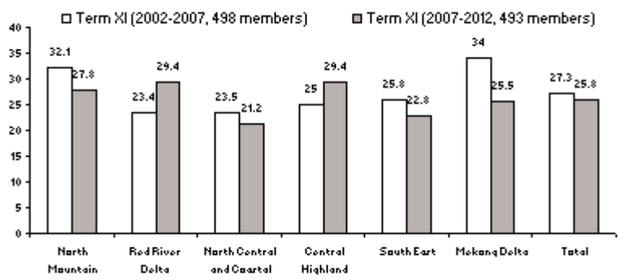
Source: reproduced using data from Department of Social Affairs, Vietnam National Assembly. http://www.na.gov.vn

27.3%, and in the service term XII (2007-2012) they account for 25.8%. Figure 5 presents percentages of female members of National Assembly by region for the service terms XI and XII. Between the two terms, the proportion of women in the VNA has increased in the Red River Delta and in the Central Highland. In all other regions it decreased. The Red River Delta and the Central Highland are regions which occupy the highest proportions of women among members of National Assembly for the current service term.

In both service terms, Presidents of the VNA are all men. Three Vice Presidents of VNA in the service term XI were also men, and there were only 2 women among 9 members of the Permanent Committee of VNA were women. In the service term XII, one of the 4 Vice Presidents of VNA is a woman, and 2 out of 13 members of the Permanent Committee of VNA are women.

In the Vietnam National Assembly service term XII, among 9 committees of VNA service term XII, women chair only 2 committees. They participated more in Committee for Social Affairs (37.5%), Committee for Sciences, Technologies, and Environment (32.4%), and Committee for Culture, Education, Youth, Adolescents, and Children (28.2%). For other areas of activities of VNA women have much less participation, and they do not have representative in the National Defense and Security Committee.

Figure 5. Percent of female members of Vietnam National Assembly for service terms XI and XII by region



Source: Data from Vietnam National Assembly website, http://www.quochoi.vn

3. Women in elected bodies at provincial, district and commune levels

Table 2 presents percentages of women in the People Councils at provincial, district, and commune levels for the service terms 1999-2004 and 2004-2009. In terms of members of People Councils, the proportions of female members for all three administrative levels increased from the service term 1999-2004 to the service term 2004-2009. The proportions of female Vice Chairs were also increased during the period. However, the percentages of women who are Chairs of People Councils at provincial and district levels decreased, and only at commune level did it increase somewhat. In general, the shares of women in People Councils at all three levels are very low, and particularly low for leadership positions such as Chair or Vice Chair.

People Committees are small groups elected within People Councils to serve as leaders of the respective administrative levels. Here the participation of women becomes even worse. Far less than 10% of members of People Committees at all three levels were women. The proportion of women among Vice Chairs was higher, but it was still far less than the female shares in the People Councils (the body that elected People Committees). Here again, very few women were elected as Chair of People Committees. There is no consistent trend between the service term 1999-2004 and 2004-2009 in terms of percentage of women for each positions. Only at provincial level the proportions of women as Chair, Vice Chair, and member of People Committees increased. It is not clear trend for district and commune levels. While percent of female Chair of People Committees for provincial level increased from 1.6% for

Table 2. Percent of women in the People Councils at provincial, district, and commune levels for the service terms 1999-2004 and 2004-2009

	Provincial level		District level		Commune level	
	1999-2004	2004-2009	1999-2004	2004-2009	1999-2004	2004-2009
Chair	1.6	1.6	5.5	3.9	3.5	4.1
Vice Chair	8.2	26.6	11.4	19.6	5.6	10.6
Member	21	23.9	21	23	16.6	19.5

Source: reproduced from Table 9, page 116, in the Document of The Xth National Women Congress on 2nd October 2007

Table 3. Percent of women in the People Committees at provincial, district, and commune levels for the service terms 1999-2004 and 2004-2009

	Provincial level		District level		Commune level	
	1999-2004	2004-2009	1999-2004	2004-2009	1999-2004	2004-2009
Chair	1.6	3.1	5.3	3.6	5.3	3.4
Vice Chair	12.5	16.1	16.1	14.5	8.4	8.8
Member	6.4	8.6	4.9	6.4	4.5	4.0

Source: reproduced from Table 10, page 117, in the Document of The Xth National Women Congress on 2nd October 2007

1999-2004 term to 3.1% for 2004-2009 term, it decreased for district and commune levels (see Table 3).

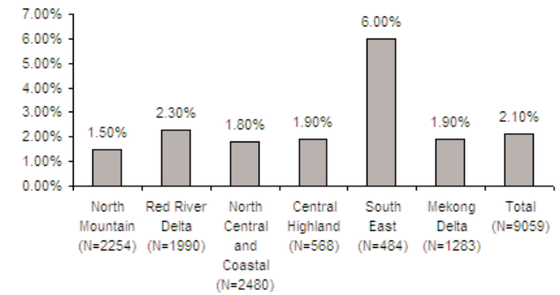
For rural communes, data from Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006 show that only 2.1% of Chairs of rural Commune People Committees were women. As in the case with commune party secretaries, this figure was also lower than 3.4% as presented in Table 3 for Chair of commune People Committees. This is also perhaps due to the fact that the proportion of urban commune People Committees may be higher (urban communes are not included in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006).

Figure 6 presents percentages of female Chair of rural Commune People Committees by regions in 2006. Less than 2% of women were among Chairs of rural Commune People Committees in 2006 in 4 regions, namely the North Mountain, North Central and Coastal, Central Highland, and Mekong Delta. The proportion of women was slightly higher in Red River Delta (2.3%). South East region appeared to be an outlier, with 6% of women among Chairs of rural Commune People Committees. There is no obvious reason for this difference.

As in the case of rural commune party secretaries, average age of male Chairs of CPC was 45, slightly higher than the average age of female Chairs of CPC which was 43.2.

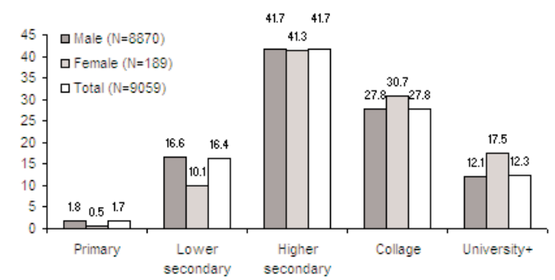
Figure 7 presents educational attainment of Chairs of rural Commune People Committees by sex. Here again we see that the educational distribution among female Chairs is more toward higher educational levels as compared to distribution of educational attainment of male Chairs. The situation

Figure 6. Percent of Female Chairs of Rural Commune People Committees



Source: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Cencus 2006

Figure 7. Education level of chairs of Rural Commune People Committees by sex

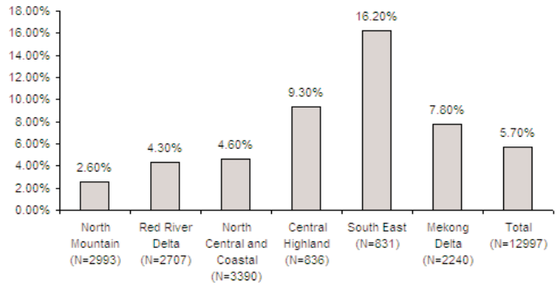


Source: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Cencus 2006

is very similar to the situation of rural commune party secretaries. It once again suggests that it is more demanding for women in term of educational attainment than for men in order to achieve the position of Chair of CPC.

Among the first and second Vice Chairs of rural Commune People Committees, according to Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006, women accounted for 5.7%, nearly 3 times lower than the proportion of women among Chairs of CPC. This figure, however, was also less than 8.8% for this position in Table 3. The difference probably due to the exclusion of urban communes in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006. The average age of Vice Chairs of CPC was lower than the average age of Chairs of CPC. The average age of Vice Chairs of CPC for

Figure 8. Percent of Female Vice Chairs of Rural Commune People Committees



Source: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Cencus 2006

male was 42, about three years older than that for female which was 39.

Figure 8 shows the percentages of female Vice Chairs of rural CPCs. It again points out that the South East region having the highest proportion of women among Vice Chairs of rural CPCs, reaching 16.2%. The figure is much higher than that of the Central Highland (9.3%) and the Mekong Delta (7.8%). Three regions in the North have the lowest proportion of women among Vice Chairs of CPCs. It seems that in the North the prejudices against women's leadership are stronger than in the Central and South Vietnam. The situation of Vice Chairs of CHC is similar (data not shown here).

4. Women in State Leadership and Management Hierarchy

The highest rank of female leader currently is the Vice President of Vietnam. In the government cabinet for the service term 2002-2007, the Prime Minister and 5 Vice Prime Ministers were all men. Among 34 persons who had served as ministers or in ministerial rank, including those who were replaced in the middle of the term, there were only 3 women. In the government cabinet for the current service term (2007-2012), again the Prime Minister and all 5 Vice Prime Ministers are men. Among 22 persons who are serving as ministers or in ministerial rank, there is only one woman (source: the Vietnam Government Website http://www.chinhphu.vn/). There were 18 female Vice Ministers or ministerial-rank officers, account for 7.8% of all Vice Ministers/ministerial-rank officers (Vietnam Women Union 2007).

Table 4. List of ministries included in the internet study

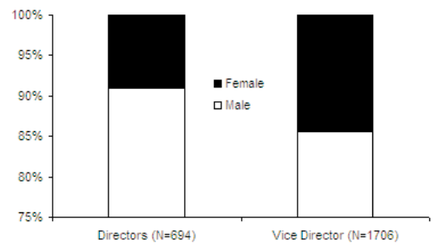
No.	Abbreviation	Name of Ministry
1	MOPS	Ministry of Public Security
2	MOIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
3	MOST	Ministry of Science and Technology
4	MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs
5	MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
6	MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
7	MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
8	MONDEF	Ministry of National Defense
9	MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
10	MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
11	MOJ	Ministry of Justice
12	MOIC	Ministry of Information and Communications
13	MOCST	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
14	MONREN	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
15	MOF	Ministry of Finance
16	MOC	Ministry of Construction
17	MOH	Ministry of Health
18	MOT	Ministry of Transport

In order to obtain sex-disaggregated data about leaders of all government sectors, the research team conducted an study on the websites of the government, of all sectors, of all people committees of 63 provinces and of corresponding sectoral departments (not all provincial departments have their own websites). We managed to obtain information about sex of leaders of 18 ministries as listed in Table 4.

For 18 ministries mentioned above, we managed to obtain information about sex of all ministers and vice-ministers. Among 18 ministers of the 18 ministries, there is only one female minister (MOLISA). Among 82 vice ministers of 18 ministries, there are only 5 female vice ministers (in MOLISA, MARD, MOET, and MOH). Thus, the presence of women in the top leadership positions in all sectors is very rare.

In the internet search, the study team also examined data about sex of directors and vice directors of provincial departments among 63 provinces. However, not all sectors or provinces provide this information on internet. We do not have any information about leaders at lower levels of Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of National Defense (at central level, there is no woman among leaders of these sectors). For the remaining 16 ministries, the research team managed to obtain figures about directors and vice directors of provincial departments of all 63

Figure 9. Sex composition of leaders of provincial sectoral departments (16 sectors, not including MOPS and MONDEF)



Source: Internet study, October - December 2009

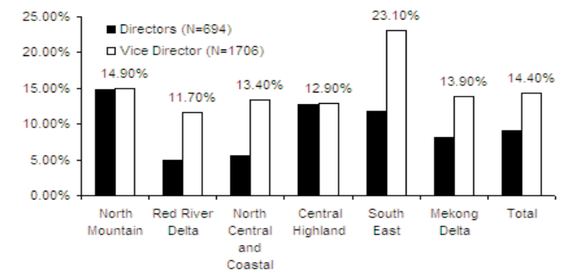
provinces for 9 sectors, and incomplete data for the remaining 7 sectors (22 DARDs, 22 DOHAs, 11 DOFAs, 17 DONRENs, 14 DOFs, 32 DOCs, and 9 DOTs). For the sectors with incomplete data, the gender situation among provincial leaders is probably different from that in the complete data, and gender interpretation of these sectors is only suggestive. Nevertheless, we believe that the general gender picture probably will not be remarkably different from the complete data.

Figure 9 presents a general picture of sex composition of provincial sectorial leaders. In general, at provincial level, women are very rare among provincial leaders at all sectors. Women account for only 9.1% of provincial sectorial directors (among 694 directors) and 14.4% of provincial sectorial vice directors (among 1706 vice directors).

Generally, gender compositions of provincial departments' directors and vice directors by sectors show the same pictures as gender balance situations mentioned above for other leaders. Women make up very small proportions of provincial sectorial directors and vice directors. Women have more shares among vice directors than among directors, but even for vice director position they are still a small minority group.

There are variations across sectors. Women have higher shares among provincial sectorial directors and vice directors in sectors such as MOH, MOF, MOJ, MOET, MOFA, MOHA, and MOLISA. They less present in sectors such as MOT, MOC, MONREN, MOST, MPI, MARD, MOST, and MOIT. These differences broadly reflect the social stereotypes that assign women to be being good at health care, education, social policies for labor, invalids, and social affairs, or to work in sectors that the work is largely office-based, and that they are not good at working in sectors

Figure 10. Percent of women among provincial sectoral leaders



Source: Internet study, October - December 2009

that require physical strength, extensive travelling, extensive fieldworks, broad and long-term visions, and in sciences and technologies.

In most sectors, perhaps except the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of National Defense, only the proportion of women among leadership positions are far lower than their proportions among employees in the sectors. For example, although the proportions of women among leadership positions in MOET are better than average, they are far less than the proportions of female workforce in the sector, in which 70% of teachers in public schools (including primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary levels), 49% of lecturers of colleges, and 43% of university lecturers are women (statistics for 2007-2008 of MOET: http://www.moet.gov.vn/).

Figure 10 presents varied percentages of women among provincial sectoral leaders across geographical regions. Here one can see that Red River Delta, North Central and Coastal, and Mekong Delta are regions with lower shares of women among provincial sectoral leaders. South East again is the area with the highest percentage of women among provincial sectoral leaders.

5. Conclusions

All descriptions in previous sections suggest several crucial conclusions:

· Women are far less represented in leadership in all areas of social life considered above than their shares in the workforce. They account for very small proportions of leadership positions that suggest the existence of a systematic bias against women advancement to leadership positions.

· Participation of women is not equal across sectors and areas of social life. They tend to have more participation in areas such as cultural, edu-

cation and health care, and less participation in construction, transportation, and areas of technological science, and they have no/little representation in defense and security leadership.

· In areas where they have more participation, women often do not occupy the highest positions.

· The low proportion of female leadership is popular in all provinces and geographical regions. Although there is no consistent variation across regions, the Red River Delta appears to be the area with low participation of women, and the South East has a relatively higher participation. This suggests that cultural stereotypes against women's leadership are considerably effective.

· There is no convincing evidence on the movement of women's leadership over time periods (as indicated in the fluctuating changes of women in National Assembly over time).

· Scattered evidence from the Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Census 2006 suggests that to achieve the same position as men, women have to work harder and need to have higher education. This can be a hypothesis for further study.

The analysis in this paper shows the fact that women are far less represented among all kinds of leadership in all public sectors, but it does not allow to provide solutions to the situation. The reason lies on the lack of appropriate data for analysis of causal relationships on gender and leadership in public sectors. There should be a comprehensive and systematic study on this topic to provide fundamental evidences for further policy actions in this regard.■

Endnotes

(1) This paper was prepared before the Vietnam Communist Party Congress XI and information in this paper does not reflect the situation after the Party Congress.

(2) Source:

http://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ban_B%C3%AD_th%C6%B0_Trung_%C6%B0%C6%A1ng_%C4%90%E1%BA%A3ng_C%E1%BB%99ng_s%E1%BA%A3n_Vi%E1%BB%87t_Nam#Ban_b.C3.AD_th.C6.B0_kh.C3.B3a_I

Reference

Vietnam Women Union 2007. *The Xth National Women Congress Documents*. Ha Noi, Women Publisher.

Schooling of Children and Adolescents in Rural Areas

Nguyen Duc Vinh

Abstract: The article explores the impacts of individual and family factors on the schooling of children and adolescents in the rural areas of the four provinces: Yen Bai, Ha Nam, Thua Thien Hue and Tien Giang 2004-08. The research findings show that economic dificulty, poor studying performance and no willing to learn are the three main reasons for the dropout of children. Mothers' educational background plays a more important role than fathers' regarding the school enrollment of rural children and adolescents. Parents seem not to have gender discrimination attitudes or behaviors in term of children's education although girls' education is restrained since they have to participate in productive household work earlier and more often than boys. Children having many siblings will encounter more disadvantages in access to schools and schooling on right age, especially among rural areas in the context of economic transition.

Keywords: Children; Adolescents; Education.

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1. Introduction

Schooling or education in general is recognized as one of the fundamental rights of human beings and plays a very important role in socio-economic development. In contemporary Vietnam, improving the level of education for citizens, especially adolescents in rural areas, is an indispensable premise to meet the market demand for high skilled labor and to reduce unemployment. Recognising this, the Government of Vietnam has made considerable efforts to promote public education by increasing budget allocation for education as well as reforming the educational system. In the year 2000, Vietnam pledged to achieve eight Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2005). One of the eight goals was to achieve the complete universalization of compulsory education before 2015. In order to achieve this goal, the Government has set targets to increase the enrollment rates at primary schools to 99%, at secondary schools to 90%, and to completely eliminate gender differences in these enrollment rates by 2010.

In Vietnam, about three decades ago, the literacy rate was relatively high compared to other developing countries – taking the correlation of these rates with average per capita income as a basis of measurement. The transition towards market economy as well as the socialization of education in recent years, however, have mixed impacts. The Vietnam Living Standards Survey in 2006 (VLSS 2006) showed that nearly 20% of children between the ages of 11 to 18 did not attend school. These statistics are supported by a recent report by UNESCO (Education for All - Global Monitoring Report, 2008) in which Vietnam, along with four other Southeast Asian countries (Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia) were identified as facing considerable challenges due to an increase in children dropping out of school. Vietnam, in particular, had about one million school-age children not attending school. Besides the problem of children dropping out of school, the report indicated that in 2008, the Education Development Index (EDI) of Vietnam was 0.899, ranking just 79 out of 129 countries surveyed, and Vietnam was facing the risk of not achieving six goals of *Education for All* by 2015. This current situation underlines the urgent needs of analysis to understand causes and to appropriately adjust policies.

It has been indicated by most analysis frameworks on education that whether a person goes to school or not is directly determined by three main variables: the availability of schools, the need or desire to learn, and the individual's/family's financial capacity. These three variables are in turn determined by three broader factors: social context and policies, the education system, and family and individual circumstances. Previous research has demonstrated that the fact a child goes to school or not depends not only on the education system and the study promotion policies but also the socio-economic and demographic conditions in which a child's family exists. A common phenomenon arising from these factors is a gendered difference in educational attainment and school enrollment. Due to gender discrimination, girls' enrollment rate is often lower than that of boys, despite no evidence on differences in intelligence or capacity to learn between the two genders (Bilton et al, 1993).

A common theoretical point of view in research on education is that social status and educational background of parents are the most decisive factors affecting their children's learning attainments. A family's economic conditions are also considered an important factor which can directly or indirectly impact on a child's school attendance, especially in places where tuition exemption policies are still limited and the cost of education are high in relation to household income. There is also evidence to support a relationship between children's educational status and household's factors such as occupation, household structure and marital status (e.g. Haveman & Wolf, 1995; Llord & Blank, 1996; Glick & Sahn, 2000; Ejrnaes, 2002; Keng, 2004; Lia et al, 2005; Walque, 2005; Holmlund et al, 2008).

To date, some analysis have been conducted on factors affecting schooling in Vietnam. An analysis using the data of Vietnam Intercensal Demographic Survey 1994 (Truong Si Anh et al, 1995), for example, confirmed that the difference in educational attainment between boys and girls no longer existed and that a household's living standard and parents' educational background were the major factors affecting a child's level of education. Similarly, based on data collected in Vietnam and some other developing countries, Knodel and Jones (1996) have suggested that inequalities in education were primarily due to socio-economic factors apart from the gender disparity. The policy implication of this finding was that gender inequality in education would be solved through poverty reduction.

Later research by Behrman and Knowles (1999) showed that in Vietnam there was a close link between a households' income and the status of children's on-age schooling, especially for girls. In poor households, the learning results of girls were lower than those of boys, i.e. in difficult eco-

nomic circumstances, households tended to curtail investment in girls' education first. The studies carried out by Liu (2001) and Belanger & Liu (2004) also revealed that in the period between 1993 and 1998, household characteristics affected the school dropout rate of girls more than boys. The authors suggested that this phenomenon might be linked to the influence of Confucianism - a belief system which places greater value on males than females on Vietnamese culture.

The divergence in results among the above-mentioned studies, especially those on the gendered nature of education in Vietnam, suggest two reasons: (1) due to differences in target population and analysis methods, the researches' results diverged, especially when there was a significant difference in economic and cultural characteristics of the regions and population groups; and (2) the data used in these analyses were collected at different times during a period with profound social change in Vietnam. The lack of evidence to support these hypotheses demonstrates the need for more research on the schooling situation of Vietnam.

2. Data and analytical method

This article focuses on exploring the impacts of several individual and family factors on the schooling situation of children and adolescents in rural areas from data collected in four provinces: Yen Bai, Ha Nam, Thua Thien Hue and Tien Giang from 2004 to 2008 under the *"Vietnamese rural families in transition"* project. The major research question of this analysis is whether gender and family circumstances are still the two most important factors determining the schooling situation of children and adolescents in rural areas of Vietnam.

In this analysis, educational status is measured by two indicators: *enrollment rate* and *on-age educational rate*. The meaning of "*enrollment rate*" is quite simple and can be straightforwardly defined, while the concept of *"on-age educational rate"* needs more explanation because it may not be identical with other studies. Official statistics often report an *on-age enrollment rate* (or rate of enrollment at right ages) measured by the number of children attending school levels at the right ages over the total number of children of school ages. This indicator is only appropriate for general school age (6-18 years) and tends to amplify the situation of children entering schools at the right ages because it doesn't distinguish different grades within one educational level (e.g. , a 10 year-old pupil studying in the first grade is still considered to be studying at the right age). The indicator *"on-age educational rate"* used in this article is measured by a fraction that has the same denominator as above (the total number of students of school ages), but the numerator is the sum of:

- Those who are studying at the right ages in general schools from Grade 1 to Grade 12 (Grade 1: less than 8 years old, Grade 2: less than 9 years old..., Grade 12: less than 19 years old)

- People under 25 years old who are studying or have completed college or university education.

Children and adolescents from 7 to 24 years old (school age) who are living with their parents were selected for this analysis. Of the 1200 households interviewed in the four provinces, 1879 people belonged to this age group, including 1026 boys and 853 girls. The right age to start schooling is 6 years old but because the data does not provide information on the month of birth for calculation of exact ages, children under-7 years of age are excluded to avoid bias. It should be noted that those household members, who are from 19 to 24 years old and currently studying in colleges/universities in the city, are not recorded in the list of households. As such, the enrollment rate in this age group might be underestimated but this age group is still included since this data would reflect the actual educational status of the people living in the areas under analysis.

The analysis focuses on the relationship between the educational status of the 7-24 age group based on selected indicators of individual characteristic and family circumstance. Individual characteristics include age, gender, number of siblings, birth order, age difference compared to parents (or parental age when giving birth). The indicators of family circumstance include household size, parents' educational background, occupation of the household (agricultural or mixed), the involvement of children/adolescents in production, and household's living conditions (spending per capita and living conditions according to the evaluation of the interviewing officials). This relationship will be examined through cross-tabulations, graphs and regression models. In addition, the cause of dropout among boys and girls according to the households' statement will also be considered. A hypothesis that will be tested is people born in families with many siblings, with too young or too old parents, with parents of a low education level, with parents working in agriculture, in poor households, or having to participate in productive labor from an early age;... face more disadvantages than other groups with regards to schooling and education-

al achievement.

Since the level of educational attainment of this population (under 25 years) is always closely related to their age, the age variable is included as a control factor in most analyses in this article. Due to size of the dataset, this research focuses on the relationships between education and major indicators of individuals and family circumstances at the time of the survey, but does not consider any change of these indicators during the course of their schooling. The word "*education*" in this article only implies formal education in schools unless there are specific notes.

3. Results

3.1. Dropout situation and reasons

Among 883 households with children of school-age, nearly 40% had children who had dropped out of school. This proportion was highest in Thua Thien Hue (54.7%) and then in Tien Giang (48.3%), Ha Nam (33.8%) and lowest in Yen Bai (12.7%). This result seems counterintuitive since the standard of living in Yen Bai is lower than that in the other three surveyed provinces. This proportion is, however, not very different within levels of expenditure per capita.

On the other hand, parents' educational background seems to generate a clear difference as the proportion of households with children dropping

Table 1. Reasons for dropping-out, boys and girls by province

	Yen Bai	Tien Giang	Thua Thien Hue	Ha Nam	Total
For boys					
Financial difficulties	**40.0**	**55.9**	**76.9**	26.2	**58.9**
Do not want schooling	26.7	25.8	8.3	16.7	17.1
Poor performance	20.0	17.2	11.1	**59.5**	21.7
Exam failure	13.3	4.3	5.6	**47.6**	12.4
Others	13.3	7.5	4.6	19.1	8.5
N	15	93	108	42	258
For girls					
Financial difficulties	**46.2**	**63.6**	**80.9**	**56.9**	**69.2**
Do not want schooling	30.8	24.2	9.1	21.6	17.1
Poor performance	15.4	18.2	10.0	**49.0**	20.8
Exam failure	0.0	1.5	2.7	31.4	8.3
Others	7.7	9.1	5.5	7.8	7.1
N	13	66	110	51	240

out of school decreases significantly from 40% in the group of below-primary-education households to 41.3% in the secondary-education group and 21% in the group of secondary-or-higher-education.

The survey includes 258 households with boys dropping out of school and 240 households with girls dropping out of school (Table 1). Most of them stated financial difficulties as the major reason, especially in Thua Thien Hue (about 80%) and Tien Giang (about 60%). In Ha Nam, this figure was relatively high (57%) among girls, but just over a quarter (26%) among boys. It would be hard to explain such considerable difference without the hypothesis that in Ha Nam, sons are often more favored than daughters with regards to education. For instance, when families face financial problems, girls may have to drop out of school first while sons can continue going to school unless their performance is exceptionally poor or they fail exams. This explanation fits with the fact that this proportion (households stated financial difficulties as the major reason) in households with drop-out daughters is about 10% higher than in households with drop-out sons.

In Ha Nam, families with drop-out boys, "*poor studying performance*" and "*exam failure*" were the most cited reasons (59.5 and 47.6%). The corresponding rates rank third and fourth in families with girls dropping out of school. In the two provinces with lower living standards: Yen Bai and Tien Giang, "*Do not want to learn*" was the second most cited reason for dropping out of school, after financial reasons, and before the "*poor learning performance*". In families with drop-out boys in Ha Nam, possibly because of their better living standard or great efforts to mobilize resources for boys to study, the main reason is not "*financial difficulties*" but "*poor learning performance*".

The data provide more evidence affirming the impact of financial difficulties on the rate of drop-out cases. The lower the living standard, the higher the proportion of children dropping out of school due to financial difficulties, and this seems to affect girls' schooling more than boys'. Indeed, the proportion of households referring to "*financial problems*" in families with drop-out girls is higher than in households with drop-out boys across all four provinces. The biggest difference is not inherent in groups with a low standard of living but in groups with an average standard of living (57% compared to 73%).

3.2. Differences in educational status according to demographic indicators and household's characteristics

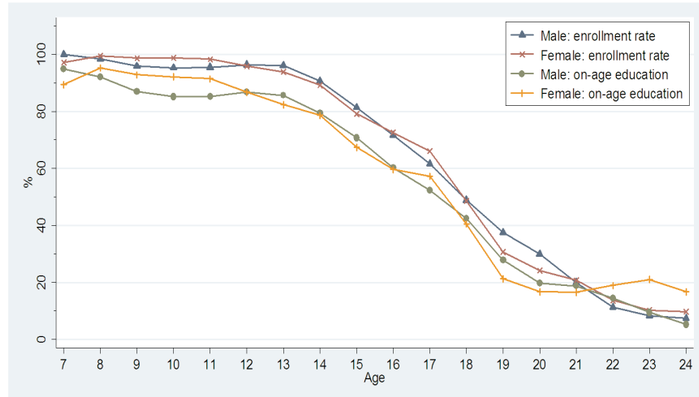
Considering province of residence, the result presented in Table 2 shows that the proportion of children (from 7-11 years old) going to school is quite high in all 4 provinces (over 96%), especially in Yen Bai and Tien Giang. This is reasonable because primary education is compulsory, subsidized and the costs are not high. However, the actual number of children from 7-11 years old not attending school is also quite large even though the proportion is only about 3%. As their age increases, the proportion of children going to school decreases significantly. Particularly in Tien Giang, this proportion dropped to 79% in the 12-15 age group, 22% in the 16-19 age group and less than 10% in the 20-24 age group. The fact that the school attendance rate in the rural area in Ha Nam (Red River delta) is lower than in a rural area in a mountainous province (Yen Bai) in all four age groups is also a noteworthy phenomenon.

The indicator "*rate of on-age education*" is also in a similar situation with the highest decrease over ages in Tien Giang: from 96% in the youngest group down to 13% in the 20-24 age group. Perhaps the reason is that, dropouts in secondary and high schools in Tien Giang are relatively popular. It should be noted that as the data was not collected at the same time in the four provinces, the differences in the results may be a combination

Table 2. Status of education by age and province

	Age group				Total
	7-11	12-15	16-19	20-24	
Currently schooling (%)					
Yen Bai	100.0	97.6	69.5	20.3	78.3
Ha Nam	96.7	94.4	57.9	18.9	74.1
Thua Thien Hue	96.6	89.9	69.7	24.8	78.3
Tien Giang	100.0	79.3	22.0	9.8	46.3
Total	97.8	91.1	55.8	17.5	70.5
On-age schooling (%)					
Yen Bai	88.3	85.5	56.2	21.9	68.2
Ha Nam	88.9	80.6	57.1	17.0	67.1
Thua Thien Hue	91.0	80.2	46.7	17.1	68.0
Tien Giang	96.3	78.2	19.0	12.8	45.5
Total	91.0	81.1	45.7	16.3	63.0
N	509	562	453	355	1,879

Figure 1. Status of education by age and province by age and gender

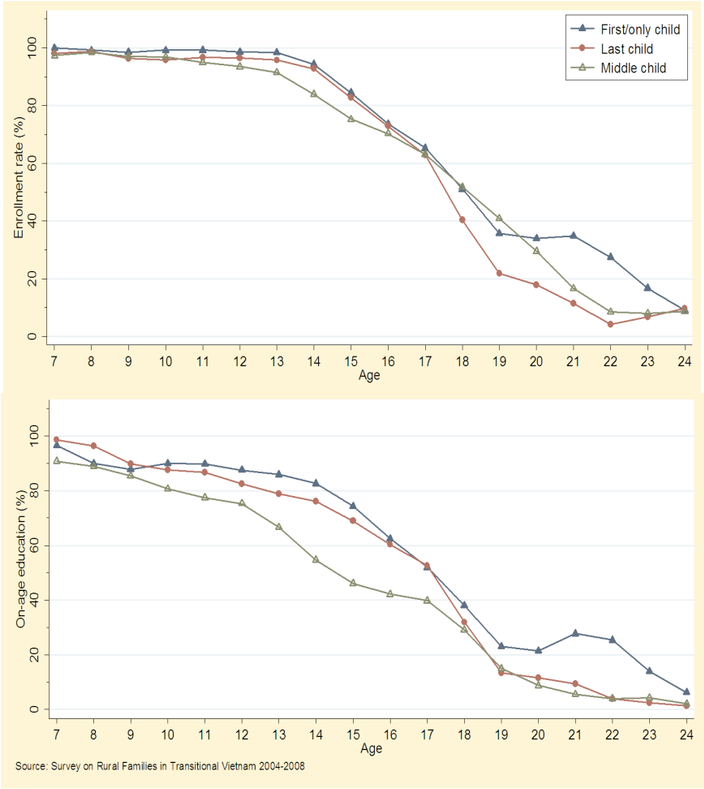


of differences over time and demographics of different geographic areas.

Figure 1 shows the comparison between education by age and gender in which some smoothing and moving average techniques were applied to achieve clearer patterns. Compared to males, the proportion of females is slightly lower at the elementary level, but a little higher in the 9-11 age group, and lower in the 19-20 age group. We can conjecture that boys are often provided more learning opportunities than girls, but more boys drop out during elementary school, and more boys pursue higher education after graduating from high schools than girls. At ages under 22, the proportion of on-age education is lower than the current school attendance proportion, but the proportion between boys and girls is similar. In the 22-24 age group, the proportion of females studying at the right ages is higher than that of males and combined proportion of both sexes. We probably need more information to explain this unusual phenomenon. In general, we can consider that in most of the age groups, males' educational status is not substantially better than females'.

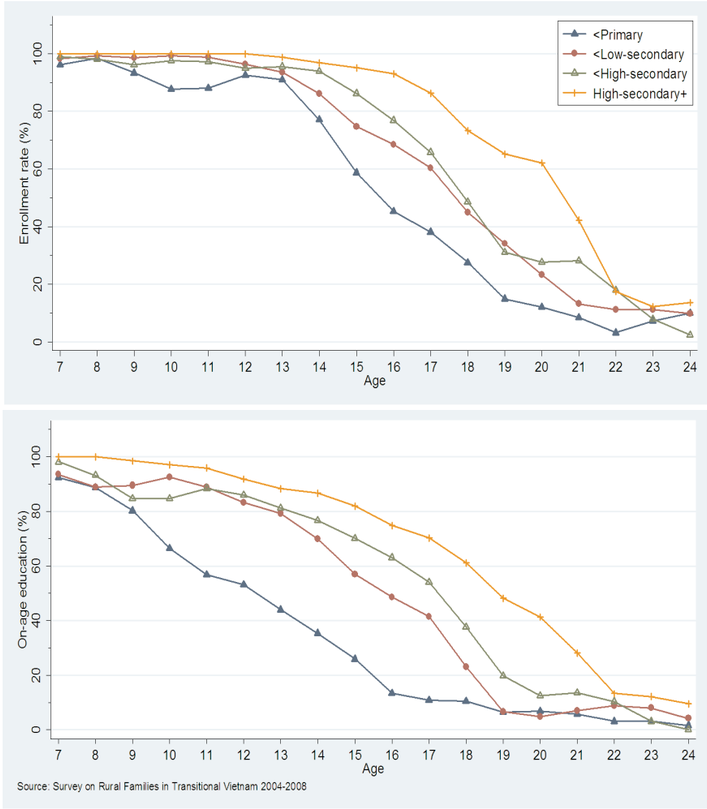
The next examined indicator is the order within siblings (Figure 2). The individuals are divided into three groups based on the number of living siblings: the eldest child/only child, the youngest and the middle. Figure 2 shows that the educational status of the eldest child (including only children) is better than their younger siblings in most of the age groups, espe-

Figure 2. Status of education by age, province and order of birth



cially in the age bracket of college/university studying (20-23 years old). The rate of on-age schooling of the youngest children is higher than that of middle children in most age groups. On the other hand, compared with those of the middle children, the enrollment rate of the youngest children is similar at primary school (7-10 years old), higher for the group aged 11-16 years, and significantly lower for the group aged 18-22 years. Notably, at the age of graduation from high school (18-19 years old), both the enrollment rate and on-age education rate of the middle children are higher than that of the youngest children.

Figure 3. Status of education by age and parents' highest education level



Regarding parental age at a child's birth (or difference between the age of children and parents), a hypothesis was that children born by parents who are too young or too old will have less opportunities to enroll and go to school at the right ages. According to the results (not presented), this hypothesis is probably true only for the early school-age group (7-11 years old) and adolescent group (20-24 years old). The most typical case is the relationship between the on-age education rate of the group aged 20-24 years with their father's age. Nearly 22% of people who are 25-34 years younger than their fathers have been or are studying in college/uni-

versity, while these figures are respectively 12% and 9% among those people with young fathers (less than 25 years older than children) and with old fathers (more than 34 years older than their children). In general, having old parents seems to have adverse impact on their educational status, more so than those children with young parents.

Similar to results from previous research, parents' educational background has obvious impacts on children's educational status and attainment. The higher the parents' educational background the higher rates of school enrollment as well as on-age education, and vice versa (figures are not presented). This relationship increases significantly with age of children. Between 20-24 years of age, the school enrollment and on-age education rates among the group having fathers who have completed secondary school, are five times higher than the group with fathers who only attained a primary level of education. The corresponding gaps are 2.4 times (enrollment rate) and 4.3 times (on-age education) if compared by mothers' educational levels.

Figure 3 illustrates more clearly the relationship between status of education and parents' educational level. Similar to various studies on education in the past, the result shows clear differences in status of education between the group of parents with the highest educational level and the group with the lowest educational level. A strange phenomenon is that the

Figure 4. Status of education by age and parents' occupation

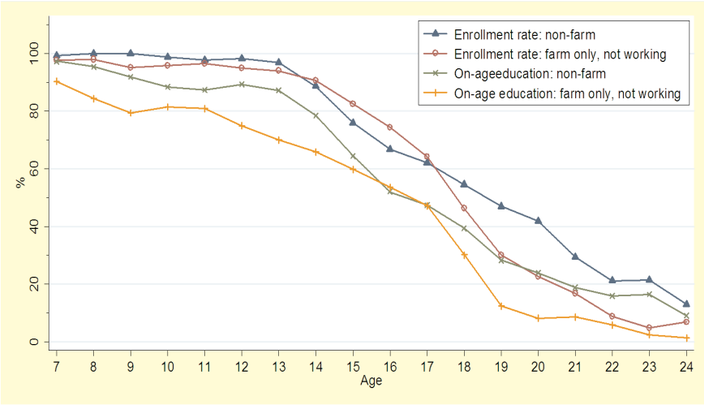
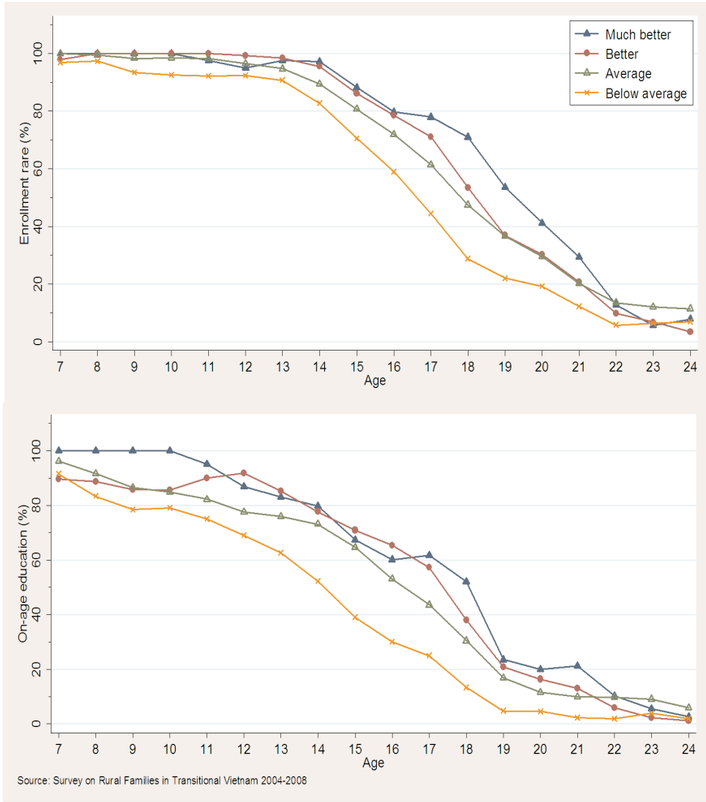


Figure 4. Status of education by age and household living standard



rate of on-age education among children less than 14 years-old having parents with under low-secondary level of education is higher than in the corresponding group of parents with high-secondary level of education. Perhaps the parents holding the under low-secondary level of education have more time and conditions to take care of their children's education than the parents holding the high-secondary level of education. But to properly explain this phenomenon, more detailed information is needed.

In this analysis, parents' occupation is classified into two groups: both parents working in agriculture or not working[1] (called the *farm group*)

and at least one of two parents working off-farm (*non-farm group*). The results presented in Figure 4 show that the enrollment rate in the farm and non-farm groups are not very different from the group aged 7-17 years. However, in the group aged 18-24 years, this figure in the non-farm group is higher than in the farm group. The on-age education rate in the non-farm group is clearly higher than that in the farm group among the groups aged less than 14 years and more than 17 years, but almost equal in the group aged 15-17 years (corresponding to high-secondary school). It can be seen on the Figure 4 that the educational status of the farm group decreases slower than that of the non-farm group as shifting from low-secondary to high-secondary level, but decreases faster in the late high secondary level, especially when shifting to higher education levels (college, university).

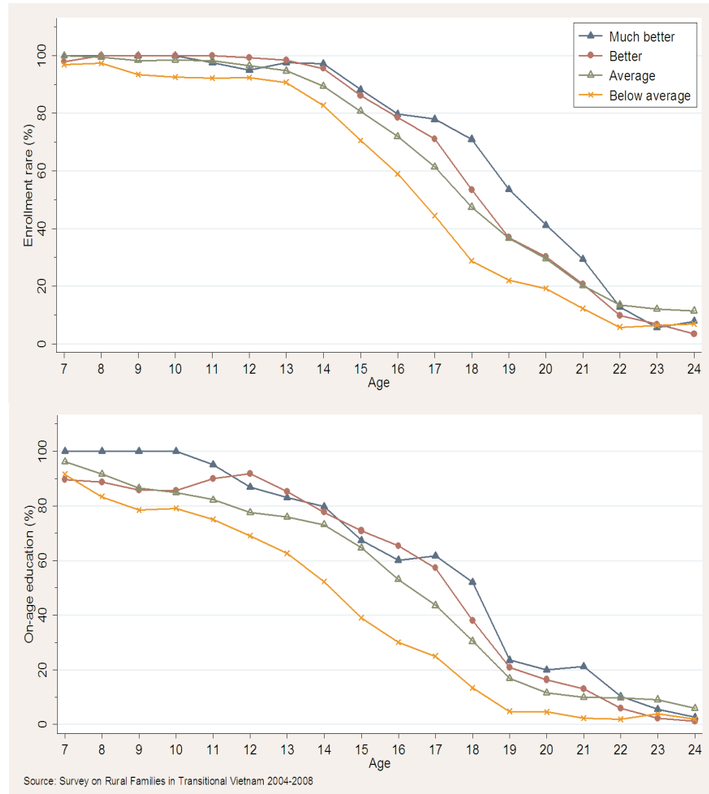
Households' living standards are always expected to be one of the most important variables explaining the differences in educational status of children and adolescents, especially in rural areas during the period of economic transition. The indicator used in this analysis is the households' living standards in comparison to other households in the same commune.

Contrary to the results presented in Section 3.1, the differences of the enrollment rate as well as the on-age education rate by household living standards are quite large, especially between groups having below-average living standards and the others (Figure 5). For example, at 17 years of age, the enrollment rate is about 78% in the highest living-standard group, but only 44% in the group with lowest living standard. The corresponding figures for on-age education are about 65% and 31%. Thus, policies to support poor students remain essential to reduce inequalities in education in rural areas.

It is noteworthy that the educational status of children and adolescents also increases by the level of expenditure per capita (the figures are not presented), but not so much as by relative living standards in commune households in the above analysis. This may be due to the education universalization policy, the policies of priority/subsidy/support for poor communes as well as the differences in the cost of access to education across provinces.

Early participation in the household's productive labor is often considered as one of the main reasons contributing to dropouts and poor study performance of children in rural areas. In this analysis, due to the lack of

Figure 5. Status of education by age and household living standard



information on age at starting participation in household work, another indicator is used as a substitute: *parents' opinion on the general age of starting participation in household labor work of their children* (with three categories: less than 15 years old, 15+ years old, and not participating). Accordingly, the result may reflect other factors such as the relationship between educational status and parents' opinions, rather than the actual productive labor status of their children. In general, the "*not participating*" group has better education level than the others. Remarkably, the group aged 10-20 years in families where children have to participate

in productive work after the age of 15 have a lower status of education than those in families where children have to participate in labor work before 15 years of age (figures are not presented).

3.3. Results from regression models

The combined impacts of independent variables on the educational status of children and adolescents in rural areas are presented by logistic regression models in Tables 3 and Table 4. Given the fact that the impacts of independent variables may be dissimilar, even contradictory, on children and adolescents, regression models for each of the two age groups, 7-15 and 15-24, have been estimated to obtain more detailed results for analysis. The age variable is included in all the models as a control variable. If being statistically significant, the positive (or negative) regression coefficients having larger absolute values should reflect greater positive (or negative) impacts to the dependent variable in comparison with the corresponding category to the control category. The following comparisons and analyses regarding the impact of every independent variable in this regression model are based on the assumption that independent variables are kept unchanged.

These following analyses evaluate the impacts of each independent variable in the regression models in Table 3 (enrollment status) and Table 4 (on-age education). The regression result shows that, given same conditions determined by other independent variables in the model, the enrollment rate of both the age groups in rural areas of Yen Bai is even higher than in Tien Giang and Ha Nam. Only the regression coefficient corresponding to the rural area in Thua Thien Hue for the group aged 15-24 years is positive and statistically significant.

The regression coefficients for provinces in the model regarding "on-age education" are similar, except for the fact that the coefficients for Thua Thien Hue are not statistically significant. Here, the differences by provinces may partly reflect the variation of the educational status over time due to the fact that the survey was not conducted in the same year in each of the four provinces. However, from the results obtained, we can consider that they may reflect the impacts of some omitted variables, such as the differences in living standards, culture, policies, infrastructure, and the quality and cost of education between the four provinces.

The regression coefficients for gender variables are not statistically significant in all three models of enrolment status for the three age groups,

Table 3. Logistic regression models on status of schooling

Independent variables	Age groups					
	7-15		15-24		7-24	
Province						
Yen Bai (2004) (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
Tien Giang (2005)	-2.588	***	-1.917	***	-1.824	***
Thua Thien Hue (2006)	-0.962		0.716	*	0.381	
Ha Nam (2008)	-1.671	*	-0.789	**	-0.888	***
Age						
Age	-18.099	*	3.140		1.184	
Age ^ 2	1.601	*	-0.200		-0.109	*
Age ^ 3	-0.047	*	0.004		0.002	*
Gender (Male=1, Female=0)	0.218		-0.013		-0.033	
Difference to mother age						
<24 years (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
24-29 years	0.410		0.062		0.207	
30+ years	0.522		0.561		0.524	*
Number of siblings	-0.239	*	-0.257	***	-0.259	***
Order among siblings						
First	0.816		0.333		0.376	
Last	0.313		-0.009		-0.023	
Other (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
Parents' occupation (non-farm=1)	0.120		0.208		0.261	
Labor participation						
Before 15 years of age	0.339		0.442		0.496	*
After 15 years of age (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
Has not participated	0.660		0.083		0.223	
Highest level of parents' education						
< Primary (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
< Low-secondary	0.641	*	0.865	**	0.813	**
< High-secondary	0.933	*	0.969	**	0.922	***
High-secondary or higher	2.106	*	2.040	***	1.919	***
Living standard in compare to other households in commune						
Among the best	0.298		0.831	*	0.910	*
Above average	1.317	**	0.925	***	1.093	***
Average	0.764	*	0.592	*	0.735	***
Below average (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
Constant	71.02	*	-13.38		0.295	
N	1046		931		1840	
R^2	0.260		0.350		0.510	

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001, *ref.* = reference category.

Table 4. Logistic regression models on status of on-age schooling

Independent variables	Age groups					
	7-15		15-24		7-24	
Province						
Yen Bai (2004) (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
Tien Giang (2005)	-0.640		-1.653	***	-1.158	***
Thua Thien Hue (2006)	0.064		0.210		0.158	
Ha Nam (2008)	-0.986	**	-0.641	*	-0.718	***
Age						
Age	-7.574	*	2.688		1.466	**
Age ^ 2	0.661		-0.199		-0.121	***
Age ^ 3	-0.019	*	0.004		0.003	**
Gender (Male=1, Female=0)	-0.024		0.598	*	0.164	
Difference to mother age						
<24 years (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
24-29 years	-0.014		0.372		0.316	
30+ years	-0.045		0.635	*	0.422	
Number of siblings	-0.143		-0.312	***	-0.255	***
Order among siblings						
First	0.440		0.487		0.389	
Last	0.310		0.351		0.207	
Other (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
Parents' occupation (non-farm=1)	0.451		0.160		0.362	*
Labor participation						
Before 15 years of age	0.362		-0.006		0.220	
After 15 years of age (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
Has not participated	0.368		0.834	**	0.536	*
Highest level of parents' education						
< Primary (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
< Low-secondary	1.277	***	0.658	*	0.885	***
< High-secondary	1.100	***	0.925	**	0.948	***
High-secondary or higher	1.731	***	1.810	***	1.753	***
Living standard in compare to other households in commune						
Among the best	0.254		1.250	**	0.931	**
Above average	1.188	***	1.276	***	1.258	***
Average	0.757	**	0.850	***	0.803	***
Below average (ref.)	0.000		0.000		0.000	
Constant	29.86	*	-9.865		-3.649	
N	1046		931		1840	
R^2	0.165		0.305		0.399	

Note: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001, *ref.* = reference category.

suggesting that in the context of contemporary society, gender is no longer a major factor affecting the school attendance of children and adolescents in rural areas. This result is consistent with the conclusions of Truong Si Anh (1995) and Knodel (1996). However, regarding the group aged 15-24 years, the on-age education of males is higher than females'. This issue will be continued later in examining figures presented in Table 5.

Those who are at least 30 years younger than their mothers tend to enroll and attend schools at the right age more than those who are less 30 years younger than their mother, especially in the group of adolescents aged 15-24 years. This phenomenon is probably due to the fact that women who gave birth at young age have less resource to take care of their children's education. Most of the regression coefficients of the siblings are negative and statistically significant. This indicates that besides giving birth at a very young age, having many children is also a notable obstacle for the future education of children. However, contrary to the results of the analysis described in Figure 2, the regression models in Table 3 and Table 4 do not show the impacts of *order among siblings* to the educational status of children and adolescents in rural areas.

Regarding parents' occupation, having a parent working off-farm can increase the probability of studying at the right age compared with those having parents as farmers. However, the result shows that parents' occupations do not affect the probability of school attendance. Therefore, in the same conditions defined by other independent variables, children in non-agricultural families do not have better access to schools than those in agricultural families, but their schooling achievements (rate of on-age education) are better. Interestingly, the probability of school attendance in families with children who participated early in productive labor is higher than in families with children who participated in productive labor after the age of 15 years or in families where children do not work. On the other hand, children's study performance (on-age education) is significantly affected if they have to participate in the family's productive labor.

Parents' educational background is one of the two most important factors affecting the educational status of children and adolescents in rural areas. Indeed, with the reference group of parents who have not graduated from primary school, the regression coefficients for higher educational levels are positive, relatively large, and statistically significant, especially in groups with parents having high-secondary or a higher level. This result is predictable and consistent with previous studies on education in Vietnam.

The second most affecting factor is the household's living standards. It is necessary to remind that the indicator used in this analysis is the living standards compared to the average level of households within the same commune, not the entire surveyed provinces. In both models - for school enrollment and on-age education, most of the regression coefficients for this variable are positive, relatively large and statistically significant. This is a clear evidence indicating the impacts of the living standards on educational status. The only exception is that the regression coefficient corresponding to the highest living standards in the model for the 7-15 age group is relatively small and not statistically significant. One possible explanation for this is that the wealthier households in rural areas are too busy with their business to pay enough attention to their children's education.

The above-mentioned analyses did not show any evidence confirming the impacts of gender on the educational status of children and adolescents, which raises the question of whether gender inequalities still persist in general education in rural areas? In order to find out more details on this issue, eight logistic regression models were set up specifically for poor and non-poor groups of children aged 7-15 and adolescents aged 15-24. Independent and dependent variables in the eight models are similar to those in Table 3 and Table 4.

In this case, as we only need to pay attention to the gender variable, all regression coefficients for other independent variables are not presented in Table 5. The results show that in both models (for school enrollment and on-age education) for the group aged 7-15 years, the regression coefficient for gender is positive in non-poor households, and negative in poor households with quite large absolute values. Although these coefficients are not statistically significant at the 0.05 level (partly because of the small sample) they may also reflect the trend that in comparison to boys,

Table 5. Coefficients for gender in 8 logistic regression models on status of education in poor and non-poor households

Dependent variable:	Currently schooling		On-age schooling	
	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor
Group of 7-15 years	0.965	-0.501	0.428	-0.405
Group of 15-24 years	-0.243	0.474	0.288	2.071*

Note: for the gender variable: male=1 and female=0; * p<0.05;
Coefficients for other variables are omitted.

girls have more "*advantages*" if they are in poor households, but suffer "*disadvantages*" if in non-poor households regarding their attendance in elementary and secondary schools, as well as schooling at the right age. Were this hypothesis is true, it would contradict the findings of Belanger & Liu (2004) which found that in poor households, the schooling of girls is more vulnerable than that of boys.

However, in the group aged 15-24 years, the result is consistent with Belanger & Liu's conclusion as the coefficient for the gender variable in the regression model for on-age education for the poor group is 2.071 and can thus be considered statistically significant. Perhaps at this age (15-24), girls in poor households have to spend more time working or doing housework than boys. In short, poverty can bring more disadvantages in education for boys from the ages of secondary to lower education, as well as for girls from the ages of low-secondary to higher education.

3.4 The intermediate factors between parents' educational background and children's educational status

The analysis results from the regression models show that households' living standards and parents' educational background are the two most important factors affecting the educational status of children and adolescents in rural areas. It is not too difficult to predict the impacts of living standards. Wealthier families will have better material and environmental conditions for the children's education. However, we need further analysis to understand the mechanism by which parents' educational background impacts upon their children. That impact must take action through intermediate factors, particularly attitudes and behaviors of parents regarding their children's education. The analysis in this section will explore the relation between parents' educational background and some intermediate factors obtained in this survey such as parents' attention to their children's education; the provision of extra lessons; career-oriented attitudes and behaviors of parents toward their children; the children's age when they started participating in productive household work, and expenditure for education. Most of the analyses in this section are based on households with children attending school.

According to the results in Table 6, it is clear that parents with a higher level of education tend to have their children take extra classes. The rate among the groups having parents holding under primary level of education is only about two-thirds of those having parents holding high-secondary or higher

Table 6. Proportion of households with children taking extra classes by parents' education (%)

	< Primary	< Low-secondary	< High-secondary	High secondary or higher	Total
Fathers' education	48.1	75.0	79.8	86.4	72.8
Mothers' education	59.8	73.6	83.2	86.1	72.8
Parents' highest education	45.6	70.6	78.3	87.8	72.8

levels. Among that, the variation in fathers' level of education is wider than that of mothers'. Particularly, when fathers do not attain a primary level of education, only 48% of children can take extra classes, whereas this rate is 60% if mothers have the same level of education.

The parent who attends parent-teacher meetings is influenced by educational background of the mother more than that of the father (figures are not presented). Mothers often attend parent-teacher meetings. Moreover, when shifting from groups of mothers with a low educational level to those who with a higher educational level, the proportion of fathers taking this responsibility decreases significantly. As an alternative, there is a clear increase in the proportion of mothers as well as both parents attending parent-teacher meetings. On the other hand, the proportion of fathers or mothers attending parent-teacher meetings does not vary significantly in relation to the fathers' education. Similarly, the frequency of attending parent-teacher meetings is also influenced by mothers' education rather than fathers'.

Analyses on the relationship between parents' educational background and *helping children learn at home* and *maintain children's discipline* show similar results (figures are not presented). Parents' educational background has positive impacts and mothers' education is more significant than fathers'. Besides, when parents have some formal education (primary level or above), the proportion of households having someone else to help the children studying at home decreases drastically in comparison to the proportion of households having parents with less than a primary level of education .

The next intermediate factors are the parent's attitudes and behaviors regarding career orientation for their children (figures are not presented). A general pattern is that the proportion of parents wanting their children

to become civil servants is lowest in the under-primary group and highest in the groups of high-secondary or higher levels of education. This difference is larger by fathers' education than by mothers' education, demonstrating that the educational level of fathers tend to affect the vocational attitudes on children more than that of mothers. Especially, the proportion of parents (mothers, fathers) expecting both sons and daughters to become civil servants is not much different across their levels of education. This is a clear indication of "progressive" awareness among families in rural areas today.

In addition, the proportion of parents displaying career-oriented behaviors for children also increases considerably with their education levels, especially with mothers' education. This proportion increases from 52% among mothers with under primary level to 77% among mothers with high-secondary or higher levels of education.

The participation of children in household's productive work is probably due to parents' decisions and, as mentioned earlier, seems to adversely affect the study performance (or on-age education) of children and adolescents in rural areas. The results also show the impacts of parents' educational background on this intermediate factor. When parents' educational level is higher, the proportion of children participating in productive work before the age of 15 years decreases and the proportion of children not working increases (figures are not presented). However, the proportion of children participating in the household production after the age of 15 is quite stable across different groups. Maybe the fact that children participate in the household production after this age has been a social norm in rural areas. Therefore, it depends primarily on human resources and the production status of the households, not parents' educational levels.

Notably, the proportion of children participating in household production activities before the age of 15 among girls is higher than among boys and, moreover, this difference increases in relation to the level of education of parents. In other words, as parents' education level increases, the proportion of children under the age of 15 that must participate in productive household work decreases, especially among boys. This is probably one of the few proofs about the existence of gender discrimination in education in contemporary rural areas in Vietnam.

The last intermediate factor considered is the expenditure for education. As the indicator used here is the education expenditure for the eldest

child attending school in each household, the result may not indicate the average educational cost for all children. Nevertheless, the result still shows significant increases of expenditure for education by parents' educational level. In particular, the average annual expenditure for education of the eldest child (attending school) is VND 560 thousand among the group having fathers with under primary level of education, and over VND 1.4 million in the group with fathers with high-secondary or higher level of education.

One exception is that the expenditure for education in the group with mothers whose an education level less than high-secondary degree is higher than in the group with mothers holding a higher level of education. This phenomenon seems to occur more clearly regarding mothers' educational background in the three provinces of Yen Bai, Thua Thien Hue and Tien Giang, as well as fathers' educational background in Yen Bai. Perhaps depending on each region's specific economic and cultural situation, when holding good educational level (high-secondary level or higher), some families can guide their children to learn, or at least control their children's schooling and as such, need not spend for extra classes nor other informal educational costs.

4. Concluding remarks

In this article, the analyses regarding educational status of rural children and adolescents from the approach of household characteristics have revealed the following main findings.

First point is about the status of school attendance and education at the right age. The proportion of children aged 7-11 years attending school in the surveyed rural areas is quite high (above 96%) but only about 90% of them are studying at the right age. Because of the large population, the actual number of children aged 7-11 not attending school as well as attending school late in Vietnam is not small. Those two proportions decreased by 10% when switching to low-secondary age, down to approximately 50% among high-secondary age, and less than 18% at the 20-24 age group. The status of school dropout and not studying at the right age are relatively different among the surveyed provinces.

Second, according to the views of the households, the main reason contributing to the dropout of their children is economic difficulty, an issue which is obviously more common in poor households. The next reasons are *poor studying performance* and *not wanting to learn*, but only frequent in households with above-average living standards.

The third point is regarding gender inequality in education. The proportion of girls attending school is higher than boys for the age range that falls under of primary education, but slightly lower after secondary education age. However, the differences between boys and girls are generally quite small. Even in similar demographic and family conditions, males virtually do not have greater educational advantages over females, except in status of *on-age education* among the age of high-secondary and higher education (15-24 years of age), especially in poor households. This result is similar to the conclusion of the Truong Si Anh (1995) and Knodel (1996), but only for children younger than 15 years of age. There is no evidence showing that parents in rural areas have gender discrimination attitudes or behaviors regarding children's education. However, the educational status of girls and female adolescents may be more disadvantaged since rural girls have to participate in productive household work earlier and more often than rural boys.

Fourth, among the analyzed factors, parents' educational background is the most important factor affecting educational status of rural children. The higher the parents' educational background, the higher the rate of school attendance and on-age education. There is evidence showing that mothers' educational background plays a more important role than fathers' regarding the school enrollment of rural children and adolescents.

Fifth, households' living standards are very important factors, perhaps only behind parents' educational background, determining educational status of children and adolescents in rural areas. Households with lower living standards often correspond with higher rates of children dropping out of school and lower rates of on-age education. Education univerialization policies, policies of priority and support for poor communes as well as differences in education costs across different areas may be the factors behind the phenomenon that the educational status of children and adolescent are significantly affected by the locality's relative living standards rather than the absolute living standards calculated according to expenditure or income per capita. In addition, low living standards do not intensify gender inequalities in education at primary and secondary levels, but in households with economic difficulties females have to suffer more disadvantages than males at the ages of high-secondary or higher levels, especially regarding possibility to complete education levels at appropriate ages. Moreover, when having girls dropping out of school, parents

often cite financial difficulties as the reason more than when boys drop out of school. This result is similar to the remarks of Belanger & Liu (2004), but probably only appropriate to the ages for high-secondary education and college/university.

Sixth, besides living standards and parents' educational background, other households' socio-demographic factors also play an important role in the educational status of children and adolescents in rural areas. The disadvantages are inherent in families with many children, especially those families in which mothers give birth too early (under the age of 24), the parents work in agriculture, and children participate early in the households' productive labor. All other conditions being equal, non-agricultural families' children do not have better access to schools than those in agricultural families, although they are more likely to study at the right age. The quantity of siblings seems to have more impacts on the learning performance rather than the enrollment rate.

Seventh, parents' educational background can affect the educational status of their children through various intermediate factors such as their attention to children's schooling, the provision of extra lessons, career-oriented attitudes and behaviors of children, letting children participating in household production labor, or expenditure for education. All of these factors tend to be more "positive" when the parents, especially mothers, have high levels of education. The most notable exception is that in some localities, the expenditure for children's education among the group with parents with high-secondary or higher levels of education is (possibly due to their capacity to monitor and guide their children's studying) lower than the group having parents with education levels less than high-secondary. The second exception is that when parents' educational level increases, the proportion of under-15 children participating in the households' productive labor decreases, and it can intensify gender inequalities.

In general, the rate of children dropping out of school in rural areas is still not too high. However, this rate may increase more rapidly in the progress of economic transition and education socialization, when the gap between the rich and the poor seems to enlarge together with the increase of educational costs. The situation in high-secondary and higher education may be more considerable. Therefore, policies aimed to support students in poverty continue to be essential to reduce schooling dropouts and educational inequalities in rural Vietnam. Besides policies implemented to promote education investment in areas with low living standards, it is also important to support more for the poorest students and children in each rural commune.

It is also necessary to implement policies aimed at promoting the elimination of all forms of son-preference in rural areas, and helping girls and female adolescents to have the same access to education and educational conditions like male children and adolescents. That will generate a "*double*" impact on the enhancement of educational status in rural areas at present and in the future because mothers' high level of education is an important positive factor for their children to obtain a good educational status. For example, in rural households, the educational status of girls will be improved significantly if they just participate in production activities at an equivalent level to boys.

In addition, the reductions in birth rates as well as the rate of too-young mothers in rural areas continue to create favorable conditions to improve the educational status of children and adolescents. Children having many siblings will encounter more disadvantages compared to children in other households in access to schools and schooling on right age, especially among rural areas in the context of economic transition. This is a noteworthy point for the development of further policies on population, education and other related fields.■

Endnote

(1) Not-working group include people who are unemployed, retired, disable, or do not need to work.

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The Use of Demographic Data in Vietnam

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Abstract: Over the past two decades, various demographic surveys were carried out. General Statistics Office of Vietnam under supports of international organizations has collected several nationally representative data. Other Government and non-Government institutions have also collected various data. While those demographic data provide a good resource for policy making and planning, question of their use remained. This paper aims to gather major demographic data in Vietnam over the last two decades, assess their use, and raise recommendations for more effective use of this valuable resource. The results show that those demographic data were under-used: the number of studies using those data source is small and a large number of potential topics for analysis were ignored. Low awareness and accessibility to data, limited human capacity to exploit quantitative data, and lack of resources for in-depth analysis would have contributed to this low use of demographic data and they should be changed.

Keywords: Gemographic Data Availability.

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1. Introduction

The most recent Census of Vietnam showed that at the time of the April 1, 2009, the population of Vietnam has reached 85.8 millions, making it the third most populous country in the Southeast Asia and the 13th of the world (CPHCSC, 2009). Over the 10 years between the 1999 and 2009 Censuses, the population of Vietnam has increased by 9.47 millions people and the average annual growth rate was 1.2 percent. This is the lowest growth rate in the past 50 years and it indicates a great achievement of the Government to limit rapid population growth as it was found after the reunification. Nevertheless, the large population size remained a major concern to the Government (CRR, 2005) and there remain wide regional disparities of population growth and birth rates across the country.

The national population strategy of Vietnam for the 2001-2010 period did not only aim to "achieve the replacement level of fertility for the entire country by 2005" but also "raise the quality of the population physically, intellectually and spiritually" and "try to attain the HDI at the average of the advance level of the world by 2010" (CO, 2000). Population size and quality remained as key areas of interest in two other important documents of the Government: the population ordinance, which was approved by the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly in 2003 (SCNA, 2003), and the population strategy for the 2011-2020 period, which is under development. This orientation of the Government clearly indicates a strong interest of the Government to not only the population issues themselves but also the linkages among population issues and social capital as well as socio-economic development issues.

Implementation of the population strategy of the Government requires comprehensive and up-to-date data on population and development for monitoring and evaluation. The national population strategy clearly indicated that "improvement of the quality of population information and data" is a solution to achieve the objectives of the strategy and it was one among seven programs of action under the national population strategy. Besides, "research of issues relating to population quality" was another program of action under the strategy. Creation and development of a national population database system were found as important activities under the population strategy.

Regardless of the clear orientation of the Government and great demands of population data, questions on population data and its use remained. There is no doubt that various nationally representative population-based surveys were carried out in Vietnam over the past three decades. However, the national population database system was still under creation and various concerns to its reliability remained (UNFPA, 2006). Besides, while many available national surveys had rich information, their use seemed to be limited.

This paper is an attempt to gather major demographic data in Vietnam over the last three decades, assess their characteristics, their use, and raise recommendations for more effective use of those valuable resources.

2. Availability and sources of demographic and population-based data

The General Statistic Office of Vietnam is the main Government institution who is in charge of data collection for most of the large scale nationally representative surveys. This was conducted thanks to GSO's extensive branches or offices from central to district level and presence of their staffs from central to commune level. Beside GSO, there are three other types of Government institutions who also collect population-based data: 1) Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences; 2) research centers under Government bodies or ministries; and 3) research centers and departments under universities. Those institutions collect data under requests of Government bodies who manage them, and they also collect data under contracts with other Government and non-Government institutions. Most of the data collected by those institutions are small scale and at sub-national levels. Non-Government research institutions also collect population-based data and most of them are at sub-national levels as well.

Thanks to the strong commitment of the Government to population issues and soundly technical and financial supports from various international organizations, a number of population-based surveys were carried out in Vietnam. The largest population-based survey as usual is the Census, which was first carried out by GSO in 1979. Under the supports of UNFPA, three other Censuses were carried out by GSO in 1989, 1999 and 2009. Beside the Censuses, an Inter-censal Survey was conducted in 1994, and annual surveys of Population Change and Family Planning with the sample of 2 percent of the national population were carried out by GSO since 2001. Those large scale nationally representative surveys have provided most crucial population data, i.e. fertility, mortality and migration, and family planning – a major concern of the Government on population issues. The 1989, 1999 and 2009 Censuses had two forms of questionnaire: the short-form questionnaires were applied to all residents in

Vietnam and the long-form questionnaires were applied to a smaller sample of the national population. While the short-form questionnaires provided basic and essential population information, the long-form questionnaires included other major socioeconomic information such as education, training, health, disability, employment, occupation, and housing. The samples for the 1989, 1999 and the 2009 Census were 5 percent, 3 percent and 15 percent of the national population respectively. The sample surveys provided data representing the provincial level in 1989 and 1999 and district level in 2009. Hence, those are valuable sources of data for population and socioeconomic planning at not only national but also sub-national levels.

Beside censuses and population changes surveys, demographic and health surveys were carried out in Vietnam by GSO in 1997 and 2002. Although those surveys had much smaller sample sizes, they were still relatively large with more than 7,000 respondents. Those surveys also aimed directly to population issues and collected more detailed information relating to fertility and mortality. A list of those population surveys is provided in Table 1.

Quality of population was assessed in further details by other national surveys of GSO and other organizations. Those surveys had nationally representative samples with sample sizes in range of 5,000 to 10,000 respondents. Most of those surveys focused on population quality with long questionnaires and rich information. Most of those surveys collected fundamental demographic information but population was not their main area of interest; they usually focused on certain socioeconomic issues or certain target groups of population. The well-known living standards surveys

Table 1. National demographic surveys in Vietnam

#	Data	Year	Sample size
1.	Census	1979, 1989, 1999, 2009.	All residents in Vietnam
2.	Sample of 1989 Census	1989	5% of national population
3.	Sample of 1999 Census	1999	3% of national population
4.	Sample of 2009 Census	2009	15% of national population
5.	Inter-censal survey (ICS)	1994	
6.	Annual Surveys of Population Change and Family Planning (SPCFP)	Since 2002	2% of national population
7.	Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)	1997	7,001 households
8.	Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)	2002	7,048 households

in Vietnam, for instance, were a part of the on-going living standards measurement study (LSMS) sponsored by the World Bank (WB) in many countries. They had very long questionnaires with a particular section on fertility, some questions identifying migrants, and rich information on various issues in terms of population quality such as education, health, employment, farming, income and expenditures, housing, participation in poverty reduction programs, agriculture, forestry and aquiculture production, and non-farm activities. The surveys have been carried out in Vietnam in 1992-1993; 1997-1998, and then every 2 years since 2002.[1] The second and third rounds of the well-known Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICSs) of UNICEF were also carried out in Vietnam in 2000 and 2006 respectively. Those surveys aimed to fill data gaps for monitoring the situation of children and women with a sample size of around 8,000 households.[2] The key indicators of interest in the surveys include health, education, child protection, mortality and HIV/AIDS. 21 MDG indicators were collected through MICS3 to monitor achievements of the MDGs. A list of those surveys and other major nationally representative population-based surveys is provided in Table 2.

Many other non-nationally representative population-based surveys were carried out in Vietnam; a few of them were managed by GSO but most of them were managed by State research institutions and NGOs. The most noticeable population data of this type was the Migration Survey which was carried out in 2004 by GSO. This survey provided rich information on migration process that was not affordable in the censuses and population change surveys. However, it only targeted major destinations of migrants. Before that, a migration and health survey was carried out by the Institute of Sociology in collaboration with Brown University in 1997 in 4 provinces; and after that a survey on impacts of migration was carried out in 2008 by the Institute of Social Development Studies also in 4 provinces. Young lives survey was also conducted in Vietnam in 2002 and repeated in 2006.

There appear a very large and unknown number of non-nationally representative population-based surveys in Vietnam. Table 3 provides a list of a few among them. Reasons for this situation will be discussed in the later part of this paper.

3. Major characteristics of population-based data

The overview of available population-based data shows that Vietnam had many population data and some of them follow the international stan-

Table 2. Nationally representative population-based surveys in Vietnam

#	Data	Source	Year	Sample size	Main areas of interest /Target groups
1.	1992-1993 Vietnam Living Standards Surveys (VLSS)	GSO	1992-93	4,300 households	Living standards
2.	1997-1998 VLSS	GSO	1997-98	5,994 households	Living standards
3.	2002 VLSS	GSO	2002	75,000 households (for income; of which 29,532 for income and expenditures)	Expenditure and income (Core) + basic SES information
4.	2004 VLSS	GSO	2004	45,900 households (for income; of which 9,188 for income and expenditures)	Core + land and non-farm activities
5.	2006 VLSS	GSO	2006, 2010	46,000 households	Core + health and education
6.	2008 VLSS	GSO	2008	46,000 households	Core + land and non-farm activities
7.	Multiple Indicator Clustering Survey (MICS2)	GSO/ Childinfo	2000	7,628 households	Women and children
8.	MICS3	GSO/ Childinfo	2006	8,355 households	Women and children
9.	Survey of economics and household living standards in rural area (SEHLS)	GSO	1990	3,000 households	Income and expenditures
10.	Rich-poor household survey (RPHS)	GSO	1993	93,000 households	Income and expenditures
11.	Evaluation of Vietnamese child malnutrition control and prevention program (CMCP)	GSO	1994	9,600 households	Child malnutrition
12.	CMCP	GSO	1996	14,400 households	Child malnutrition
13.	Multi-purposes household surveys (MPHS)	GSO	1994, 1996, 1997, 1999		Living standards
14.	Poverty survey (PS)	GSO	1999		Household income and expenditures
15.	National survey on household economic and life (SHEL)	GSO	1999-2000	25,170 households	Household income and expenditures
16.	Labor and Job Annual Surveys (LJS)	GSO /MOLISA	1997-2000		Labor market
17.	World health survey (WHS)	WHO	2002	19,029 individuals in 4,174 households	Health report, performance of health system, health care expenditures, adult mortality, birth history, risk factors.
18.	National Health Survey (NHS)	GSO/ MOH	2001-2002	36,000 households	Monitoring national health goals, private health care, coverage of public health programs, health insurance, health financing, quality of health care.
19.	Surveys of Rural, Agriculture and Fishery (SRAF)	GSO	1994, 2001, 2006	145,000 households	Rural households, infrastructure, farm economy, rural production.
20.	Vietnam population and AIDS indicator survey (VPAIS)	GSO/ NIHE	2005	6,337 households with 13,996 individuals	AIDS indicators
21.	National Survey on the Family in Vietnam (NSFV)	Committee of Population, Family and Children (VCPFC); GSO, IFGS	2006	9,300 households	Family values, norms, economics and welfare.
22.	Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth (SAVY)	GSO /MOH	2003, 2008	7,584 youths between 15-24 years old	Youth SES and aspiration
23.	National Sexuality Survey (NSS)	ISDS	2009	5,000 individuals aged 18-65	Sexuality

Table 3. Some examples of non-nationally representative population-based surveys in Vietnam

#	Data	Source	Year	Sample size	Sites
1.	Migration and health survey (MHS)	Institute of Sociology & Brown University	1997	2,500 individuals in 1,800 households	4 provinces
2.	Young lives survey (YLS)	RTCCD/ GSO /SCU	2002, 2006	1,999 children aged 6 to 18 months and 1,000 children aged between 7.5 and 8.56 years	5 provinces
3.	Global youth tobacco survey (GYTS)	CDC & WHO	2003	18,000 secondary school students aged 13-15 from 125 schools	5 provinces of Vietnam
4.	Migration survey (VMS)	GSO /UNFPA	2004	10,000 individuals (5,000 migrants and 5,000 non-migrants)	11 provinces that are the major places of destination of migrants
5.	3-city youth study survey (3CYS)	Institute for Family and Gender Studies	2006	6,363 youths aged 15 to 24 years	1 city /Hanoi in comparison to Shanghai and Taipei
6.	Migration impacts survey (PIM)	ISDS	2008	5,000 individuals	4 provinces in the north and south of Vietnam, 2 origin and 2 destination

dards. Those data include not only population data but also population quality data that are crucial for evaluating, monitoring and planning various aspects of socio-economic development. Most of the available surveys, including the censuses and the demographic and health surveys, followed international standards, and they also received technical and financial supports from international organizations such as UNFPA, UNDP and WB.

It was found that quality of the population surveys was high and improved over time. Beside the Censuses, the Population Change and Family Planning surveys are among the best data providing important annual demographic information at national, regional, and provincial levels. “In the recent population change surveys, survey tools were improved over time to gain good data on fertility and mortality. … Similar to previous population change surveys, the quality of the 2008 population change survey was high, as evaluated by international consultants of UNFPA” (UNFPA, 2009).

Although there is no doubt about availability and quality of population-based data in Vietnam, several questions remained. First of all is the question of data accessibility. This question includes two aspects: (1) the awareness of data availability; and (2) access to public and raw data.

While many population-based data were available, most of them were not widely popularized. GSO is the central organization that has involved directly or indirectly to many surveys. It recently made a great effort on the website to provide information of various surveys online.[3] Establishment of the National Data Archive (NADA) under the supports of the International Household Survey Network and the WB recently indicated further efforts of GSO in publicize sample survey and census micro data.[4] Four objectives of the NADA are: 1) Promote a best practice and international standards for the documentation of micro-data amongst data producers in the country; 2) Provide equitable access to micro-data in the interest of all citizens, by protecting confidentiality and following international recommendations and good practice; 3) Promote an effective utilization of existing survey and census data for statistical and research purposes, thereby encouraging a diverse range of analytical work through secondary research; and 4) Ensure a long term preservation of micro-data and related metadata, and their continued viability and usability in the future. Nevertheless, some information of on-going surveys and information of several surveys are not available on GSO's website, which includes the NADA's website. For instance, GSO's website does not provide information of the demographic and health surveys, the first two rounds of the living standards surveys, the 2001-2002 national health survey, the population and AIDS indicator survey, etc.; among the 42 national surveys that had GSO involvement and listed above, 23 surveys are not presented in the GSO's website. Besides, regardless of the very specific and clear objectives of NADA, information of available data on NADA is thin and does not fulfil those objectives yet. The reason would be that NADA's website is still a demo site or under construction. Difficulties in accessing data were reported by some researchers. A fee is requested for some data, such as the VLSS, which is another constraint for researchers accessing in a developing country like Vietnam.[5] NADA has made a great progress of GSO recently as it has showed the contact point or name of the department in charge of a specific data and procedure to receive data.

Second, it is the question of concerning to data surplus, i.e. are we having more data than enough (?) and, consequently, are we wasting resources for data collecting (?) The list of available population-based data above shows that Vietnam has very rich information but it also proves a high frequency of data collection, some similarities and overlapping across surveys. Figure 1 presents a list of national surveys by years of data collection. It clearly points out a very high frequency of data collection, especially during the last two decades: 41 national surveys were carried out over the last 20 years; 25 national surveys were carried out in the last 10 years; and there were 4 to 5 national surveys in some years, i.e. 1994, 1999, 2002, and 2006. Obviously, similar data were repeatedly collected on large scale because many contents or sections in the questionnaires of those surveys were similar. Education and training, health status and access to health care services, employment and occupation, income and expenditures are frequently found in most, if not all, of those surveys. The living standards surveys, multi-purpose household surveys, household economic and life survey, poverty surveys share major characteristics and information. The world health survey and the national health survey were carried out in about the same time (2001 to 2002) with similar objectives. Recently, GSO has integrated some surveys, e.g. the MPHS and VLSS, to avoid overlapping, and more of such efforts is expected.

A fair reason for having a new survey usually is that the available data did not have enough information of certain issues or of a particular group, usually vulnerable group. Nonetheless, questions relevant to their effectiveness still remain, e.g. is it necessary to carry out a new survey? is it

Figure 1. List of national surveys by year of data collection 1989-2009

Year	Name of national surveys	Number of surveys
1989	Census	1
1990	SEHLS	1
1991		0
1992	VLSS	1
1993	RPHS	1
1994	ICS, CMCP, MPHS, SRAF	4
1995		0
1996	CMCP, MPHS	2
1997	DHS, VLSS, MPHS	3
1998		0
1999	Census, MPHS, PS, SHEL	4
2000	MIC2, LJS	2
2001	NHS, SRAF	2
2002	SPCFP, DHS, VLSS, WHS	4
2003	SPCFP, SAVY	2
2004	SPCFP, VLSS	2
2005	SPCFP, VPAIS	2
2006	SPCFP, VLSS, MICS3, SRAF, NSFV	5
2007	SPCFP	1
2008	SPCFP, VLSS, SAVY	3
2009	Census, NSS	2
	Total	42

necessary to collect data on annual basic? can we make use of available information and national data through data merging? etc. assessment of population-based data with thoughtful considerations to those questions would increase effective use of resources for data collection.

Third, while Vietnam may have a situation of data surplus, the country also faces a situation of data insufficiency in certain areas. For instance, migration is an important component of population, and it is considered as an important issue in term of urbanization and economic development of Vietnam; however, migration related data is insufficient. The census can only define migrants as those who changed their place of residence within the five years preceding the census date (GSO, 2001). The most recent 2009 census and the annual population change and family planning surveys deal with the same problem. Migrant population therefore is well under-estimated since many return migrants, short-term or temporary migrants were not included in the censuses. Further, many information relating to migration process was not included. The 2004 migration survey was an effort to supplement those information but they could have done it only at the major destination places of migration. Besides, regardless of the large number of population-based surveys, there is still no reliable data on the number of migrants in urban areas of the country.

Fourth, it is the question of the use of population-based data for planning and policy making. There is no doubt that results of censuses and population-based data were used to point out fertility trends and assess fertility policies of Vietnam, but it was not the case for mortality and migration related policies. The national population strategy showed a great desire of the Government to make use population-based data for planning and policy decision making. However, assessment of an international consultant on the population strategy showed that this has not been implemented (UNFPA, 2006).

Fifth, it is the question of availability of survey documents. GSO provides very fundamental information of available surveys on their website. NADA provides more structural but still very basic information. There are only a few surveys providing very detailed technical information relating to the survey, e.g. study design, sampling, questionnaires, data access policy and contact point. VLSS is a very good example of survey documentation as most of them are available online through the LSMS's website.[6]

For non-nationally representative samples or small-scale surveys, there are some additional questions or concerns. The small scale surveys also

mean that generalization of those surveys is limited. A mistake that is frequently found in reports using those data is the over generalization of results, e.g. data was collected in a small number of provinces but the report discussed about the issues for the whole country. Awareness of those surveys is even a bigger challenge than awareness of national surveys since those surveys are scattered and usually known to a small groups of people who have connection with the data collecting organizations.

4. The use of population-based data

In general, it is found that the use of population-based data in Vietnam is limited. The limited use of population-based data in planning and policy making was mentioned in the previous part. Besides, there are only a very small number of publications using those population-based data and most of them are descriptive reports. The major publications of GSO and the Statistical Publishing House are reports of the major findings of the surveys that present only basic descriptive statistics of main indicators from a survey. Although UNFPA, WB, UNDP, SIDA and other donors of the surveys tried to promote the use of population-based surveys through provision of technical and fiscal supports for in-depth analyses, the number of in-depth analysis publications is still very small. For the most recent Census of 2009, UNFPA/ GSO approved for only 4 in-depth analysis monographs using the census data. Similarly for the 2004 migration survey, UNFPA funded only 3 in-depth analysis monographs using this dataset. Besides, there were only a few studies using this 2004 migration survey data. Similar situation happened to most other datasets.

There are at least two main reasons for this limited use of population-based data in general and demographic data in particular. Apparently, the accessibility to data which includes awareness of available data, as presented above, is a reason for this limited use. The second reason relates to human resources or ability of using quantitative data and the shortage of demographers professionally trained in Vietnam. Although the number of Vietnamese students studying abroad has increased over time, there is still a limited number of people who are good at quantitative analyses. In fact, UNFPA as well as WB and other UN offices in Vietnam found it difficult to seek for local consultants who are able to perform quantitative data analyses. This situation was a reason for the delay of several national reports. The number of demographers was even smaller and demographic training received less attention recently. During the early 1990s, when the fertility was high and population issues received great attention,

Department of Demography was established under the National Economics University for formal demographic training. However, this department was closed, probably due to the low demand of students. Nowadays, formal demographic training is implemented at sub-department level or research centers of some universities, such as the Institute of Population and Social Issues affiliated the National Economics University, sub-department of Population and Environment under the Department of Sociology and Center for Population Studies and Social Work of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, sub-department of Population under the Department of Health Community of the Hanoi School of Public Health. The small number of Vietnamese participants to annual PAA meetings is another evidence for the small number of demographers in Vietnam. Finally, the low use of population-based data would be contributed by a funding-driven reason: most donors only provided funds for data collection, development and dissemination of the preliminary findings reports. There was usually a limited to no funding for development of in-depth studies or promotion of their use.

5. Summary and discussions

The review of availability and characteristics of population-based data in Vietnam shows that there are a large number of population-based data in Vietnam, especially over the past two decades. A large number of national representative data have been carried out in Vietnam; most of them were managed by GSO and received technical and financial supports from international consultants and organizations. Those surveys include not only demographic information but also rich information of population quality. It is found that most of those data have good quality and it has been improved over time. The other side of the great availability of population-based data is the overlapping and similarities across available data. An evaluation of demographic data found that Vietnam had enough information to perform accurate estimates of fertility and mortality. However, much less satisfaction was found with migration data, availability and reliability of migration data remained major challenges.

Although population-based data has a great availability and quality, their use in Vietnam is limited and questions regarding their effective use remain. This shows that most population-based data are under-used; reports of preliminary findings with simple descriptive analyses are popular but there was a small number of in-depth studies using those data source, especially while comparing to a large number of potential topics for in-depth analyses. Low awareness and accessibility to data, limited human capacity to exploit quantitative data, and lack of resources for in-depth analysis would have contributed to this low use of demographic data. There was a great concern to effective use of population-based data in Vietnam given the high costs of national data collection, the high frequency of data collection, and the low level of usage of population-based data in the country.

The current situation of population-based data in Vietnam and their use suggest several ideas for more effective use of population-based data. First, since there is a concern to awareness of data availability, facilitating development of NADA as a pool of available population-based data, and advertising NADA for greater awareness of its existence is strongly recommended. Secondly, promoting and enriching survey documentation, especially documentation of survey designs and tools, in NADA would increase a better utilisation of data. Among the available surveys, VLSS /LSMS provides a very good reference source for the survey documentation. Third, promoting the use of NADA among data collectors of all scales would also improve the use of available data and also increase effectiveness of data collection. Fourth, given the concerns to overlapping and similarities across population-based surveys, especially the nation-wide surveys with large sample size and high cost, it is recommended to have an assessment of the use, effectiveness and necessity of available data. Consideration should be taken to the use of inter-censal and census data as an alternative to the use of costly annual population change surveys since projections for years between censuses and inter-censal surveys would be estimated with high accuracy. Besides, the development of a national basic socioeconomic data that can be merged with other national surveys should be considered to save resources for collection of the same data over surveys. Fifth, the use of population-based data for planning and policy making should be promoted given their current low use and the strong desire of the Government. Finally, the current situation of the use of population-based data suggest that capacity building for analyses of quantitative data in general and promote development of human resource in demography in particular should be promoted. This solution would lead to a greater number of in-depth studies using the available data.■

Endnotes

(1) Detailed information of the surveys can be found online at http://econ.world-

bank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTLSMS/0,,contentMDK:21485765~menuPK:4196952~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:3358997~isCURL:Y,00.html

(2) Detailed information of the surveys can be found online at http://www.child-info.org/mics.html

(3) www.gso.gov.vn

(4) http://www.gso.gov.vn/nada/?page=home.html

(5) Access policy and fee for obtaining the VLSS data are available at: http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTLSMS/0,,contentMDK:21482640~menuPK:4196952~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:3358997~isCURL:Y~isCURL:Y~isCURL:Y,00.html

(6) See: http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTLSMS/0,,contentMDK:21485765~menuPK:4196952~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:3358997~isCURL:Y,00.html#Viet_Nam

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Divorce in the Rural Red River Delta: Individual and Traditional Factors and the Participation of Social Organization

(Case studies in one commune in Hanam province)

Tran Thi Minh Thi

Abstract: This paper aims to examine trend and correlates of divorce in rural areas and to identify social and cultural factors influencing the divorce decision, using data of divorce profiles of one district court in 10 years (i.e.2000-2009) and case studies of divorced persons at the same district. There is an interesting pattern of the person who initiated divorce that brings out alternative issues of gender equality. There are different variables which correlate to divorce such as age at marriage, marriage duration, number of children, living arrangements after marriage, type of marriage, place of residence, employment, birth cohort, sex of children and etc. In addition, case studies shed lights on alternative aspects in divorce which cannot be absolutely seen in regression analysis. There are also traditional factors involvements in divorce decision.

Key words: Divorce; Marriage; Red River Delta.

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1. Introduction

While divorce has long been culturally discouraged and limited in Vietnam, the divorce rate has been rapidly increasing for a number of reasons since the renovation policy in the late 1980s.

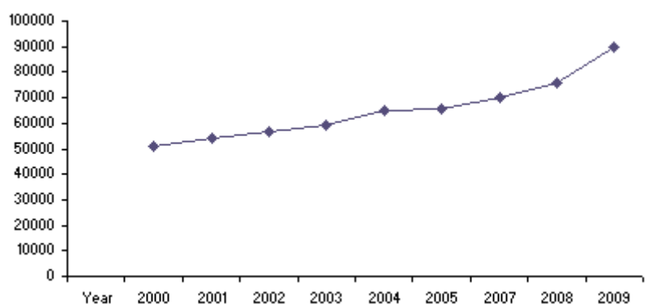
This paper aims to examine individual, social and cultural factors influencing divorce decision, using case studies in one commune of Binhluc district, Hanam province in 2008-2009 and statistics of the district and national supreme people courts.

In Binh luc, Hanam, there are about 40-60 divorces per year and the number of divorces has tended to increase every year (Table 1).

The number of divorces in any individual commune is not high and ranges from 5-8 cases per year. Numbers of cases initiated by women are higher than men, whilst those who commit faults like adultery and violence are mostly male.

Case studies show that economic hardship and conflict might be the root of much marital dissolution. It also has a close relationship with men's use of and addiction to alcohol, drugs and gambling. Economic hardship is also relevant to domestic violence, the main cause of rural divorces. Migration and its relationship with extramarital sexual relations are also discussed. There are also more traditional factors involved in divorce

Figure 1. Number of divorces over the years



Source: Statistical data of National Supreme People's Courts.

Table 1. Number of divorce cases in Binh Luc by years

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total processing case	60	49	60	74	84
Marriage and family	47	42	41	57	60
Dispute	13	8	19	17	24
Solve	51	43	52	64	69
Judge	20	18	16	15	19
Suspend	10	8	9	21	15
Divorce agreement	18	16	27	27	31
Case Forward from previous year	3	1	0	1	2

decisions, such as living arrangements, the relationship between mothers and daughters in-law, vestige of polygyny, childhood and etc. The social organizations, families and close relative relastionship are subjects that affect individual divorce decision.

2. Sampling and methods

Sampling

The study was implemented in one sunken-field commune of Binh luc district, Hanam province. Farming is the main livelihood here.

Case studies of divorced people, including divorced wives and husbands, were collected and reviewed for this study. In this paper, 13 divorcees were successfully interviewed in 2008 and again in 2009, of these divorcees 8 are women and 5 are men. They all reside in Trinh Xa commune, Binh Luc district, Hanam province. The list of all case studies is as follows (see Table 2).

In addition, mass organization and commune leaders were also interviewed to reveal the divorce process and impacts of divorce on individual lives and children, as well as social opinion regarding divorce.

Methods and methodology

This paper applies secondary data analysis of documents including the annual report, statistics, and divorce registration profile at the People's District Court and Supreme Courts, (the courts that rule on divorces and marriage conflicts in Vietnam).

The paper utilises case studies to comprehensively assess the influences

Table 2. Interviewees and divorce case keywords

#	Cases	Keywords
1	Kim, female, born 1966, divorced 1992, farmer, Hanam	quick courtship, unequal qualification, adultery, remarriage
2	Dao, female, born 1973, divorced 2005, secondary education, farmer and small trader, Hanam	parent separation experience, quick courtship, low couple intimacy, gambling husband, economic hardship, domestic violence, family conflicts, extramarital relationship, out-of-wedlock child, migration, no feeling of happiness
3	Tien, male, born 1955, divorced 1992, high school education, worker at state enterprise, Hanam	different lifestyle, conflicts, unusual characteristics, husband remarriage
4	Duc, male, born 1952, divorced 1992, farmer, Hanam	quick and "traditional" mate selection, no premarital intimacy, cohabitation with parent in law, family conflict, deep intervention from mother in law on private issues
5	Hung, male, born 1962, divorced 1992, farmer, Hanam	clumsy wife: bad at child care and housework, domestic violence, husband remarriage
6	Hien, female, born 1963, divorced 1999, farmer, Hanam	conflict with mother in law, spousal conflict and violence, spouse living far away
7	Diep, female, born 1959, divorce 1982, retired official, Hanam	job dissatisfaction, favor marriage, spouse far away, different lifestyle (the wife would exceed the given family pattern)
8	Hong, female, born 1981, farmer, Hanam	economic hardship, domestic violence, mother and daughter in law conflicts, extramarital relationship, separation, husband without cooperation in divorce, complicated divorce process
9	Huong, female, born 1974, farmer, Hanam	migration, domestic violence, drinking husband, economic hardship, sacrificed pressure
10	Thuyet, female, born 1971, farmer, Hanam.	economic hardship, migration, excessive drinking, polygyny, domestic conflict and violence
11	Nhung, female, born 1980, Hanam	migration, extramarital relationship, separation
12	The, male, born 1977, Hanam	family conflict
13	Danh, male, born 1971, farmer, Hanam	economic conflicts, land conflicts, domestic violence, living at wife family

of cultural, historical, custom, childhood, mate selection, and living arrangement factors, which are subjective and objective factors on separation and divorce. Moreover, the paper reveals the roles of mass organization, local government and courts on individual divorce processes.

3. Divorces as a consequence of individual and family conflicts

The most common causes of divorce in rural areas are adultery, family conflict, domestic violence, economic hardship, and different lifestyles. Studies show that men and women report different types of marriage problems as the causes of divorce. Women emphasize the personal characteristics and behaviours of their spouses more than men. In particular,

women often cite the husband's use of authority, his cruelty, drinking habits, immaturity, infidelity, poor money management, values and lifestyle as causes of divorce. Husband often cites the wife's infidelity, work commitments and drinking. The following analyses may partly show this.

3.1. Economic condition, the root issue

In statistical data at the people courts, not many couples request for marriage dissolution because of economic hardship and conflicts. However, in reality, in rural areas, economic hardship is a crucial factor which strongly influences marital happiness and stability, and is often the trigger factor for subsequent separation and other changes.

Economic cause is sometimes the beginning of problems such as domestic violence, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflicts, extramarital relationship and excessive drinking. Most divorced families in the rural areas are poor, have a low income, little agricultural land, no stable job, low qualification and living skills. They are busy with finding the way to get out of poverty together, and they spring a trap their destiny on the way. Some men leave home to go to the urban cities to find jobs. They are called free migrants, seasonal migrants, or rural-urban migrants. They can do almost any job to send remittances home. This can be seen as a positive aspect of migration. However, the negative aspects of migration include men to negative social issues such as gambling, drinking, cruising. For women, they must also cope with suspicion and jealous feelings from their spouse.

After marriage, most of them are happy in the first few years. When the first child is born, their economic condition is harder due to a fixed income and increased expenditure. For couples, the expectation of economic improvements sometimes exceeds the reality. In fact, several family conflicts are caused by economic constraints

Difficulties and constraints in life lead to couple's inhibition and dissatisfaction. The wives may reproach their husband's capacity for earning money and compare him to other capable husbands. They have to take care of farming, housework and children in the condition of economic shortage and limited role in decision making in the family.

> Ms Thuyet, born in 1971, married in 1990 and gave birth to a son in 1991. In 1993, the couple left for Binh Duong province. Her marriage is a combination of the economic hardship, migration, excessive drinking, adultery, domestic violence, and family conflicts.

According to her husband's words: "When we got married and had a baby, we had no property except for two paddy field the government assigned for citizens. In addition, we constantly lost our harvest because of bad weather and pestilent insects. Thus we decided to migrate to the South with the expectation that we will be better-off. But the new life in the new land was also very difficult. We were not able to overcome that and often quarrelled. These made me extremely depressed…In 2007, I decided to separate from my wife. My aspiration is to divorce soon to stabilize my new life…"

3.2. Drinking and gambling

The relationship between excessive drinking and the marital association will be considered in terms of three points: excessive drinking and particular characteristics which are usually present in the excessive drinker tend to preclude marriage; that married life and excessive drinking are incompatible; and that the destruction or disruption of the marital association frequently results in the onset of excessive drinking

There are two kinds of drinker: moderate drinker and excessive or problem drinker. Moderate drinkers drink because it is customary for them to do so and alcohol for them presents no particular problem. Some other drink not in moderation but to excess which is not simply a specific amount which represent excess quantity but rather that amount which for any particular individual leads to problems such as physical injury, arrest, loss of job, marital discord, or psychological nature.

There are several circumstances that may contribute to men and women becoming addicted to alcohol. For example, aspects of life are competitive and impersonal; there is keen competition which respect to employment, sexual satisfaction, social position and prestige. Mistakes are easy and everyone makes his share. With everyone, mistakes and wounds suffered in social living produce a certain amount of anxiety, tension, frustration, and guilt. Yet despite these difficulties most people manage to make a fairy satisfactory working compromise with life. Certain individuals, however, are not so fortunate. Whenever they try to satisfy ordinary needs, they feel painful. Some of these people suffer from unreasonable frustrations in every sort of situation. They just know that life is one painful experience after another. Since alcohol is basically a depressant and an anesthesia, its immediate effects on the human organism are to relieve anxieties and fears, and to alleviate the pains of tension and conflict. Alcohol may also provide temporary solutions for conflict by repressing one of the conflicting elements (Straus, 1950).

When the family faces difficulties, some men drink and gamble to relieve

these difficulties. They cannot afford to visit luxury places such as casinos or restaurants but gather together with similar men in the villages. Sometimes they drink home-made alcohol at home or at home-based businesses in the villages at low prices. They gamble with small amounts of money and may also gamble with their belongings. This habit comes from the individual characteristics but family hardship and unemployment may also contribute. Day by day, the habit becomes more serious for many men in the rural areas.

Drinking and gambling problems happen mostly to men in the rural areas. Men may defend this as an entertainment during leisure time and holidays. However, in the context of lack of employment and economic development, they sink into the mud and neglect their family. At the same time, the family economic condition has not been improved, and they may even become bankrupt if they mortgage their properties to pay for drinking and gambling. The wives are struggling with farming, housework, and childcare. Subsequently some wives may not stand the situation and complain to their husband. This may lead to first conflicts when the wives are unhappy with such habits and may ask their husbands to stop these activities. In such cases, the husbands often disagree and continue their own entertainment activities and neglect their household chores. The family conflict then starts.

Ms Dao, born in 1973, talked to me with a gentle voice but communicated her innermost feelings: "After a year of marriage, conflicts started to occur in my family. The reason is my husband often gambled and did not want to work for a living. If he lost money, he even demanded me to lend him money to pay for gambling loans so he could continue to indulge in his pleasure. He would argue rudely if I were not able to comply with his demand. He did not care about my advice to give up his bad habits."

3.3. Migration, distance and extramarital relationship

An outlet that seems to be more positive for the poor couples is to migrate to better economic development areas. There are several variants of this solution. Either the husband or the wife migrate to the urban cities to find jobs or both of them migrate to a new land with more available opportunities and careers.

The migration process may be the beginning of the discord and break-up for cases of divorce. If only one spouse migrates then adultery may occur. In such a case both partners are deprived of the marital emotional and sexual relationship, but men are more likely to have the extramarital relationship than women. Men find new partners in the new land. They find

their new partners, and these relationships do not have the difficult pressures of the emotions, economic hardships, or conflict relating to the husband's social activities that might exist within the marital relationship. The pressures of long term living with a spouse in a situation of hardship and starvation are released. The new partners in the new land are said to be more composed, modern than the rural spouses at home.

The male extramarital relationship is furtive. They are not ready to break up with their existing spouse but also do not have the will to end the new relationships. Most of such men want their old and new women to compromise with each other and sacrifice to share the husband.

In this situation, the wives often seek help from their parents and parents-in-law. The wife expects her husband's parents to advise him to return the family. The wife may also try to help herself by talking to her husband and begging for his return. The wife may also discuss values and issues relating to children, spousal affection, gratitude and parental advice with the husband to try to change his mind if she still loves him and wants to protect the family. The pending condition persists even for a year and divorce happens when the husband does not want to come back and he has binds in new relation such as a baby born. Divorce also happens if the wife is severely hurt and the couple has less intimacy.

> "I had three children within three years after the wedding. He then had the extramarital relationship which meant our intimacy was shared out, leading to dissolution. There is a difference in terms of qualifications between us because I am farmer and he is an artist. He is a traditional operetta actor. It was impossible for me to keep our marriage because I could not be able to persuade him to leave his girlfriends and the kids were too small so I could also not be able to make a sense of jealousy. Thus I retreated. I even came to his office to ask his colleagues to advise him but that was meaningless. My husband then directed me to request divorce. It is the fact that if I compromised I could keep my husband. But I did not (share husband). Even now, my ex-husband keeps trying to convince me and our children to live with him and his second wife but I refuse. I do not like the situation that one boat has two wharfs" (Kim, born in 1966, farmer)

> Nhung, born in 1980 and got married in 2002 at the age of 22. Her marriage and divorce include the factors of migration, adultery and separation. According to her words, they registered for marriage at the commune office but did not organize the traditional wedding because her father-in-law did not agree: "We migrated to HCMC to work after marriage. In 2003, I came back to give birth alone and then returned to HCMC again with my husband. When my child was two years old in 2005, (women like her often count time by the first child's age) I discovered my husband had an extramarital relationship with a girl named NTT in Ninh binh province. That girl was born in 1986, and is younger than me". After the relation is investigated, she and her husband often had serious conflicts and big fights. Her husband left the family to rent a new room to live with the lover. She brought her child back home to live with her parents.

> "In 2006, my husband returned home to apologise. I forgave him and decided to live together again. However, a half of month later, NTT phoned and said she was pregnant. My husband convinced me to let her stay with us to give birth and then he would cut the relationship forever. I agreed because I believed him. I went to Hanoi to work leaving the baby with my parents and left the house for her. Several months later, she gave birth and left my house after one month. It is December 2006. My husband went to Hanoi to pick me up home again. We lived together for several months when my father in law was sick and hospitalized in Hanoi in March 2007. My husband went to Hanoi to take care of his father and lived with that woman since then. I am extremely hurt since he lies to me many times regardless of the fact that I forgave him once before. I want to divorce to liberate a credulous woman like me and to take the initiative to take care of my destiny (Nhung, born in 1980).

3.4. Different lifestyle

Different lifestyles is one of the most commonly registered reasons for divorces in rural areas. However, it is necessary to carefully consider the actual causes hidden behind the reported causes. In the divorce application, couples may apply for divorce because of different lifestyle but this general cause may hide differences of culture and values etc. Different lifestyles may arise from personal characteristics such as an unusual personality, being bad in relation to housework and childcare, etc. It is noted that complaints often start from husbands. For instance, husbands may be dispirited and upset because their wives are bad at housework. Day by day, this unpleasant feeling leads to family conflicts. However, women seem to be resigned to their fate and tolerate their husbands being lazy, bossy, drunk, bad at earning a living and other unpleasant characteristics. Women's bearing and sacrifice are over when they suffer from long domestic violence and husbands deeply engage with a new relationship.

Many rural women are familiar with the traditional patriarchal family pattern that guarantees the husband's roles and enlightens wife's status regardless of their economic contribution. Not many women ask for divorce because of different lifestyles. Divorce is the final solution when they see no potential for happiness or affection from their husbands.

> "After being married for several months, I started feeling different. I tried to adapt to avoid quarrelling. Like other officials at the same time, we lived in the collective room assigned by the office. Each room is divided by a very thin bamboo mat wall. On the other side of the wall is the other couple. They would laugh at us if we beat each other. This situation dragged on for 7-8 years. We separated one time, and then reconciled, but conflicts started afterwards. We then separated for the second time before we officially divorced. She never stopped demanding for increased finances while I have tried my best. I myself had a quite high income at that time but it still didnot meet her demands. I said to her I was not a cash printer at the bank. (Kien, born in 1955).

> After about three months of marriage, I knew we did not share the same lifestyle. My wife

was so disorderly and clumsy. She did not know how to do the housework nicely. She was irresponsible for everything. For example, we lived with my parents but she did not obey them. Just one example for you to understand. She asked my parents to visit her parents' (about two km far from my house then) but she stayed overnight regardless of having a hungry baby at home. She also placed a two-month baby in the iron vessel in a very cold winter day. We share the same cultural background but we are so different in terms of living styles and family traditions. In 2001 we divorced after 7 years of separation. It took so long because I did not want my son to be unhappy. I wished that time could change my wife's personality to live together but I failed" (Hung, born in 1963).

3.5. Domestic violence

Domestic violence, mostly the husband beating the wife, is always the final water drop leading to the overflow of separation and divorce. Women do not request a divorce at the first time of being beaten by her husbands. Divorce happens when the violence is severe, systematic, and unchangeable. There are many reasons for the domestic violence, from the very simple to more serious ones such as being drunk, being out of money, adultery or the wife talking too much, etc.

It is worth noting that there existed a custom of Vietnamese women, especially rural women to accept domestic violence. Common reasons to accept violence are to keep the family peaceful, to make a sacrifice for children, or out of shame if others knew about the violence. Therefore, many husbands give themselves the "right" to lecture their wives by violence if they do not obey.

The researchers also addressed one other aspect of violence, which is mental violence. However, in the rural areas where physical domestic violence is common, the local acknowledgement of preventing women from being victims of mental violence is far-away.

Domestic violence is one of the main reasons for divorce in rural areas in at least the last ten years. And even where the reason given for divorce is another reason, there are still occasions where there are some shadow of domestic violence. The majority of victims are women. Women may stand for domestic violence for years and the decision to divorce comes when they acknowledge their pitiful status and their tolerance comes to an end.

Hong is a young girl born in 1981. She stayed at home doing farming after high school. Similar to other girls in the village, she got married at the age of only 19. Analysis of her marriage produces a list of descriptive factors such as economic hardship, domestic violence, mother and daughter in law conflicts, adultery, separation, and complicated divorce process.

Hong said that she and her husband had had a happy courtship. Their parents organized a traditional wedding for them. Two years after the wedding, they were happy. However, her husband, Thanh, was lazy and liked gambling and drinking. Hong also suspected him of having relationship with another other woman during the marriage. Subsequently, they often had conflicts and concentrated less on economic development and the family situation was worse.

….After that, my husband migrated to Hanoi to earn for living. I stayed at home with the family- in- law. My mother-in-law and I started to have an increased level of conflict. I was cursed with her insult and maltreatment. At the worst time, she came to my private room to take my belongings to throw them away; my clothing was dragged to the corner of the garden to burn them all. I saw this behavior as being so rude. When my husband came back home, he listened to her side of the story so he did not only prevent the conflict but also beat me. He had no way and will to solve the problem but left home again. I brought my daughter back to my parents home. We broke-up from that point in time, no care, no relation, nothing. My husband sometimes came back home to visit his mother but he never showed up to visit our daughter. He never came to my parents' to pick up me and the kid. He never stopped by the kindergarten to see the kid when he was passing by. After that, he brought some new girls home and lived as husband and wife (Hong, born in 1981, farmer, Binh Luc district, Hanam province).

4. Mass organization and power subjects: conciliators and family stability protectors

In the rural areas, local governments and social organizations play significant roles in the individual divorce decision through their intervention of reconciliation and through receiving and preparation of the divorce profile at the commune level. When the divorce application is sent to the commune people's committee, the judicial official would process administrative procedures, starting with reconciliation. The purpose of the government conciliators is to consult with the couple to see if they will cancel the divorce request and reconcile to live happily together again regardless of faults. They would give advice to both the plaintiff and the defendant. For the spouse who has been assigned the fault for the divorce, it is advised to fix their behaviors, to give up bad behaviors and habits, to apologise, etc. For the other spouse, normally women, it is advised to forgive, and to make a sacrifice for the well-being and happiness of children.

Reconciliation is the first strong step of local government and social organizations to intervene in the individual divorce decision. There are two levels of reconciliation, the village and the commune level. At the village level, the village authorities including the representatives of the village women union, the village leader, and the village judiciary visit the couple at their home to encourage them to change their mind. A successful reconciliation case is regarded as one achievement of the unit for the year. In fact, this counseling service brings specific remarkable results,

such as the husbands stop beating wives, or the wives withdraw the divorce application. That means both of them do not want to obtain a divorce. However, if the couples' lives after reconciliation are happy constitute a different aspect.

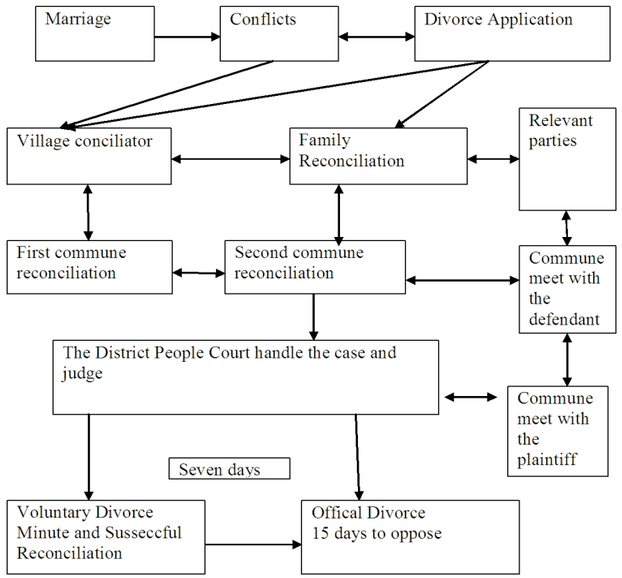
When the village reconciliation is unsuccessful, which means it is not possible to meet the couple or the couple insists on divorce, the commune conciliators would take over. There are several procedures in this level of reconciliation. First, the reconciling commission includes one leader of the commune people's committee, and the commune judicial official to meet the plaintiff and the defendant separately to listen to their opinions and expectations. After these two private meetings, there is a general meeting held with the participation of the couple, people committee representatives, the women union leader, the judicial official and other relevant mass organization representatives. In this meeting, the commune officials would again listen to the plaintiff's divorce application and his/her current opinions. The defendant then would also present his/her points of view and expectations. Following this, there is an open discussion. There are advice, arguments and suggestions aiming at the couple reunification. The reason is that it is not encouraged and not common for an individual to divorce. The expectations for women's sacrifices are high, which prevent many divorces.

There are two possible options after these meetings. First, the couple forgives each other and cancels the divorce request. The divorce application then will be suspended at the commune level. Secondly, one or two parties insist on obtaining a divorce and have no will to reunite. Thus the commune government would produce an explanation report and send the divorce profiles including the divorce application, meeting minutes, and the case report to the district people court. The district people court has the competence to judge the divorce.

It is worth noting that, meetings between the local authorities and the couples are noted as minutes with signatures of relevant parties. The process from receiving the divorce application form, reconciliation and reporting to the district level ranges from 2-6 months depending on how complicated the case is.

A divorce judgement includes several procedures: divorce application receipt, reconciliation, judgement, and divorce decision. During the process, the case would be suspended if the plaintiff withdraws the application. The divorce judge court is open 7 days after the divorce agreement signed between the two parties. The divorce court consists of the judge, the court secretary, people jurymen and two parties. After the judge issues the divorce decision which mentions clearly about the arrangements for children, housing and property, subsidy etc, the couple is given 15 days to reconsider. During those 15 days, either of the two parties have the right to oppose the decision in terms of childcare, subsidy, and property division. After that, the divorce comes into effect and the couple officially dissolute. On average, the total time for a divorce case at the district level ranges from 2-5 months. In order to divorce, the couple has to spend months to follow the process. The time is even longer if one of two parties is missing or do not cooperate with the divorce.

Chart 1. Divorce Procedure



Thus there are significant percentages of couples who cancel the divorce application form as the result of the long process listening to advices of clan, family and social organization. The process of the divorce judgement also provides the couple with great opportunities to receive coun-

seling from experts and the government, since almost all couples do not think about or receive marital counseling during their marriage, especially in the rural and mountainous areas, where the social and legal awareness is very limited. Thanks to the counseling and advice of the local authorities, many individuals, for instance, bad husbands are aware of their faults, willing to repair and ask for forgiveness of the spouse.

> "The commune conciliators reconciled but I did not agree. I made the decision because I could not stand anymore. I was so tired of his manner. (The commune) invited to reconcile for four and five times but he continued (adultery) so I decided. I advised him but made no sense, they (commune conciliators) advised him but meaninglessly. I just had the final way to divorce him. I accepted this" (Kim, born 1966, farmer)

5. Divorce: Not an easy process

Divorce is not an easy and quick procedure. It is also not a fast or light decision for an individual. Divorce is a long procedure with many steps. During the divorce application, the spouse has months to experience, to consider, and to change their mind. They have more than one opportunity to examine their feelings, to assess the situation and to consult with government officials through different levels of marriage reconciliation and counseling. The time is even long enough for the defendant to fix their faults to change the spouse's mind if they are willing to. The divorce application process is considered as the final opportunity for the individuals and couples to reexamine their situation and decision.

> When Ms. Hong realized that her spousal relationship could not be healed, in August 2004, she applied for divorce: "I gave him [husband] the divorce application to sign for five times but he intentionally evaded signing". After receiving her divorce application, the district people court informed her to handle the case in the divorce court and convened for her husband several times but he was always absent without reasons. Thus, the court had to give the announcement letter to his mother. The court also posted the court notice of the case at the Commune People Committee. His mother confirmed that she had given the court notice to him but he said: "That is Hong's business with the court" and he pretended not to receive any announcement from the court. This means the court officials could not be able to listen to his words and process the reconciliation.
>
> Finally, the court issued the divorce without him because "the conflict is severe and the marital cohabitation has ended for a long time. The purpose of the marriage is broken"Ms Hong, born in1981, farmer)

A summary of key events of Hong's marriage and divorce

> 28/8/2000: Marriage
>
> 26/4/2001: Delivery a daughter
>
> 7/2002: Thanh, the husband, moved out

> 8/2002: Hong came back to her parent's
>
> 2/1/2004: Separation
>
> 28/8/2004: Divorce request
>
> 15/9/2004: The People Committee invited Hong to meet
>
> 16/9/2004: The People Committee met with Hong
>
> 20/9/2004: The first meeting invitation letter sent to Thanh
>
> 24/9/2004: The second invitation letter sent to Thanh
>
> 10/10/2004: Hong reclaimed for divorce
>
> 13/10/2004: The commune People Committee reported the case to the district court
>
> 3/2005: Hong requested the annoucement of missing case to her husband
>
> 16/3/2005: Minute to verify Thanh was absent in the commune
>
> 8/2005: Hong met with her husband to ask for reunification but being refused
>
> 19/8/2005: Divorce Request
>
> 22 và 29/8/2005: Hong's Declaration
>
> 11/10/2005: Hong's declared supplementation
>
> 13/10/2005: Commune reconciliation minute
>
> 22/8/2005: The district court and people committee informed Thanh's family about Hong's claim for divorce, first time
>
> 5/9/2005: The district court and people committee informed Thanh's family about Hong's claim for divorce, second time
>
> 18/11/2005:The District People Committee judged the divorce case with Thanh's absence

This case is a typical example for the irresponsibility and non-cooperation of the husband during marriage and divorce. He didnot live with his family, was not responsible for family chores, and was not willing to heal the family break-up. He also didnot want to free his wife to let her start a new life. Hong must spend almost three years to accomplish the divorce procedure while her actual marriage has been dissolved for these years.

In a decision to issue the divorce agreement of the District People Court, there are several sections: 1. To admit the divorce agreement; 2) To admit the agreement of the interested parties in terms of children division, agricultural land, common properties, private properties, the legal costs in the first instance.

6. The collective decision for divorce: The participation of family and clan

The family and clan are vital channels for the individuals to consult with before marriage, in the marriage and after marriage. Rural people often get married with those who reside closely in the village. They may live in the same village, commune or district. The couple's families may know each other and they may be neighbors. In addition, the neighbor relationships are said to be closer in rural areas because the way of life is more traditional. Therefore, rural people know neighbor's conditions and the domestic relationship quite well. Any special events in the villagers' lives can be known, shared, consulted on and intervened on by the other residents. Married women not only identify themselves with the family-in-law but also maintain the close relationship with their biological families. The crucial decisions such as marriage, bearing and rearing children, and even divorce can be seen as a collective decision. Especially, when women experience problems in their marriage, such as economic hardship, domestic violence, adultery, or conflicts with the family- in- law, they would seek advice, encouragement, and help from their biological parents and siblings.

Divorce is an important decision which directly affects individual life. Thus, the divorce decision often receives a common agreement from the family and clan.

> My parents supported me a lots, especially my mental issues. They asked me to travel for a period of time to relax. My siblings helped taking care of children when I was too stressful (Dao, born in 1973, divorce in 2005, educational level 7/10)

The individual divorce decision has the assertive mark of the patriarchal heritage and collective decision. When an individual wants a divorce, a family meeting, or even a clan meeting would be held in some forms. The chair would be the old man who is the head of the clan or family. There would be several points of view and suggestions. They would seriously assess the real situation of the marriage, current problems and the possibility of reconciliation. It is worth noting that the alliance's attitudes toward their family members significantly affect the other side family's decisions. Especially, for women, the family meeting also figures out issues of childcare, and family member's responsibility to support them after divorce. This is because if divorce happens, women's family would support them and their children if any.

> When she was pregnant the youngest son, her mother in law and husband beat her and cast out of the house. She came back to my home. I asked her to come back to her husband's but they insisted on dismissing her. The youngest son was born here. He was 10 years old but could not read nor write though he attended the 1st class for 4 years. He is now staying at home helping us. I am very sorrowful since my husband passed away very early and my daughter took the wrong step. Her husband left her and she came back to stay with me which makes my life strenuous. I am making the soybean sauce to feed her and two grandchildren (Mother of Ms. Hien).

7. Traditional factors of divorce decision

However, after each divorce case with visible, measurable and direct factors may hide a complex of influential factors. Those factors may not be the final and direct causes leading to the divorce but can contribute to conflict and ulitimately to separation and divorce. These issues can create conflicts and undermine the marriage's happiness and stability. These factors may root from individual characteristics and emotions such as behavior, cultural background; may be formed within family background and childhood; or may rise from objective and subjective factors during mate selection, and following cohabitation.

Cohabitation

According to traditional custom in Vietnam, after marriage, women would live with husband's family. This pattern of living arrangement is currently significant in rural areas. The newlywed couple live with the husband's parents, at least in the first year of marriage. Sons are often the inheritor of the family while daughters are often thought of as outsiders. Therefore, if the husband's family has only one son, the couple cohabitate with the parent in law permanently. If the husband's family has more than one son/one child, it is common that the eldest or the youngest son would live with the parents. The other son/child may be fiscally supported to purchase a new land or a new house or may be assigned the different second land. In some more difficult cases, the parents cannot afford a private house and land for all sons, so they would live in the same roof.

Each couple is assigned a small room of 10-15m2 and shares a kitchen, bathroom, and living room with the big family including the husband's parents and siblings. There are two options for co-living arrangements. First, they stay with and eating with the whole family. Second, they stay in the same house, eat separately and are assigned their own agricultural land as given for rural citizens. In divorces with domestic violence and conflicts causes, co-living arrangement seems to be closely relevant.

> We lived with my parents. My parents were always expressing their responsibility to take care of children and took their own initiative to intervene in all aspects of our marital live.

My wife had no right and power in the family economy as well as daily expenditures. My parents took their initiative to control everything from income to expenditures. We were regarded as two members without initiative and privacy. Even money for her monthly period my wife had to ask from my parents. We even had to hide some money to pay during delivery. In everyday life, if there was a conflict between my parents and wife, I often stood on the side of my parents and reprimanded my wife. My wife then thought that I neglected her. I often told her that if I was not living for her and kids and wanted to break, we would not have such three children. My wife was a hard working woman. Actually the conflicts were small but the point was I did not understand my wife. In 1990, my wife wanted to split from the big family by separating rice harvested from our assigned agricultural land. I did not agree and asked her to do farming with the whole family again. Then we had a big fight. Rightly in the evening, she brought the youngest son to her parents' and came back the next morning with the signed divorce application form. I was so angry and signed without thinking. My parents and hers prevented us from divorce but I was too hurt to reconcile regardless of thinking about her contribution." (Duc, born in 1955)

Mother and daughter-in law relationship

Facilitating the relationship between the daughter-in-law and the family-in-law is directly relevant to the co-living arrangement pattern. It is expected that the relationship is fine and negotiable. However, if living values, personal characteristics, and benefits and etc are different, conflicts may appear. In the rural areas, it is common to talk about the mother and daughter- in- law relationship, and it is also understandable if there are conflicts in this relation. The main reason is that, the mother-in-law would tend to impose their old traditional points of view, lifestyle, standard of value and etc to the daughter-in-law. She may also tend to impose the economic activities, and views on the couple's intimacy to the newwed. In the other words, this constitutes generational conflict and value-benefit conflicts. This conflict in some extent is a direct and indirect cause of couple's conflict and subsequent divorce.

Ms Hien is a thin, slow, and normal-looking women. She spoke of her divorce in a disjointed fashion and not in chronological order. She tends to react slowly and has limited social knowledge and awareness. It is understandable because she never goes out of her village border. She was born, grew up, got married, gave birth to her children and divorced in this village. She is now living with her ninety-year-old mother in the house where she was born.

"After marriage, we lived with our parents-in-law. I did not suit my mother-in-law since she was very frightening and had conflicts with all the neighbors. When my husband and I were dating, she agreed. However, after marriage and living with her, we had conflicts. She often drove me out of the house. We lived separately after two years of marriage but she still controlled everything, even if my husband could be able to be at home with me and my children for the Lunar Year Holiday. I tried to tolerate being maltreated in this way. When I was pregnant with my last child, my husband and mother-in-law beat me and drove me out.

My husband knew I was pregnant then but he still drove me out because he listened to his mother's words. I came back to my mothers' but she first asked me to return. According to traditional customs here, when the daughter gets married, she would belong to husband's family and clan. The parents would never support the daughters to come back home if there are still the ways to negotiate with the husband. My mother said "you are married and you are a member in your husband's family". But I knew she understood the situation because she lived in the same village. At that night, I followed my mother's advice to come back to my husband's house to ask for forgiveness but they kept on driving me away. My husband then applied for divorce. I felt that he did not want to divorce me but his mother asked him to do so" (Hien, female, born 1963, divorce 1999, farmer)

8. Family background influences

Several studies have shown the correlation between childhood history and later family happiness of individuals. This qualitative study examines divorced men and women and in some cases, they reflect their memories of separated family in their childhood and the thoughts of their following marriage stability.

Case studies show that, the parents' unhappy, separated, or divorced situation negatively affects children's psychological development, mate selection, and behaviors in marriage.

When I was about ten or eleven years old, my parents broke up. My mom came back to my maternal grandparents' house. My dad raised four of us but we mostly lived with our paternal grandparents. The reason was that my dad had a little wife who is running business with him. My mom sold green tea when she returned to my mother's village. She often visited us yet not leave us. My mom is good-natured and kind-hearted. If she was beaten or reprimanded by my dad, she never shouted. She was just silent or grumble.

When I witnessed my parents' break-up, I was wondering what my later life will be. It was very sad if my life would have the same situation.

When I was about fourteen and my sister was sixteen, there were many boyfriends coming to my house for courtship. I felt my family was lacking so our boyfriend dating was influential. Other girls in other families had both mom and dad while we had not. I was ashamed of that then. My sister's boyfriend visited us and I felt self-pity that we did not have both mom and dad. That I felt so sorry for that deficiency. I thought carefully and encouraged my dad to persuade my mom come back home so the family would be warm and complete. More importantly, the men who came to date with me and my sisters would not criticize and disparage. (Dao, born in 1973).

9. Mate selection

One common point of many interviewed divorce cases is that, they reported a quick courtship, at the arrangement of the parents lead to limited intimacy and shared from the very beginning of the marriage.

Our marriage is arranged by both families. I was 19 and my husband was 25 then. We did not date. I did not agree but my parents insisted on pushing me to agree. My parents said

that his house was close to mine. The time from the introduction day to the wedding day was only 10 days. (Kim, born in 1966, farmer, Hanam).

At the age of 18 I joined the army. I have never been taught about how to love and find a mate. It's a stigma to talk about marriage and happiness then. Its simply that life required us to have a family and a mate…Knowing each other for a week, I proposed and introduced her to my family. My family agreed. I ever asked her why she wanted to marry me. She said because I was good looking and had a good career. I had no time to think about and selected the girl as I imagined. I just saw that she was clean and looked alright. Her career was easy to move also (Tien, born in 1956)

"We dated for about two months. I did not intend to get married then because I expected to find employment at cities. But my aspiration failed. My wife resided in the same district but a different commune. We met by chance in the village kindergarten. The main cause of my marriage dissolution was careless courtship during mate selection. She had different lifestyle. She did not know housework and childcare. She had a different cultural background with me" (Hung, born in 1963, Binh Luc, Ha Nam).

"Newly knowing, not deep emotion and feelings, but my dad liked his appearance and self expression. My husband was well-spoken so he persuaded my dad absolutely. My dad insisted on asking me to love him. He said the girl has only limited time for mate selection. There were so many men proposing me at the same time, I should selected the one who needed me most, and should not wait for a vague man! My husband knew he was supported by my dad and attacked more strongly. His parents also visited my family constantly to propose marriage to me. Thus within two months both two families decided to wed while I did not fully understand my husband. I was not happy and felt bored all over the time. Even the sexual relationship between us was a duty. I had to please him but actually I did not like. After marriage for a while, we had conflict. We discussed on migrating to Vungtau to earn a living and leaving the baby at home. It was 1995 then. (Dao, born in 1973).

10. Conclusion

This preliminary analysis has shown the direct and indirect causes of individual divorce. It can be said that adultery, domestic violence, economic hardship, drinking, and some lifestyle conflicts in connection with domestic violence are universal causes of rural divorces. The study also shows the participation of mass organization and power subjects in individual divorce. Divorce is not an easy but a long and complicated process with reconciliation, counseling, and intervention of alternative subjects such as family, clan, village and commune authorities and etc. The paper also points out traditional factors involving in divorce such as co-living arrangements, mother and daughter-in law relationship, the vestige of polygyny, and parents' influences in mate selection. They are typical factors of rural divorces in relation to the urban counterparts, where women in particular and individuals in general share more modern living styles and points of view in marriage. This is a starting study for such a very complicated and sensitive topic. More comprehensive analysis and discussions using quantitative data with significant sampling are necessary to better confirm and shed lights to these qualitative findings.■

Seminar: Results from Qualitative Study on Social Impact of Rural Electrification in Hoa Binh Province

On 27 April 2011 in Hanoi, Institute for Family and Gender Studies (IFGS) organized the seminar introducing results from a Qualitative Survey on the Effect of Rural Electrification conducted in two communes of Kim Tien and Binh Thanh in Hoa Binh province. Participants included researchers from IFGS, Institute of Sociology (IOS), Institute of Energy, Department of Energy (Ministry of Industry and Commerce), Institute of Educational Science (Ministry of Education and Training), Institute of Health Strategy and Policy (Ministry of Health), Vietnam Farmers' Union, Vietnam Women's Union… and local officers of two surveyed communes.

On introducing about the survey, Associate Prof., Dr. Nguyen Huu Minh said: in April 2010, a group of researchers from IFGS and IOS conducted qualitative survey in Kim Tien and Binh Thanh communes to provide supplement to quantitative analyses that were done here in 2002, 2005 and 2008. In April 2011, research team came back to these two communes and continued qualitative survey to study changes in the lives of local people after a year in terms of economics, education, health care, cultural life, recreation, support for the poor and gender relations under the influence of electrification. Results from the survey indicate some remarkable things as follows:

- **Electrification has positive influence on economic transformation, increase in income, and improvement of material life of local people**

Electrification reduced labor that local people spent on agricultural activities dramatically. Electric rice plucking and rice husking machines replaced previous time-wasting manual labor work. With availability of electricity, small scale industries have been expanded and developed, some women in Kim Tien have done extra jobs like running variety shop, tailor shop, restaurants, rice husking service, making tofu, running sawing workshops, making toothpicks and weaving bamboo mats, etc. Since electricity was made available, gender relation has also been changed. Women takes less time and effort to do housework and men do not hesitate to do cooking any more.

- **Rural Electrification has brought a lot of benefits for children's study**

There are electric fans for pupils in summer and when all the doors and windows are closed in winter, there are electric lamps for lighting. Lectures are more interesting thanks to the use of CD player, overhead projectors, computers and speakers. A lot of materials have been computerized to make it easier for pupils to study like pictures, video clips related to lectures, community activities and traffic safety…

It is also more convenient for teachers to give lectures and prepare teaching plans with the use of computers. Availability of electricity is very necessary for teachers to teach English and computer skill. At school, computers are connected to internet for teachers to search information for their lectures and the board to deal with management and statistic reports.

- **Electrification has positive influence on people's enjoyment of culture**

With the use of television and radio, people can access plenty of information sources. Programs like the news, economic, cultural, social, scientific and technological, health care programs… give them good conditions to improve their knowledge in all the fields.

Community meetings and meetings of unions can be organized and held conveniently because their schedules are widely announced on public loudspeaker system; and they are held in suitable time during busy harvest as there are not any obstacles of darkness or hot

weather any more. Cultural activities of the youth are more exciting thanks to the use of speakers, amplifier, electricity for decoration, karaoke…

- **Electrification has positive influence on health care for people**

Simple equipment like fan, water pump, lamp and important medical equipment like sterilizing box, spotlight for gynaecological examination… have improved quality of medical examination and treatment of the medical stations, so health care for people has become better and people's trust for the services has improved.

It is also easier to propagandize prevention of diseases and epidemics. Public loudspeaker systems and CDs for propagation have been under operation, which is good for application in general, especially in reproductive health care, population and birth control.

- **Despite progresses, Electrification has not brought all of its effect into play**

Pattern of electricity use is still simple, especially in poor households: 1 or 2 lamps, 1 fan, 1 television set, 1 electric rice cooker (people often have to stop using it due to weak electric supply). Electricity is mainly consumed for daily life of households. Proportion of electricity used for business and production is not high. There has not been breakthrough in expansion of occupational structures in the two communes.

Due to rapid increase in the demand for electricity, systems of electric poles and cables are becoming overloaded. When electricity is available but often cut off, it is difficult for people to do production.

All the participants at the seminar expected that the project would have better resources of human, time and material in order to better clarify influences of electrification and increase the effect of electrification on improving life of rural people.■

Nguyen Duc Tuyen

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