REVIEW

of dissertation for acquiring educational and research degree "Doctor"

Professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences

Doctoral Program "Sociology", Part-time, IPHS-BAS

Topic: Attitudes towards Parenthood in the Focus of Family Policies and the Changing Gender Relationships in the Family (An International Comparative Analysis)

PhD student: Irena Sashova Georgieva

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Elitsa Dimitrova, PhD

By

Prof. Dr. Tatyana Ivanova Kotzeva, appointed as a reviewer of the Scientific Jury by order RD-6-265/23.05.2023 of the Director of IPHS-BAS Prof. Dr of Psychological Science A. Hristova

Brief biographical data of the PhD student

Irena Georgieva was enrolled as a part-time doctoral student in a doctoral program in sociology, IPHS in 2017 and was deducted with the right of defense in 2021. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in journalism and communication sciences from the University of Ludwig and Maximilian of Munich and the University of Vienna (2009) and a master's degree in sociology from the University of Ludwig and Maximilian (2016). He is fluent in German and English. She works with Stata, Endnote and other software products.

General characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation on "Attitudes towards parenthood in the focus of family policies and the changing gender relationships in the family (an international comparative analysis)" has a volume of 207 pages. The content is structured in an introduction, 3 chapters, a conclusion, a description of the contributions and a reference list, including 114 sources in English and German and 28 sources in Bulgarian. The analytical material is presented in 66 figures and 13 tables.

The topicality of the PhD thesis and knowledge of the problem

The topic of the dissertation is within the scope of the most discussed topics in the social sciences, namely the division of household work and raising children between partners in the family in the changing context of social policies, as well as in the context of the dynamics in cultural stereotypes and attitudes towards parenting and gender roles in modern societies. The topic is interdisciplinary in nature and crosses the fields of various scientific disciplines: sociology, including the sociology of the family and sociology of work, studies of welfare states, studies of social, including family policies, gender studies, and socio-demographic studies. The focus of the dissertation is the comparative analysis between Germany and Bulgaria regarding the impact of family policies on attitudes towards parenting, compatibility between work and family, division in domestic work, and satisfaction with family life with emphasis on the roles of fathers. The hypotheses drawn are clearly formulated relevant to the object and subject of the study.

The PhD student knows the main international literature in the above interdisciplinary fields very well. In the first theoretical chapter, she references major authors' publications in the fields of welfare state studies, social and family policies, and work-family life balance/conflict research. The PhD student also presents the Bulgarian authors with their basic research and conclusions. In general, the presentation of other authors' concepts and ideas is systemic and the PhD student expresses her attitude towards the referenced texts in many places.

Research methods

The empirical analysis is based on quantitative data from the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), conducted every 4 years by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). Descriptive statistics (one-dimensional and two-dimensional distributions) as well as linear regression models were applied. In addition, data from NSI, Eurostat and other sources have been used. The processed data is an original contribution of the PhD student and is presented in a very good visual format.

Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and its contributions

The narration in the first chapter *"Theoretical framework of the study"* has a clear and logical structure that starts from the more general theories to the more partial theories and finally ends with the presentation of empirical data from other studies as a verification of some of the theories and as a bridge to the second and third chapters, which are empirical in nature.

The first section discusses basic theoretical concepts and approaches related to the welfare state and its models. Based on the ideas of G. Esping-Andersen, the doctoral student presents basic concepts such as commodification and decommodification, familialism and de-familialism, which explain the different types of connections between the state, the family and the labor market. The three models of the welfare state – liberal, conservative and socio-democratic, which have different degrees of dependence of the individual on the labor market and respectively on the family, are examined. The main characteristics of the conservative type of welfare state in Germany are presented very well: commodified individual goods based on the individual's employment status and family status, a separatist model of division of labor between the sexes, in which the male is a breadwinner and the woman is a housewife, taking the main care of the home. This model also has a modified variant – when the woman works partially or occasionally. The PhD student references the main feminist critiques of Esping-Anderson's theory, which lacks gender relations and gender-based power inequalities. The Bulgarian model of the welfare state is also commented on mostly from the point of view of the division of labor between men and women in the public and private spheres. The PhD student shares the idea of the compromise nature of this model, given the socialist tradition of continuous and ubiquitous paid employment of women, which lasted in the years of the Transition, combined with a traditional division of domestic work by gender.

In a subsequent section, gender neutral theories, most notably that of G. Becker and others, are presented, which explain the division of labour by gender and the decline in fertility with the increased educational and labour capital of women. Gender-sensitive theories that pay attention to gender relationships and, accordingly, power inequalities between men and women as an explanatory tool for the division of labor by gender are also presented.

Special attention in the first chapter is paid to the presentation of concepts and approaches for balance, respectively the conflict between work and family. A successful attempt has been made to summarize the factors that contribute to the balance and those that aggravate the conflict. Factors

for the work-family balance at the micro-, meso- and macro-level are presented, linking the topic to quality of life and job quality. Typologies of balance theories are discussed, with particular attention to satisfaction and overall compatibility assessment as measurement criterion. The systematic and consistent presentation of theories in this section is of a contributory nature and fairly self-evaluated by the PhD student as a contribution.

The one before the last section in the first chapter systematizes empirical results from international and Bulgarian studies, outlining the main trends: dynamics in gender attitudes towards egalitarianism, a discrepancy between attitudes and practices of division of labor, discrepancies in the assessments of male participation made by women and respectively by men themselves, the role of education in assessing gender distribution of labor. The PhD student discusses the phenomenon of "new fathers" in Germany, who are expressive of the active involvement of fathers in household work and child-rearing.

In the second chapter *"The National Contexts of Bulgaria and Germany"* are presented the main trends and characteristics of family policy, the main socio-demographic indicators related to fertility, marriage and divorce, and key indicators of the labor market related to gender equality, as well as key economic indicators. The aim of the comparative analysis is to present the similarities and differences in the national contexts of the two countries as an explanatory key to the empirical results in chapter three.

Family policy is represented by its 3 main instruments: parental leave, paid childcare services and financial transfers, the so-called family benefits. A major overview of the legislative initiatives in the field of family allowances, parental leave and formal childcare in Bulgaria and Germany is made, with a focus on the differences between the West and East of Germany and on the 2007 reform including a mandatory quota for the father in parental leave.

Along with the presentation of the trends in the indicators of fertility, marriage and divorce in both countries, important differences are outlined: in the share of part-time work /on average about 47% for women in Germany and less than 3% in Bulgaria/, in the access and usability of paid child care /e.g. much lower share of child services up to 3 years of age in Bulgaria /. The last section of this chapter summarises data on poverty and social exclusion in different family types in both countries. The trends derived in the national contexts in chapter two correspond to the description of the 2nd and 3rd contributions.

The third chapter *"Comparative analysis between Bulgaria and Germany of attitudes towards parenting, gender relationships in the family and the balance between work and family life"* presents the main results of the analysis of quantitative data from the European Quality of Life Survey (last wave) with a view to proving or rejecting the formulated eight hypotheses. Extremely precisely in tables are presented the main variables included in the analysis, by thematic blocks, by number of respondents and by relative share of answers for the representative samples of both countries. Interesting similarities and differences are analyzed, such as the higher level of conflict testing among Bulgarian respondents and those living in smaller towns and villages. Higher incomes and higher satisfaction with the economic situation in the country and a safer workplace presuppose lower conflict in both countries. The PhD student also looked for explanations for unexpected empirical results, such as that respondents engaged daily in child care experienced less conflict than those who cared for fewer hours. Logistic regressions on the impact of various factors on family satisfaction are also presented, where again economic security as well as children and family with a partner are factors for higher family satisfaction.

The following section analyses the results related to the distribution of work in the family (household and childcare) and in paid employment by gender, as well as depending on other important factors such as age, income, etc. The main difference between the two countries is in terms of the participation of men, which in Germany significantly exceeds that of men in Bulgaria, especially in everyday household activities. Unexpected is the result that Bulgarian men spend more time caring for children than German men. The PhD student is looking for an explanation of these empirical facts as one of the possible is the self-evaluative nature of men's responses, which could differ from that of women. A similar discrepancy in the evaluations of men and women is found in many other studies on this topic. The second significant difference is with regard to the higher share of part-time employment of women in Germany, which contributes to the lower degree of conflict between women's roles.

The last section of chapter three presents the results of the usability and quality of childcare. Again, through a precise analysis of the data, the similarities and differences between the two countries are shown: the higher usability of informal childcare in Bulgaria and formal childcare in Germany, the role of education in the usability of paid childcare and the quality of childcare as a factor for satisfaction with family life.

In general, the analysis in chapter three is done professionally, with an accurate and clear presentation and visualization of the processed data, with possible interpretations of the data and accordingly withholding the limitations of empirical data. The conclusions deduced correspond fully to the 4th, 5th and 6th contributions. The conclusions of the analysis have also practical directions for social policy in Bulgaria, as they show the role of flexible working hours, higher participation of fathers and alternative and quality childcare as resources for the well-being of families and children.

The conclusion section presents concisely the main conclusions and compares them adequately to the validation of the hypotheses. In summary, I fully accept the self-assessment of the scientific contributions in the PhD thesis as expressing the original and independent work of the doctoral student.

Critical comments

I don't have any because the PhD student has reflected my comments from previous discussions. As a recommendation, I would like to recommend her to publish the thesis results in international journals with an impact factor.

Evaluation of the PhD candidate's publications

The PhD student has published 3 author's articles – 2 in a collection of Reports from the National School for PhD students and young researchers in the social sciences and 1 – in Nasselenie review. The publications reflect essential elements of the dissertation. She has participated with presentations and posters in 4 scientific forums. The attached reference for the minimum national requirements for the educational and research degree "Doctor" shows that the doctoral student meets and exceeds the minimum requirements. The thesis abstract reflects the structure of the content and presents the most important theses and conclusions of the conducted research.

CONCLUSION: The dissertation "Attitudes towards parenthood in the focus of family policies and the changing gender relationships in the family (an international comparative analysis)" is a completed research product that shows the professional knowledge and skills of the doctoral student to independently collect, process, summarize and analyze theoretical concepts and

databases by drawing her own original conclusions. I will fully vote for the award to Irena Sashova Georgieva of the educational and research degree "Doctor" in Professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, Doctoral Program "Sociology".

15 June 2023

Sofia