

PROMOTION OF CONSCIOUS PARENTING VIA MEDIA: EVIDENCE FROM RUSSIAN REGIONS

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Abstract

Conscious attitude to parenting, which includes the formation of the child's human capital, must be promoted by state authorities. We believe that this type of parenting insufficiently promotes via official media by Russian regional authorities.

The paper presents a methodology for assessing the degree of promotion of conscious parenting and the results of its application.

Our research showed the insufficient degree of promotion of conscious parenting via media in analyzed Russian region. It is almost three times less than for the semantic units associated with parenting and its quantitative characteristics. We proposed subcategories for the operationalization of the concepts "parenting" and "conscious parenting". Alongside this, we identified semantic units that allow distinguishing analysing phenomena.

Our results show an absence of integrated and regular promotion of conscious parenting at the regional level. A full understanding of promoting categories of parenting will enable the development of strategies to improve it. We believe that promotion of conscious attitude to parenting is a necessary condition for improving the quality of forming human capital in today's Russia.

Key words: conscious parenting, parenting, human capital, promotion, media

JEL Code: J13, J18

Introduction

In any contemporary society, development of national economy and high business activity intimately relate to the formation of human capital and human resource involvement. According to Bittman & Folbre (2004), "capitalist firms and public enterprises tend to take the larger supply of human capital as given". Focusing on commercial efficiency, major consumers of formed human capital promote ideals of carrier development and full-time paid job. The conflict arises between operating margin and long-range investments. People face the same conflict. In the economic sense, it is not profitable to spend time and money on child's

education and child-rearing. Summarizing the research results, Bagirova & Ilves (2017) say that family has a very important role in forming human capital. At the same time, parents pay a large economic penalty: they have to spend their resources on child-rearing instead of personal consumption. Becker (2003) reports parent's behaviour as a choice between investment in children's human capital and their own consumption. The essence of childfree ideology shows that investment in children's human capital has a viable alternative.

In that case, the state should assume the role of mediator and must support and promote parenting. The authors of recent studies have proposed different tools for the promotion of parenting in the state demographic policy. Thus, Ke & Nikolayishvili (2015) suggest social media advertising; Chizhova & Zelevansky (2015) offer advocacy positive image of the family via mass media. Along with that, all named researchers adhere to the position that the mass media has a very important role in forming family values. Such values must correspond to the state demographic policy. In addition, if one of the main concerns of the state and society is the formation of human capital, which includes the all-round development of a child and the formation of knowledge and skills demanded by the society, the state must promote conscious attitude to parenting.

Conscious parenting includes a range of various categories according to different researches. Thus, Kohn (2005) believes that unconditional support, reflection, focus on child's long-term goals, relationship and respect will nurture child's growth in positive ways. Ignatushenko (2011) says that constant parent's control over behaviour and their attitude towards other people, attention to the organization of family life contributes to the comprehensive and harmonious development of children. Rahmqvist & Sarkadi & Wells (2013) refer conscious parenting to philosophies, awareness in parenting, as well as respect and understanding towards their children. These approaches differ from traditional attitude to parenting.

Our research seeks to form subcategories of conscious parenting on the base of previous results. These subcategories must be appropriate for an analysis of the official state media and evaluation of the promotion of conscious parenting in the certain Russian region.

1 Data and Methods

At the beginning of the research, we have held the operationalization of the main concepts to identify subcategories and semantic units for content analysis of the official media. The structural operationalization of the concepts "parenting" and "conscious parenting" is shown

in figure 1. We propose to use quantitative and qualitative approaches to family activity and its results. It reveals the core difference between parenting and conscious parenting.

1.1 Subcategories and semantic units of the concept "parenting"

In quantitative approach parenting in the strict sense is considered as “conception and pregnancy” (Brednikova & Nartova, 2007). Promotion of parenting in this sense means an emphasis on two subcategories: the prestige of a large family and the improvement of material conditions of a parent's life. Material conditions, as created by the state benefits and housing, are important to make a decision for conceiving a child. Actually, Russian authorities distribute a positive image of a large family using social media advertising and trying to ensure favourable material conditions for young parents (Ke & Nikolayishvili, 2015). As can be seen from above, the semantic units that allow characterizing the concept of “parenting” are the following:

- 1) birth rate;
- 2) large families or increase in the number of children;
- 3) maternity allowance;
- 4) maternity (family) capital;
- 5) favourable for birth conditions, especially housing for young families;
- 6) baby boom.

We separate maternity capital from other benefits because nowadays it is one of the most common measures of the state support for families with children in Russia. Maternity (family) capital is granted to families in which after January 1, 2007, the second, third or subsequent children were born or adopted. The basis for the appointment of the maternity capital is the legally registered fact of the birth of the child, regardless the result of child's upbringing or development. The law permits to use the non-cash means for one of the following directions: the improvement of housing, education of children, a formation of a funded part of woman's labour pension. According to official data of the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation, mothers directed maternity capital to an improvement of housing conditions, rather than to invest in the children's human capital or compensate the mother's pension, in 91.38% of cases. That is why we attribute this semantic unit to quantitative characteristics of parenting.

In this subchapter, we have briefly analyzed parenting in a traditional sense. In the next subchapter, we consider conscious parenting in detail.

1.2 Subcategories and semantic units of the concept "conscious parenting"

On the base of previous results in studying conscious parenting, we propose the following definition of this concept. It is an expedient and conscious use of the parental asset while bearing, giving birth, educating, ensuring the satisfaction of primary needs, and creating the conditions for the life of a child in society. Child's human capital formation is a result of this activity. In turn, under the parent asset, we mean a set of parental abilities or capital and parental opportunities that are in parent's availability and in fact used by parents in the process of parenting.

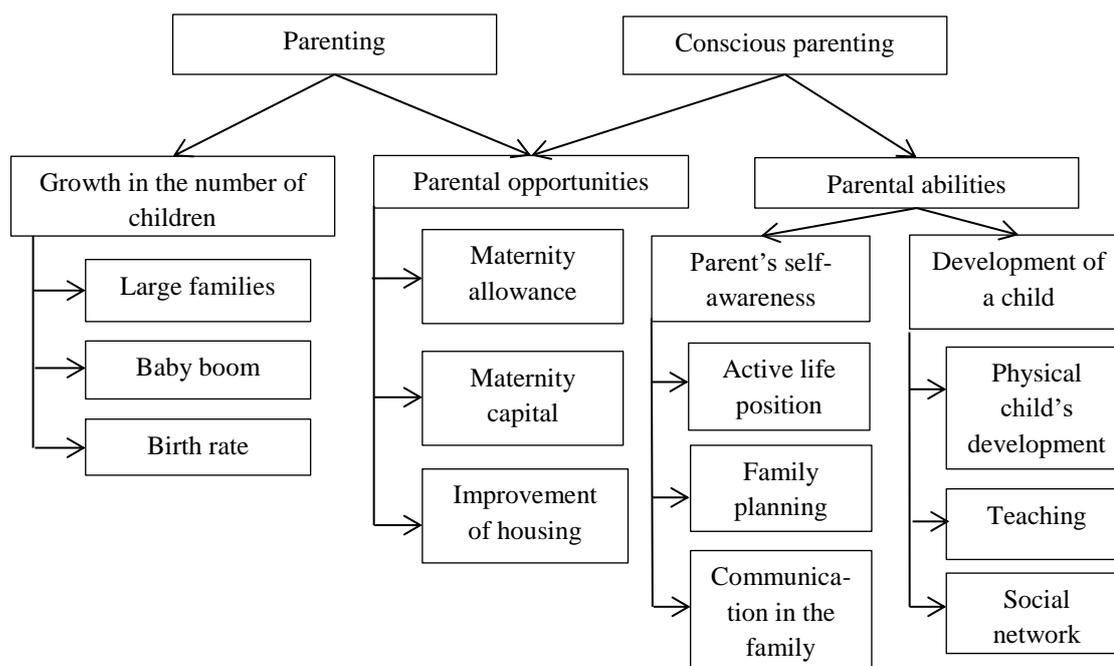
Parental opportunities represent the material side of parenting. It is both social and economic conditions of a parent's life (level of income, housing conditions, surroundings, etc.). This concept is closely correlated with the conceptual framework of Becker. The level of parental opportunities affects the amount of human capital (Becker, 2003).

However, it is impossible to deny the influence of parental abilities (parent's human capital) on the formation of the human capital of children. Parental abilities are inherited from birth and acquired in the course of their life skills, knowledge and qualities, which parents use in the process of parenting.

Thus, the basis of conscious parenting includes external and internal elements, in particular, parental abilities and opportunities. Then, all things considered above, parental opportunities relate to parenting in the strict sense. Instead, parental abilities are just the fundamental component of conscious parenting. Promotion of conscious parenting in this sense means an emphasis on two subcategories: parent's self-awareness, growth and comprehensive, harmonious development of a child. As can be seen from above, the semantic units that allow characterizing the concept of "conscious parenting" are the following:

- 1) active life position of the parent, healthy lifestyle;
- 2) careful attitude to the family, communication in the family;
- 3) family planning, preparation for childbirth;
- 4) conscious approach to the physical care and development of the child (vaccinations, feeding, cold hardening, etc.);
- 5) influence on child's space (ecology, social network, information environment, etc.);
- 6) conscious approach to teaching and upbringing (own example, conscious choice of training programs, etc.).

Fig. 1: Structural operationalization of the concepts "parenting" and "conscious parenting"



Source: Developed by author

As a matter of practice, we have tested the proposed methods and used these semantic units to monitor the media. The object of the study was the materials of the regional official newspaper “Oblastnaya Gazeta” for 2014 and for 2017. “Oblastnaya Gazeta” is a daily regional social and political newspaper with a circulation of more than 77,000 copies. The frequency of the exit is five times a week (from Tuesday to Saturday), the format is A2, and the volume is 4-8 pages. There were 243 issues of the newspaper in 2014 and 245 issues in 2017. Its founders are the authorities of the Sverdlovsk region: the Governor and the Legislative Assembly. The newspaper also has an official website with the electronic version of the newspaper and official groups in social networks.

2 Results

The results of analysis of the promotion of parenting and conscious parenting in 2014 and 2017 are presented in table 1 and in table 2 correspondingly.

Tab. 1: Results of analysis of the promotion of parenting and conscious parenting via Russian regional media in 2014

| Category | Semantic unit | Absolute frequency of mention (number) | Relative frequency of mention (percentage) |
|----------|---------------|--|--|
|----------|---------------|--|--|

| | | of times) | by category | in general |
|-----------------------|--|-----------|-------------|------------|
| 1 Conscious parenting | 001 active life position of the parent | 13 | 4.24 | 0.99 |
| | 002 communication in the family | 36 | 11.73 | 2.73 |
| | 003 family planning | 33 | 10.75 | 2.50 |
| | 004 physical child's development | 51 | 16.61 | 3.87 |
| | 005 teaching | 100 | 32.57 | 7.59 |
| | 006 social network | 74 | 24.10 | 5.62 |
| Subtotal: | | 307 | 100.00 | 23.29 |
| 2 Parenting | 007 birth rate | 93 | 9.2 | 7.06 |
| | 008 large families | 186 | 18.4 | 14.11 |
| | 009 baby boom | 4 | 0.4 | 0.30 |
| | 010 maternity allowance | 248 | 24.53 | 18.82 |
| | 011 maternity capital | 174 | 17.21 | 13.20 |
| | 012 improvement of housing | 306 | 30.27 | 23.22 |
| Subtotal: | | 1011 | 100.00 | 76.71 |
| Total: | | 1318 | | 100.00 |

Source: Developed by authors

Thus, in 2014, the degree of promotion of conscious parenting via media in analyzed Russian region was almost three times less than the degree of promotion of parenting. In brief, the semantic units of conscious parenting were mentioned in the following context:

1. Active life position of parents was mentioned along with parent's participation in activities and organisations that dedicated to the family.
2. Communication in the family was related to conflicts between parents and children.
3. Family planning was considered in the context of the existing medicine possibilities.
4. A lot of articles and notes were devoted to the physical health of children and youth, but there was practically no direct connection with the family.
5. Half of the mentions about the development of the child was related to education by example when the child follows the example of parents in choosing its profession.
6. Children's contacts were considered in the context of various crimes and offences under influence of peers and the Internet.

At the same time, at the regional level, the discussion about parenting in 2014 revolved around two themes: large families and assistance to socially unprotected orphans.

Tab. 2: Results of analysis of the promotion of parenting and conscious parenting via Russian regional media in 2017

| Category | Semantic unit | Absolute frequency of mention (number of times) | Relative frequency of mention (percentage) | |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|------------|
| | | | by category | in general |
| 1 Conscious parenting | 001 active life position of the parent | 23 | 9.02 | 4.69 |
| | 002 communication in the family | 31 | 12.16 | 6.33 |
| | 003 family planning | 28 | 10.98 | 5.71 |
| | 004 physical child's development | 35 | 13.73 | 7.14 |
| | 005 teaching | 106 | 41.57 | 21.63 |
| | 006 social network | 32 | 12.55 | 6.53 |
| Subtotal: | | 255 | 100.00 | 52.04 |
| 2 Parenting | 007 birth rate | 48 | 20.43 | 9.80 |
| | 008 large families | 68 | 28.94 | 13.88 |
| | 009 baby boom | 3 | 1.28 | 0.61 |
| | 010 maternity allowance | 27 | 11.49 | 5.51 |
| | 011 maternity capital | 65 | 27.66 | 13.27 |
| | 012 improvement of housing | 24 | 10.21 | 4.90 |
| Subtotal: | | 235 | 100.00 | 47.96 |
| Total: | | 490 | | 100.00 |

Source: Developed by authors

Accordingly, in 2017, the degree of promotion of conscious parenting via media in analyzed Russian region was almost the same as the degree of promotion of parenting. In brief, the semantic units of conscious parenting were mentioned in the following context:

1. Active life position was related to parent's self-awareness, parent's hobby.
2. Communication in the family was mentioned along with building mutual understanding in families.
3. Family planning and preparation for childbirth were considered in the context of the modern reproductive technologies.
4. The physical health of children was mentioned along with prevention of diseases, vaccinations, participation in sports competitions.

5. Intellectual development of the child was related to high study results and additional education (chess, robotics, finance).

6. Conflicts between parents and teachers influence child's space.

Compared to 2014, the relative frequency of mention the semantic unites of conscious parenting increased in 2017 (from 23.29% to 52.04 %). In general, the context became more positive. At the same time, in 2017 the total absolute frequency of mention the semantic unites of both parenting and conscious parenting decreased more than twofold. In 2017 the total absolute frequency of mention the semantic unites of conscious parenting decreased by 16.94% (from 307 to 255). Despite the improvement in relative indicators, we are forced to recognize an insufficient degree of promotion of conscious parenting via media in analyzed Russian region.

3 Discussion

The results of our analysis indicate a general decrease in the degree of promotion of conscious parenting, as well as parenting, via official regional media in 2017 as compared to 2014. The thematic page "Family" that had appeared in 2016 was presented only in 8 of 245 issues in 2017 (that is 3.27% of issues). At the same time, one of these pages was completely devoted to advertising.

Our research shows that nowadays promotion is insufficiently used as an instrument of the state demographic policy in Russia. These results are important in the context of declining birth rates in Russia. It will continue because of the expanding tendency to postpone birth. However, the most important reason for the decline in the birth rate is that underpopulation of the 1990s has achieved reproductive age. That is why the promotion of conscious parenting is critical. At the same time, it is important to assess the effectiveness of the state demographic policy in Russia. One of its tasks is to strengthen the family institution, the revival and preservation of the spiritual and moral traditions of family relations that includes:

- 1) Development of a system of counselling and psychological support for the family in order to create a favourable intra-family climate;
- 2) Promotion of large family values;
- 3) Set of measures to further reduce the number of premature abortions;
- 4) Increasing parental obligations to ensure an adequate standard of living and development of the child;
- 5) Development of the institution of children's rights in Russia.

Some modern researchers revealed that being a parent is the core category for parents to look for information in media (Walker, 2012). At the same time, researchers believe that media must not overestimate parent's role in child's especially early development (Lee & Lowe & Macvarish, 2015) and must also consider "the contribution of genetic or wider societal factors" (Joffe & O'Connor, 2012). In further research, it is necessary to take into account previous results in order to promote conscious parenting effectively and consistently.

Conclusion

Our results show an absence of integrated and regular promotion of conscious parenting at the regional level. We consider promising areas for further research in this field to include identifying the image of parenting in Russian federal media; analysing its accord with the family policy of Russia; studying the influence of such image of parenting on the birth rate and child's human capital. A full understanding of promoting categories of parenting will enable the development of strategies to improve it. Materials of the official media should correspond to the current family policy. We believe that promotion of conscious attitude to parenting is a necessary condition for improving the quality of forming human capital in today's Russia.

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