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**STATE MANAGEMENT ON  
SEX COMPOSITION AT BIRTH IN VIETNAM**

**Major: Public management**

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ABSTRACT ON DOCTORAL DISSERTATION OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Rationale

The population constitutes the foundation, and is the goals and motivation for sustainable development. Among demographic elements, sex composition at birth plays an important role in population and socio-economic development. Therefore, nations should take the initiative to regulate this issue to achieve the goal of sustainable development. As a law of population transition, Vietnam has been experiencing demographic transition since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many problems are emerging, including sex imbalance at birth with the sex ratio at birth (SRB) being higher than the natural balance. Although sex imbalance at birth came later in Vietnam than it did in other nations, the imbalance rate is higher, and growing and spreading more rapidly. It tends to become a more complicated phenomenon. Vietnam has enacted and enforced some policies as countermeasures to this problem. However, practical experience shows that state intervention has not acted to serve as a realistic solution to the problem due to loose state management and lack of resources. In reality, a relatively large number of research works have been geared towards addressing this problem but virtually none of them have made a comprehensive approach to it from the perspective of state management. Driven by the desire to find out solutions to improving state management in order to control and gradually alleviate the disproportion in sex composition at birth in Vietnam to bring it back to the natural balance, the author has opted for the topic “*State management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam*” for the doctoral research.

## 2. Research objectives and tasks

2.1. *Research objectives*: The research is aimed to build fundamental scientific arguments in theoretical and practical terms to help improve state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam.

2.2. *Research tasks*: To provide an overview of relevant research; To classify and define the theoretical basis of state management on sex composition at birth, and to conduct analysis to learn other nations’best practices in dealing with sex imbalance at birth by interventionist actions; To conduct analysis on the reality of sex composition at birth and the reality of state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam; To raise the Party’s guidelines and the State’s directions relevant to sex composition at birth in Vietnam and to propose some solutions

to further improvement of state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam at present and in the coming time.

### **3. Research object and scope**

*3.1. Research object:* The dissertation conducts research into practice of state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam.

*3.2. Research scope:* In terms of content, the research covers some issues of state management on sex composition at birth; in temporal terms, the research is focused on the development of the disproportion in sex composition at birth in Vietnam as well as on the influence and intervention the state has exerted as of 2009. However, some data prior to 2009 are also used in analysis and evaluation; in spatial terms, the research is conducted into state management on sex composition at birth which occurs within the territory of Vietnam.

### **4. Research questions and hypotheses**

#### *4.1. Research questions*

- What should state management on sex composition at birth be theoretically based?
- How has the movement in sex composition at birth in Vietnam (by SRB) developed since the emergence of unusual disproportion?
- What interventionist actions has the State of Vietnam taken to regulate sex composition at birth?
- What determinants have effects on state management on sex composition at birth?
- What results have been achieved through state intervention in sex composition at birth?

What shortcomings still exist?

- What should the state do for better management to bring sex composition at birth to its natural balance?

#### *4.2. Research hypotheses*

- Although sex imbalance at birth came later in Vietnam than it did in other nations, the imbalance rate is higher with rapid growth and wide spread. It has its own characteristics and is complicated.

- The Government of Vietnam has issued and enforced several intervention policies to reduce sex imbalance at birth and gained some initial results. However, many shortcomings are still observed. If state management is conducted in such a way that is relevant to socio-

economic contexts of particular regions and if the authority commits strict management and pay more attention, sex composition at birth will certainly be brought back to the natural balance.

## **5. Research methodology and methods**

### *5.1. Research methodology*

### *5.2. Research methods*

The research is conducted, using a combination of various research methods, specifically: Retrospective study; secondary statistical treatment and analysis; practical research method made possible through sociological survey (quantitative surveys through questionnaires and qualitative surveys through group discussions and in-depth interviews); comparison and matching method; specialist consultation method; information and data processing.

## **6. New contributions**

The dissertation comes out as a result of scientific research made independently by the author. It offers following new contributions:

It has systematized and developed a theoretical basis for state management on sex composition at birth, defined the rationale for state management on sex composition at birth, and raised the academic concept of state management on sex composition at birth and determinants that have effects on state management on sex composition at birth; It has helped build practical arguments based on best practices learned from some nations in the handling of sex imbalance at birth; It has raised some viewpoints relevant to state management on sex composition at birth as a gradual step towards reducing the sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam at present and in the coming time.

The research has provided an overview of movement in sex composition at birth and characteristics of such changes. It has conducted an analysis on and judged the reality of state management on sex composition at birth. Incorporating international best practices, the research has produced verified and grounded judgment and evaluation on state management on sex imbalance at birth at present, and proposed some solutions which are relevant to the reality and context of Vietnam at present and in the coming time.

## **7. Significance of the dissertation**

The dissertation has added more profound concepts to state management on demographic matters and sex composition at birth; it has analyzed the reality of state management on demographic matters and sex composition at birth in Vietnam today to point out the achievements and limitations and to define both subjective and objective causes which are significant to the control of sex imbalance at birth to bring the sex composition at birth to the natural balance; the research findings will serve as useful reference materials for managers and policy makers in the control of sex composition at birth. The research findings can be used for research and training of state management in general and foundational study of state management of social affairs.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

In addition to its introduction, conclusion, list of references and annexes, the dissertation “State management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam” is structured into four chapters:

- Chapter 1. Literature review
- Chapter 2. Scientific bases of state management on sex composition at birth
- Chapter 3. Reality of state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam
- Chapter 4. Viewpoints and solutions to the improvement of state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam

### **Chapter 1**

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

##### **1.1. Domestic and international research relevant to the theme**

Research works relevant to population and sex composition at birth have been conducted by various domestic and international individuals and organizations. The said research works have been published in various forms. They are categorized into following groups:

- Theoretical research into gender, demographic composition by sex, SRB and determinants.
- Research into the reality, causes and consequences of sex imbalance at birth
- Research conducted from the perspectives of gender and family
- Research works that recommend solutions to reducing sex imbalance at birth

##### **1.2. Overview of relevant research findings and issues to be further studied**

###### ***1.2.1. Overview of relevant research findings***

The aforesaid research works have virtually addressed the following issues:

They have provided relevant framework theories as foundations for studies of sex imbalance at birth; they have focused on the reality and development of sex imbalance at birth (expressed through movement in SRB); they have conducted analysis to find out the underlying and precipitating causes that lead to sex imbalance at birth; they have analyzed long-term social impacts that results from disproportioned SRB; they have, from certain perspectives, proposed interventions to prevent accelerating sex imbalance at birth to bring it back to the natural balance.

### ***1.2.2. Issues to be further studied***

Although sex imbalance at birth has emerged and spread in many Asian countries and many domestic and international research works have attempted to address this problem and gained achievements as said above, the said research works have mainly focused their analysis on the development trend and determinants that have direct effects on the increasing SRB without making a comprehensive approach from the perspective of state management. The dissertation, therefore, studies further the following issues:

*Firstly*, to define the theoretical basis of state management on sex composition at birth:

- (1) To define the role and responsibility of the state in addressing sex imbalance at birth
- (2) Underpinning instrumental concepts on state management and determinants that affect state management on sex composition at birth;

*Secondly*, to review and analyze the reality and the trend of sex imbalance at birth, and to study its causes from socio-economic, environmental, technological and managerial perspectives in the specific context of Vietnam, whereby finding out appropriate solutions;

*Thirdly*, to study practices of nations with sex imbalance at birth or sex imbalance or their successful stories in retrieving the natural sex balance at birth, whereby learning lessons for Vietnam.

*Fourthly*, to recommend solutions to improving state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam.

## Chapter 2

### SCIENTIFIC BASES OF STATE MANAGEMENT ON SEX COMPOSITION AT BIRTH

#### 2.1. Basic concepts

In this section, instrumental concepts that serve to form research foundation are raised:

*First*, population and sex composition at birth.

*Population* is the congregation of people living in a nation, a region, an economic territory or an administrative unit, including the size, composition, distribution and quality of population at a given point of time. *Demographic composition* is one aspect of population, formed under the effect of movement in birth rates, death rate and migration. *Sex composition* is the division of the population into two sexes: male and female. *Sex composition at birth* is the ratio of male to female live births. Sex composition at birth will determine the sex composition of the population. Sex composition will vary by age, by space (between countries, between urban and rural areas) and is determined by many factors. Similarly, sex composition at birth is determined by various factors. *Sex ratio* is a basic indicator used to measure the sex composition of the population and defined as the *number of males per 100 females in the population*. Sex ratio is used for calculations in all age groups, including birth. It may vary from one region/country to the next and from time to time. *Sex ratio at birth reflects the sex composition at birth* and is defined as “the number of male live births per 100 female live births”. In virtually all countries, without human deliberate interference, normal SRB will range between 103 and 107 male live births per 100 female live births. That manifests the *natural balance of sex composition at birth according to natural reproductive law*. The gap in the numbers of male and female can only be attributed to the natural selection in the human society. The natural SRB is widely used as a basis for measure of disproportioned sex ratio. Sex balance at birth occurs when the natural SRB, which range between 103 and 107 male live births per 100 female live births, is achieved. Sex imbalance at birth occurs when the number of male live births in a nation or a region or a province rises beyond the natural level as per 100 female live births within a given time period, usually 1 year. Considering changes of sex composition at birth by studying changes of SRB, researchers assume that SRB is determined by the following factors: *Demographic factors; Socio-economic factors; Institutional factors*



*relevant to state policies; Factors relevant to technique- technology and market; Diagnostic technology/technique of fetal sex screening.* The research into and management of sex composition at birth assume theoretical and practical significance. Sex composition at birth determines, to a great extent, the sex composition of the population, whereby affecting many aspects of socio-economic development. In case the natural sex composition at birth is broken, not only prospect demographic development but also many social aspects will be affected. Therefore, it is the duty of the entire society, the State and every individual to maintain the natural level for sex composition at birth.

*Secondly, concept of state management on sex composition at birth.*

Objects of state management on demographic matters are the process, size, composition, distribution and quality of the population. Therefore, state management on sex composition at birth is a constituent of state management on demographic matters.

*State management on sex composition at birth is the organized and purpose-oriented process of intervention, reflecting power of the competent state authority, affecting population-reproductive health perception and behavior of individuals and organizations, aiming to achieve balanced sex composition at birth determined by the natural law of human reproduction.*

State management on sex composition at birth is aimed *to keep the sex composition at birth at the natural level or to keep SRB at the natural level according to the natural reproductive law (ranging between 103 and 107 male live births per 100 female live births).* Reducing sex imbalance at birth as a step to bring it back to the natural level is a transitional task of state management on sex composition at birth.

Subjects of state management on sex composition at birth are described as follows: the Ministry of Health and People's Committees at all levels assume state management on sex composition at birth; the General Department of Population & Family planning functions as an advisory body to the Minister of Health in the field of state management on sex composition at birth; ministries and ministerial level agencies, within their scope of duties and powers, are responsible for enforcing state management on sex composition at birth as designated by the Government.

Objects of state management on sex composition at birth are the perception and behavior relevant to population - reproductive health and the relation of individuals and organizations in the society.

State management on sex composition at birth is a constituent of state management on demographic matters, and therefore, assumes all features and principles of state management on demographic matters.

## **2.2. Rationale for state management on sex composition at birth**

Management of sex composition and enforcement of population policies are essential for all nations in order to improve the people's living conditions, to regulate and maintain the reproductive process at a rational rate, and to keep the population growing at a rate synchronous with material production and socio-economic development. That necessity is demonstrated in the following points: (1) The significance of population and sex composition at birth in socio-economic development; (2) The State's guide of the goals of sex composition at birth; (3) Providing a legal framework for organizations and launching intervention actions to ensure the balance of sex composition at birth; (4) Providing support and mobilizing resources to achieve the goals of sex composition at birth.

## **2.3. Contents of state management on sex composition at birth**

State management on demographic matters encompasses state management on sex composition at birth, including:

*2.3.1. Building, issuing and directing the implementation of intervention strategies, plans, and programs to ensure the balance of sex composition at birth*

*2.3.2. Building, issuing and organizing the implementation of institutions and policies relevant to sex composition at birth*

*2.3.3. Building the machinery and developing the staff in charge of sex composition at birth*

*2.3.4. Allocating resources to launch activities to achieve the goals of state management on sex composition at birth*

*2.3.5. Organizing, collecting, processing, using and managing the storage of information and data on sex composition at birth*

2.3.6. *Organizing and managing the communication, education and campaign for behavioral change to ensure the balance of sex composition at birth*

2.3.7. *Engaging in international cooperation in the field of management of sex composition at birth*

2.3.8. *Conducting inspection, control and handling of violations of policies and laws on sex composition at birth*

## **2.4. Determinants that have effects on state management on sex composition at birth**

State management on sex composition at birth is determined by various factors:

2.4.1. *Capacity of state officials and the completeness of state management on sex composition at birth*

2.4.2. *Civic consciousness and responsibility for law observance*

2.4.3. *Efficient investment and disposition of financial resources*

2.4.4. *Impacts by international and regional integration*

2.4.5. *Scientific and technological development, especially obstetric practice technology*

2.4.6. *Socio-economic, natural and cultural conditions*

In addition, *institutions which act to ensure to balance of sex composition at birth* also have substantial effects on state management on sex composition at birth. They are legislations on gender equality, women's empowerment, social security, especially on insurance for the elderly, etc; *market factors; commercialized* provision of reproductive health services to respond to people's need for desired birth. They all have substantial impacts on the effectiveness of state management on sex composition at birth.

## **2.5. Experience in the handling of sex imbalance at birth in selected regional nations**

Upon studying sex imbalance at birth which occurs in the region and intervention by China, South Korea and India, some lessons are learned for state management to handle sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam today:

*Firstly*, it is necessary to examine, investigate into and define the development and causes, especially underlying causes, of sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam to provide scientific proof as a basis for intervention in sex imbalance at birth;

*Secondly*, as disproportioned sex composition at birth is determined by various socio-economic factors, especially factors relevant to habits and traditional cultures which are deeply

rooted in the community's mindset, a comprehensive set of solutions in economic and educational terms is required to be carried out in conjunction with law enforcement. However, immediate actions to be taken include strong communication and education in order to change the awareness of sex imbalance at birth and its social consequences as a way to change the people's behavior towards non-selection of fetal sex.

*Thirdly*, as sex imbalance at birth is caused by gender inequality as an underlying cause, it is necessary to launch complete sets of solutions to enhance the status of women and female children in the family and society;

*Fourthly*, in order to get rid of sex imbalance at birth, vigorous and deterrent legislations should be enforced to handle violations, whereby influencing the society.

*Fifthly*, political commitment, the involvement of the entire political system and the synergy of the society are needed in order to address sex imbalance at birth. In addition, strong and constant support and close management by authorities at all levels are also needed;

*Sixthly*, a specialized machinery which is strong and stable, aided by well-defined strategies and actions for particular periods, is needed;

*Seventhly*, resources, especially sufficient financial investment, should be made available for the implementation of policies to address sex imbalance at birth. Particularly, financial regime and incentives, which gives support to the enhancement of women's and female children's status, is needed.

*Eighthly*, as sex imbalance at birth is a complicated social phenomenon that involves many sectors, social mobilization is necessary for the handling of this problem, especially strengthened coordination and expanded participation by mass organizations and non-governmental organizations. Given the complicatedness and persistence of the problem, it is noteworthy that appropriate steps should be taken without haste.

## **Conclusion of chapter 2**

## Chapter 3

### REALITY OF STATE MANAGEMENT ON SEX COMPOSITION AT BIRTH IN VIETNAM

#### 3.1. Overview on the population growth and sex composition at birth in Vietnam

##### *3.1.1. Overview on the population growth of Vietnam*

According to the interim survey of 2014, the Vietnamese population is 90,493,400 people, an increase of around 4,646,400 as compared to 2009. The population growth rates tend to slow down by time. The average population growth rate in the period 2009-2014 reached the lowest point, about 1.06% per year. By 2014, Vietnam is still in the phase of golden population, with population in the working age making up 69.4%, dependent population making up 30.6%, and general dependence rate being 44%. Urban population makes up 33.1%. Population density of Vietnam is 273 inhabitants per square kilometer, ranking the third in Southeast Asia and the 14<sup>th</sup> among 49 Asian nations and territories. The total fertility rate in 2014 is 2.09 children/woman. For over 10 years, Vietnam has maintained its birth rate around the replacement reproduction rate (2.1 children/woman). National gross death rate is 6.85%. Infant mortality rate of children under 1 year of age fell rapidly to 14.94% in 2014. The national average life expectancy in 2014 is 73.2 years, an increase of 0.4 year as compared to 2009. Average life expectancies of male and female is 70.6 and 76.0 years respectively. Data show that in the period 2007-2014, the rate of women with third child fell from 16.7% in 2007 to 14.3% in 2013, and then rose slightly to 14.5% in 2014.

##### *3.1.2. Reality of sex composition at birth in Vietnam*

The male population is 44.6 million while the female population is 45.9 million, a ratio of 97.3 males per 100 females. As compared to the census of 1/4/2009, this ratio in the interim survey of 2014 shows virtually no observable changes and there exists negligible disparity in sex ratio between regions.

The movement in sex composition at birth of the population is expressed through the movement in SRB by years.

- *Firstly, sex imbalance at birth come later than it did in other countries of the same situation, but increased more rapidly.*
- *Secondly, sex imbalance at birth tends to spread.*

- *Thirdly, SRB is high among women of high intellectual level.*
- *Fourthly, the movement in SRB shows different features among different socio-economic groups.*
- *Fifthly, SRB is high at the first and last births.*

Research findings in Vietnam show that some underlying causes lead to sex imbalance at birth:

- *Firstly, preference for boy – the underlying cause of the problem.*
  - *Secondly, family norms of having fewer children.*
  - *Thirdly, medical development and availability that makes it possible for prenatal sex selection, the improvement of medical facilities and the rapid expansion of the network of public and private health service providers.*
- *In addition, policies of gender equality have not been properly enforced and social and family status of female children and women is low. This problem has induced women to seek prenatal sex selection services.*

### **3.2. Analysis of the reality of state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam**

#### ***3.2.1. Building, issuing and directing the implementation of intervention strategies, plans, and programs to ensure the balance of sex composition at birth***

Aware of immeasurable social consequences of negative changes in sex composition at birth, the Party and the State of Vietnam have paid attention to the formulation and enactment of policies and given guidance to socio-economic development strategies and population strategies and programs.

The strategy for socio-economic development for the period 2011-2020 states “Effectively carrying out policies of population and family planning, maintaining replacement birth rate, ensuring rational sex balance, improving the population quality”; The strategy for population - reproductive health for the period 2011-2020 sets the goal of sharply reducing the growing rate of SRB, with emphasis on the provinces and central-ruled cities suffering severe sex imbalance. The strategy has covered a comprehensive system of leadership, organization and management; communication and education for behavioral changes; services of population – reproductive health; improving the institutional system relevant to population – reproductive

health; promoting social mobilization, inter-sectoral coordination and international cooperation; finance; training, scientific research and providing information to achieve the stated goals. The strategy also states duties of ministries and agencies in the handling of demographic problems. Programs, projects and models are advanced with aims to reduce sex imbalance at birth as a step towards the goal of controlling sex imbalance at birth in order to slow down the increasing SRB. The national program in this phase has launched various projects, including Project 2 - Screening for congenital deformities, diseases and defects, and controlling sex imbalance at birth. An intervention project for reducing sex imbalance at birth has been formulated and launched for pilot implementation since 2009 in many localities. The project has achieved initial results and appealed to the interest of the party leadership and local authorities at various levels. In the period 2011–2015, the Intervention Project for reducing sex imbalance at birth has been maintained and expanded to 43 provinces/cities. In response to relative high SRB and “severe sex imbalance at birth” [7], the Prime Minister approved the Project for Control of sex imbalance at birth on 23/3/2016 for the period 2016-2025, stating specific goals and a series of tasks and solutions to bring SRB quickly to the natural balance [20].

However, there exist many inadequacies in the organization for implementation of strategies, programs and projects. The said inadequacies are manifested by the fact that attention has not been properly paid to the integration of gender, gender equality and sex imbalance at birth into curricula. Resource allocation, especially investment in intervention project to reduce sex imbalance at birth, is still limited or even cut down, making it hard to maintain currently-run activities and launch new ones. In addition, the assignment of plan targets and allocation of budget are delayed in some localities, which affects the pace of activity implementation and achievement of goals.

### ***3.2.2. Building, issuing and organizing the implementation of institutions and policies relevant to sex composition at birth***

In response to the observable imbalance of sex composition at birth in Vietnam, Vietnam has formulated and enacted various legislations to regulate sex composition at birth: Population Ordinance 2003 with revision in 2008, which makes fetal sex selection in all forms illegal; Decree No. 104/2003/NĐ-CP dated 16/9/2003 specifying and guiding the implementation of some articles of the Population Ordinance. The Decree is the first legislation that is targeted

directly at sex imbalance at birth. To specify the Decree and strengthen its enforcement, the former Committee of Population, Family and Children and later the Ministry of Health issued a series of legislations to specify the Population Ordinance relevant to prohibition of prenatal sex selection, surveillance and examination to prevent disproportion sex ratio and prenatal sex selection, prohibition of the use of high technology to select fetal sex. In addition, Decree No. 114/2006/NĐ-CP, later replaced by Decree No. 176/2013/NĐ-CP, on the handling of administrative violations relevant to population and health care, provides for acts of fetal sex selection which are made illegal; the Law on Gender Equality 2006 defines acts as contravention of law in the healthcare field: Impeding, inducing or coercing others on the ground of gender bias so that they do not participate in health education activities; Fetal sex selection in any forms or inducing and coercing other to abort on the ground of fetal sex. However, inadequacies and constraints emerge during the enforcement of some legislations. They are either unrealistic or poorly realistic (due to misinterpretation of concepts, weak sanctions or asynchronous legal provisions), causing poorly effective law and obstacles to the inspection and control of law enforcement relevant to the prohibition of fetal sex selection. The enforcement of institutions relevant to state management on sex composition at birth is delayed, causing a legal void that people may use as a loophole to escape the law. All those inadequacies have negative effects on the achievement of the goal of reducing contemporary problem of sex imbalance at birth.

### ***3.2.3. Building the machinery of state management of demographic matters and sex composition at birth***

In fact, the machinery of state management on population & family planning in Vietnam has evolved through these two models to be able to respond to the demand of population management in various phases. The machinery is being gradually strengthened and settled. In 2007, the Committee of Population, Family and Children was dissolved. The population section was incorporated into the Ministry of Health, which has the function of state management on population & family planning. The General Department of Population – Family Planning acts as an advisory agency to the Minister of Health in all issues relevant to the size, composition and quality of population [19]. In compliance with Decision No. 103/2013/QĐ-TCDS, the Bureau of Population Composition and Quality is formed to take charge of managing



demographic composition, including sex composition at birth. At the local level, the machinery responsible for population matters has no agency specialized in managing demographic composition but administrates population matters, ranging from the size, composition to the quality of population according to Circular 05/2008/BYT. However, shortly after its formation, this model manifested several inadequacies when it was translated into practice. Many different models exist in the locality. This problem has greatly affected the effectiveness of state management on demographic matters in general and on state management on sex composition at birth in particular.

#### ***3.2.4. Building and developing the staff in charge of population issues***

According to a report by the Ministry of Health, two years after Decision No. 17/2013/QĐ-TTg was implemented, under the leadership of the Party Committee and the Ministry leaders, the General Department of Population & Family Planning settled its organizational structure and staff in charge of population issues from the central to grassroots levels. Despite some initial results, limitations have been exposed in the formation and development of the population staff: Qualifications of the staff in charge of population & family planning at the grassroots level; poor remuneration that cause constant instability in this staff, around 30% [81], which has substantially negative effects on the achievement of the goal for reducing sex imbalance at birth.

#### ***3.2.5. Allocating resources and giving support to handling sex imbalance at birth***

Although it is regarded as an important issue in this context, the work of population & family planning is exposed to many challenges and constraints, including financial ones. Financial allocation has leveled off since 2012 due to reduced allocation from the state budget as a major source and reduced or stopped ODA. In fact, between 2011 and 2015, financial allocation and grant from the central budget to projects and schemes under the National Target Program have virtually remained unchanged, with the annual average allocation of 760 billion VND, falling short of the expected amount of 1000 billion per year. This financial shortage is and will still be affecting the performance of population & family planning in general and the intervention program to reduce sex imbalance at birth in particular.

#### ***3.2.6. Organizing and managing the communication, education and campaign for behavioral change to ensure the balance of sex composition at birth***

Communication and campaign activities are always regarded as the most radical solution to achieve the goal relevant to population. Despite absence of a dedicated communication program, sex composition at birth is always considered as an important issue in a larger program of population & family planning. Although a large workload has been done, the organization and management of communicative and educational activities to reduce sex imbalance at birth still contain certain limitations: no detailed categorization of the targets of communication; no radical renewal of the content and formality of communication to target at sex imbalance at birth; focus is still made on the quantity of activities and formalistic activities, etc, causing communicative and educational campaign to remain inefficient; reduced enthusiastic morale among communicators at the grassroots level, which have substantial negative effects on the quality of communicative campaign in the community.

### ***3.2.7. Engaging in international cooperation in the field of management of sex composition at birth***

Given the fact that sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam is characterized by its new emergence 10 years ago and its rapid growing and complicated development, Vietnam is unprepared for it, with limited financial, technological and human resources. Therefore, international cooperation can work in this case and help with experience sharing. Agencies of state management on population & family planning have defined it as one of the four critical preconditions to address the problem of sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam. For many years, Vietnam has coordinated closely with international organizations to conduct research activities, organize forums and workshops, and launch large communicative campaign in the community to seek social consensus and effective solutions to raising the awareness of gender equality in order to slow down the accelerating SRB. At the same time, international cooperation earns Vietnam substantial funding and technical assistance that are greatly credited with the success of the interventionist policies of reducing sex imbalance at birth.

### ***3.2.8. Conducting inspection, control and handling of violations of policies and laws on sex composition at birth***

Since 2009, the Inspectorate under the General Department of Population & Family Planning has worked with ministerial and local inspectorate to launch inspection and control over the law enforcement on the prohibition of fetal sex selection in any forms. They have

detected and handled violations relevant to the communication of fetal sex selection. Inspection and control activities are focused on two main issues: (a) Inspection and control over medical check-up and treatment and pregnancy management; (b) Inspection and control over the publication, issuance and trading of book, dissemination of electronic information about methods to select fetal sex [30]. However, the problem is too complicated while the specialist inspectorate is incomplete in both quantitative and qualitative terms, compounded by limited coordination due to their low legal status. Therefore, the performance of inspection and control is not so high while information and communication technology is highly developed, causing it hard to detect violations. In addition, inspection and control must be carried out with inter-sectoral coordination, with each inspection session containing many health issues [27;56]. As a result, the inspection and control over fetal sex selection are rarely held or failed to be conducted on all health institutions. Moreover, sanctions are neither strong nor realistic, causing it hard to treat violations, causing the deterrent effects on the society to be reduced.

### **3.3. Judgment of state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam**

#### ***3.3.1. Achievements obtained in state management on sex composition at birth***

Some achievements have been obtained in some aspects: *First*, legal framework has been initially set up, including legislations providing for the control of changes in sex composition at birth. *Secondly*, the staff in charge of population & family planning has been gradually standardized and entitled to preferential treatment policies and entitlements; standard training programs have been formed, facilitating the development of a knowledgeable and specialist staff to take charge of and well perform the task of population & family planning in the locality under their management. At the communal level, officials in charge of population & family planning have access to regular specialist training courses; *Thirdly*, law communication, education and dissemination are carried out nationwide with a variety of activities taking place in various forms: face-to-face communication and communication on the mass media, to communicate to various targets about prohibition of fetal sex selection, the reality and harmful effects of sex imbalance at birth, countermeasures to sex discrimination and selection, production best practices, building of cultured family of women having solely girls who do not give 3<sup>rd</sup> birth, and best practices relevant to the learning and training of female children having good study performance.

The aforesaid success is attributed to the following factors: care and leadership are afforded by the Party and authority at various level; the machinery specialized in population & family planning is being strengthened; the management of population & family planning is performed according the National Target Program to ensure the performance and the efficient funding disposition; etc.

### ***3.3.2. Limitations remaining in state management on sex composition at birth***

*First*, there still exists lack of care and guidance from authorities in some localities; *Secondly*, there still exist inadequacies relevant to the issuance and enforcement of state management institutions on sex composition at birth; *Thirdly*, communication, education and campaign activities are somewhat ineffective, with achievements obtained mainly in quantitative terms; *Fourthly*, financial allocation to communication about reducing sex imbalance at birth is very low, with virtually all allocation has been cut. Moreover, allocation is made in an untimely and irrational manner, making it hard to launch communication activities about minimizing sex imbalance at birth; *Fifthly*, inter-sectoral coordination in activities of reducing sex imbalance at birth in some localities is not appreciated, in which strengths of parties have been promoted, etc.

***3.3.3. Causes of limitations:*** The aforesaid inadequacies and limitations result from both subjective and objective causes. *First*, as a subjective cause, the Vietnamese population is experiencing an unprecedented demographic transition, arousing newly emerging problems such as imbalance of sex composition at birth with which we have no experience to deal; *Secondly*, the awareness by the Party's Committees and authorities at various levels about sex imbalance at birth as well as its effects on socio-economic development is incomplete, causing them not to take drastic and close actions in their lead the operation of activities; *Thirdly*, confusing consciousness of the nature of demographic issues and sex imbalance at birth and its social consequences has caused institutions to be issued in substandard quality; *Fourthly*, the machinery in charge of population - family planning, especially at the grassroots levels, is unstable; *Fifthly*, the capacity of the staff in charge of population & family planning is limited in both specialist and managerial aspects, particularly the collaborators; *Sixthly*, state allocation, which is the major source, is cut, compounded by stopped ODA and local negligence in allocating fund; *Seventhly*, communication, education and campaign activities are carried out

with limitations: no detailed categorization of objects and coverage of influence; communication is made in an irregular and formalistic manner; communication is heavily preoccupied with family planning without much change in the form; communication facilities are deteriorated and outdated, causing lack of communication facilities.

### **Conclusion of chapter 3**

## **Chapter 4**

### **VIEWPOINTS AND SOLUTIONS TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF STATE MANAGEMENT ON SEX COMPOSITION AT BIRTH IN VIETNAM**

#### **4.1. Trend of the movement in sex composition at birth in Vietnam and requirements for state management on sex composition at birth**

Trend of the movement in sex composition at birth in Vietnam are revealed by forecast of competent agencies. At the same time, this section discusses requirements for state management on sex composition at birth.

#### **4.2. Viewpoint and direction for management of demographic matters and solving sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam**

##### ***4.2.1. The Party's viewpoint towards demographic matters and solving sex imbalance at birth***

The Party's viewpoint is well articulated in the Resolution of the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference of the VII Communist Party; Resolution No. 47-NQ/TW by the Party Executive Committee on further proceeding with policies of population & family planning; Conclusion No. 44-KL/TW by the Politburo on three year implementation of the Resolution No. 47-NQ/TW; Conclusion No. 119-KL-TW dated 4/1/2016 on population and population management, demographic composition in particular phases. They act as guidelines for population management to gain certain achievements. Particularly in this period, Vietnam has achieved and maintained the replacement birth rates steadily. Therefore, population focus should be *shifted away from family planning towards population & development* in order to address demographic matters in a comprehensive manner, dealing with the size, composition, distribution and quality of population (maintaining replacement birth rate, *reducing sex imbalance at birth*, taking advantage of golden demographic composition, accommodating to aging population,

rationalizing population distribution, and improving the population quality) to ensure rapid and sustainable development.

#### ***4.2.2. Direction for state management on demographic matters and sex composition at birth***

The direction of the State and the population administration is expressed in a series of documents: Strategy for Sustainable Development in Vietnam in the period 2011 – 2020; Strategy for population - reproductive health in the period 2011-2020 as a step towards: alleviating sex imbalance at birth; effective performance of solutions to promoting gender equality and women's advancement; effective resolution of issues relevant to demographic composition; promoting the performance and maintenance of countermeasures to accelerating SRB.

#### ***4.2.3. Goals of sex composition at birth in Vietnam***

Guided by the Party's guidelines and the State's instructions, the population administration set forth general and specific goals to control effectively the accelerating SRB as a step towards bringing it to the natural balance with aim the improve the human resources quality to serve national industrialization and modernization.

#### ***4.2.4. Viewpoint expressed in the dissertation towards state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam today***

In this section, seven attitudes towards state management on sex composition at birth are raised: The State takes the initiative to take interventionist actions and regulate the population and its processes but it must acquire and apply skillfully the law of population movement and development in the management of sex composition without haste, subjectivism and arbitrariness. The State should try to exert influence on human consciousness and behavior to guide the national development course towards its set goals according to the law of movement; as sex composition at birth is formed through the reproductive process of a population and determined by the existing social values and norms, the State should place emphasis on influencing and regulating actions to change social consciousness towards gradually forming new values and norms of female children and gender in a relevant socio-economic context. By doing so, the State can facilitate the achievement of the goal of balance sex composition at birth; the management of sex composition at birth assumes social effect on a large scale. It is

not only an issue relevant to the State but also to every individual and family, and the entire society. Therefore, social mobilization in population activities is needed and the entire social masses should be involved. An inter-sectoral solution is also needed, with the population administration as a key advisor and voluntary participation of the people under the leadership of Party's Committees and authorities at all levels. The agency of state management on demographic matters should function as a population program coordinator to be able to take charge of state management on demographic matters while mobilizing all social forces; it is necessary to carry out good communication, education and campaign in combination with the formulation and enforcement of laws and policies; population issues should be viewed and addressed in a certain socio-economic context, and linked with development policies; managers and leaders should be well aware that population and healthcare are closely inter-related but different in nature. Therefore, population issues should by no means be viewed and addressed solely from healthcare perspectives; with thorough and sound awareness of the relation between population and development and the law of movement, if Party's Committees and authorities further strengthen their leadership and management, and carry out sync, drastic and timely solutions in state management on sex composition at birth, the problem of sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam will soon be solved.

#### **4.3. Solutions to improving state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam**

Having analyzed the reality of sex composition at birth and the reality of state management on this issue, having cited the Party's guidelines, the State's directions and sectoral instructions, eight solutions are proposed as follows:

*4.3.1. Institutional and policy improvement on sex composition at birth;*

*4.3.2. Strengthening and settling the machinery of state management on population - family planning*

*4.3.3. Building the capacity of population – family planning staff at the grassroots level;*

*4.3.4. Allocating sufficient financial resources in a rational manner to take interventionist actions to minimize sex imbalance at birth*

*4.3.5. Enforcing, in an effective manner, legislations that prohibit fetal sex selection;*

4.3.6. *Strengthening and renovating the organization and management of communicative, educational and campaign activities to direct behavior towards non-selection of fetal sex;*

4.3.7. *Promoting the coordination between relevant sectors and taking advantage of their strengths to take interventionist actions to ensure sex balance at birth*

4.3.8. *Promoting socio-economic development as a pre-condition to enhance gender equality as a step towards sex balance at birth*

#### **4.4. Some recommendations**

4.4.1. *To the National Assembly and the Standing Committee of the National Assembly*

4.4.2. *To the Government, central ministries, agencies and mass organizations*

4.4.3. *To provincial People's Committees*

#### **Conclusion of chapter 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

Study of state management on sex composition at birth in Vietnam today is virtually the study of the intervention by the State in unusual sex composition at birth or sex imbalance at birth in other words. The State must take interventionist actions in a timely manner given its immeasurable social consequences to sustainable development. The dissertation has attempted to find answers to the question of how the State manages sex composition at birth.

The dissertation has accomplished basic tasks:

*First*, based on the overview of relevant research, Chapter 2 has systematized the theoretical bases of sex composition at birth and state management on sex composition at birth. Particularly, the author has been based on the theoretical basis to put forwards the concept of state management on sex composition at birth, well defining the subjects, objects and targets of management as well as subjective and objective factors that determine state management on sex composition at birth. Upon study of state intervention to deal with sex imbalance at birth in typical countries in the region, the author has conducted analysis to learn lessons to be applied in Vietnam at present and in the coming time.

*Secondly*, upon considering the reality of Vietnamese population development, the dissertation has conducted analysis to assess changes in sex composition at birth occurring



since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The analysis shows a clear picture of sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam, with different characteristics as compared to other nations with the same problem (as discussed in chapter 3). At the same time, the dissertation has conducted analysis to produce a set of causes that leads to sex imbalance at birth in Vietnam, including an underlying cause, namely preference for male children. Preference for male children is derived from Confucian ideology that sets up social values and norms for the traditional model of patriarchic families. Clear definition of the underlying cause will enable managerial subjects to define the right direction for interventionist solutions.

*Thirdly*, based on the theoretical basis as defined in chapter 2, the dissertation has conducted analysis to assess the reality of state management on sex composition at birth from the perspective of state management: formulating and issuing strategies, programs and projects to reduce sex imbalance at birth; state management institutions; machinery and staff in charge of population & family planning; funding; organizing for communicative, educational and campaign activities for behavioral change, and international cooperation to control sex imbalance at birth. On that basis, the dissertation has come up to limitations and causes thereof in state management on sex composition at birth. That is the basis on which the dissertation proposes solutions to improving state management on sex composition at birth to quickly bring SRB back to the natural level.

*Fourthly*, having cited the Party's guidelines, the State's directions and sectoral instructions as well as requirements for state management on demographic matters and sex composition at birth in Vietnam at present and in the future, the author advances personal attitudes towards state management for attaining sex balance at birth. On that basis, the dissertation proposes a set of eight solutions to the improvement of state management on sex composition at birth. At the same time, the author raises some recommendations to competent agencies and local authorities to exert all possible resources to quickly bring SRB back to the natural level.

*Fifthly*, defining objects of state management on sex composition at birth as changeable and determined by various endogenous and exogenous factors, by preference for male children, and even by social "aspiration", managerial subjects are advised not to take hasty and voluntaristic actions but to exert interventionist influence in a flexible and relevant manner.

However, managerial subjects should closely adhere to the underpinning stand, i.e. exerting influence through communicative and educational campaign for awareness change and reproductive habit change. At the same time, as sex imbalance at birth is also a social problem, it is necessary to promote social mobilization in dealing with it. To do so, the State is required to act as a hub that connects other subjects together to generate synergy of the entire political system and society. The synergy concerns the leadership and management by Party's Committees and authorities and the active response by all agencies and mass organizations in the control of sex imbalance at birth. As for the community and citizens, they are duty-bound to participate actively and voluntarily in activities of reducing sex imbalance at birth. That determines the sustainability and success of bring sex composition at birth back to the natural level in Vietnam.

## LIST OF RESEARCH WORKS OF THE AUTHOR

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