

Family-Birthday – Concept, Types, Calculation and Importance

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Abstract

In Europe we have to deal with demographical crisis, with unfavorable demographic indicators. So that it looks to be important to emphasize the role of the family. Our goal is to introduce the concept of the family-birthday and to give a new meaning to the celebration of birthdays. The family-birthday is calculated by averaging the birth dates of its members, the basic calculation refers to the traditional families. It is also possible to make complex calculations for spouses, children, atypical families. The calculation of the averaged family-birthday and its shared celebration can strengthen the cohesion between its members and the social capital and increases the probability of social support. The anniversary family-birthdays can convey a favorable message.

Keywords: Demography, Family Members, Family-Birthday, Mathematical Calculation, Anniversary.

Introduction

Celebrating someone's 100th birthday is a rare event even in the developed countries (Eurostat, 2012). According to the statistics the ratio in our region is of only a few individuals over the age of 100 per 100.000 people (Institute of National Statistics, 2012). On the level of family the members of the family can live for a total of several hundred years. Considering that in Romania the life expectancy is 70 years for men and seven years more for women (Public Health National Institute, 2013), a family with two children can live to its 250th family-birthday. Large families with more children have a chance to live to their 300th, 400th or even 500th family-birthday. In addition to the number of children, another important factor is the age of the parents when they have their children (D. Dorling, 2013). From a health point of view we have to consider: the lifestyle of the family members, socio-cultural factors, genetic factors, environmental factors, the development of society and healthcare (Z. Abram, 2006).

A global, specifically European phenomenon also affecting the Eastern-Central European region, is the decrease of fertility and the natural decline of the population, the increase of life expectancy at birth and the ageing of the population, a lower rate of marriages and higher rate of divorces (M. Macura, 2010). Along with a low birthrate, the age of childbearing for women shifted from the biologically optimal 20-24 years to 25-34 years, and every fifth child is born

to a woman above 35 (World Health Organization, 2012). These and other factors lead to the increasing prevalence of new family types. Most common is the blended family composed of a divorced or widowed parent, his new partner and at least one child from the previous relationship (M. Kopp, A. Skrabski & S. Szedmak, 2000).

Our goal is to give a new meaning to the celebration of birthdays and the importance of the family in the modern world, by introducing the concept of the family-birthday and emphasizing its significance.

Methodology

The Concept of Family-Birthday

The birthday of an individual is connected to the time of his birth and it can be celebrated every year on this particular day. In the case of the family-birthday we calculate it from the birth date of several family members, this day will be only a mathematically defined moment in time, not the day when the family was born, without a specific date linked to it. The family birthday is calculated by averaging the birth dates of its members. This way the birthdays of the family members that are on different months and days, can be reduced to a single date. On this day the family will be as many years old as the total age of its members.

In every calendar year the family will be older with as many years and can celebrate as many birthdays as the number of its members. Meaning: every year we add to the age of the family a number of years equal to the number of its members (we call these family-years). Besides the averaged family-birthday we can calculate the dates of other family-birthdays. At the same time jubilees are worth celebrating and being remembered.

The basic calculation refers to the traditional families, who have been together since the marriage of the parents, and it takes into consideration the age of the living parents and their children. In some cases there can be made special calculations. Death, divorce, remarriage, children born in the new marriage or outside marriage, represent special circumstances. A different variation would be to include the direct descendants, grandchildren, great-grandchildren of the living parents, calculating the family-birthday of three or four generations.

Calculating the Family-Birthday

Knowing the birth dates of the members of the family we can calculate the day that would be the yearly family birthday, the so called averaged family-birthday. Using a non-leap-year calendar for each family member we calculate the days that have passed until his birthday. January 1 will be the first day and the day before the birthday the last one. We add these numbers, and to the result we add the number of the family members multiplied by half a day. Considering that we usually don't know the exact hour when a person was born, we calculate an average value. The total will be divided by the number of family members and the result will be an integer (whole number) and usually a remainder. In the non-leap-year calendar we will find the day that follows this whole number. This will be the date of the averaged family-birthday.

The averaged family-birthday is the arithmetic mean of the birthdays of the family members. On this day the family will be as many years old as the sum of the age of the family members. In addition to this day the family has other birthdays throughout the year. If we divide the 365 days of the year with the number of the family members, the result will be a number that shows us the differences between the family-birthdays. For example in the case of a five member family the length of a family year will be 73 days, in this case without remainder. In the other cases we will define the birthdays of the family-year according to the remainder with special emphasis on the jubilees and birthdays. In leap years we don't change the date of the averaged family-birthday, but we have to take into consideration the extra day when we calculate the other birthdays.

We can also determine how old the family is on New Year's Eve. For every family member we calculate the number of days between the day after his birthday and December 31. We add these numbers and to the total we add the number of the family members multiplied by half a day. This will be divided by 365; the result will be an integer and a remainder (generally). This integer will be added to the family-years of the averaged family-birthday: this shows us in years how old the family will be on New Year's Eve. The remainder shows us the number of extra days and later to this there will be added as many family-days as the number of the family members. The next birthday can be calculated with the help of these numbers.

Additional Calculations, Alternatives

In the case of a deceased parent, he should not be left out from the calculations, but we will take into consideration his age at the time of death. Although his biological age is limited to the years and days until the time of his death, he will always remain a member of the family. In this case the date of the averaged family-birthday won't change, it will not be calculated again for the living family members, but the number of the family-birthdays will be decreased by one. According to this we will modify the date of the other family-birthdays through the year. The procedure is the same if the parents lose their child.

When one of the parents dies, the question arises: will they celebrate the family birthday or will they honor the lost loved one on the occasion of the shared family-birthday? The situation is even harder when both of the parents passed away. In my opinion we can apply the same procedure on the level of the family as on the level of the individual, when the family members commemorate the hundredth birthday of the deceased. The difference is that for example a 500th familial commemoration doesn't refer to an event that happened half a century ago, but to a much closer one.

Another particular situation would be the divorce of the parents. Do we include the age of the missing mother/father in our calculations? Biologically speaking we have to consider the birth date and age of the missing parent. But if we consider the relationship "dead" from the social point of view, then we should use the date of the divorce for our calculations. We have to mention that the calculation of the family birthday is merely an opportunity, in some cases it doesn't have to be forced.

The remarriage or cohabitation following the divorce or decease will also create a new, special situation. In case if neither partner brings a child into the new relationship, because both were childless when they became single, a simple calculation can be applied that refers to childless families. For blended families the calculation of the family-birthday is much more complicated. Because not all family members are blood-related, and may times it isn't obvious who is part of the family, first we have to clarify the status of the family members. Therefore we have many possibilities, alternatives for the calculation of the family-birthday, depending on the following questions: In the blended family there is no symmetry, do we make the calculations from the point of view of the man or the woman or both? Do we take into consideration only the biological children or do we include the stepchildren living in the same household? When does the former partner become part of the new household? Considering the multiple marriages, relationships, do we have to use division after the additions?

It is also possible to make complex calculations to include more generations (three or four) in the model. In these cases the grandchildren, great-grandchildren are equally considered for the calculations. But the situation can be even more complicated in the case of new spouses, half-siblings and half-cousins.

For the spouses we can make further calculations: at what age did they marry, at what spouse-age their first and last child was born. We can make separate calculations only for the children and we can determine separately the averaged birthday and family-years for the male and the female family members.

Discussion

In Eastern-Central-Europe we have to deal with unfavorable demographic indicators, while the role of the family is devaluating. These two phenomena are mutually amplifying each other. Families with two children are no longer the majority; families are becoming smaller and less prevalent. While the rate of single parents is increasing, every third household contains only one person. Cohabitation is more prevalent and more children are born outside marriage, at the same time fewer children are born into marriages and the fertility rate is critically low. The natural replacement of the population is in danger (M.J. Bailey, B.J. Hershbein & A.R. Miller, 2012).

The demographical crisis is complemented by a crisis of migration. New challenges arose: legalizing same sex marriages, the ethical background of the adoption process, the methodology and functioning of sperm-banks, clarifying the relationship between a biological mother and a surrogate mother and so on.

In order to change these phenomena we need to strengthen among the population the psychological and social factors of becoming a parent (W.M. Pinsof & J.L. Lebow, 2005). Emphasizing the role of the family can be important even for our physical existence, biological perseverance. We have to raise awareness on the advantages and joys of having children, and promote exemplary large families. The introduction of the family-birthday can become a facilitating factor; its celebration could strengthen the solidarity within the family and society.

Knowing the birthdays of the family-members, if the family and its members accept the publicity, the celebration of the family-birthday can be extended to its surrounding community. The averaged family-birthday has a Gaussian distribution; therefore it is most likely to be on a summer day. This makes it easier to celebrate. This occasion can increase harmony in the family, it can be an opportunity for the family to be together and a whole family can celebrate with other families who are close to its members. It offers a special communal experience, sense of togetherness.

Reaching a higher family anniversary can be a prestige for the family and its members. Ageing can become a desirable process as the family becomes more mature and the anniversaries can be an incentive for the family-members. In the case of a deceased family member, the family-birthday can transform into a family commemoration.

Of course the family-birthday cannot be compulsory. It serves its purpose only if its celebration is wanted by the family and it carries a positive meaning for its members and its surroundings. For example a blended family should only celebrate its family birthday if its structure has been clarified, if there is harmony and understanding between its members, whether they are blood-related or living in the same household. In this case the family birthday can strengthen these bonds. Interesting calculations can be made only for the spouses or the children, or the same-sex members, but apart from their playfulness their importance should not be exaggerated.

I calculated that the family of the longest-reigning British monarch, the widely esteemed Queen Elisabeth II celebrated its 425th family-year on February the fourth 2016, with her husband, Prince Philip and their four children Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward (S. Bradford, 2012). This considerable family age is due to not only the age of the royal couple but also the exemplary commitment of the Queen to bring two more children into the world after her coronation. And it is also worth considering that the mother of the monarch, Elisabeth the Queen Mother, who passed away in 2002 at the age of 102, was born ninth in a family of 10 children.

Conclusions

The calculation of the averaged family-birthday and its shared celebration can strengthen the cohesion between its members and the social capital, it introduces the concept of family capital, enhances the role of family friends and other families, it increases the probability of social support.

It can become part of a new perspective that emphasizes communal experiences and togetherness.

It can balance out the unfavorable demographical and psycho-social phenomena, contributing to childbirth and strengthening traditions.

If the concept of the family-birthday becomes popular, it will be a sign of appreciation for the family as an entity that assures the perpetration of society and nation.

In the case of large families the anniversary family-birthdays can convey a favorable message.

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