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Faculty of Social Sciences



Saltykova Alina Alekseevna

**The effect of gender roles on divorce rates in Russia**

Field of study: 22.00.03 Economic sociology

 Proposed Scientific Supervisor

Doctor of Sciences

Olga Kuzina

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1. **Problem statement and theoretical overview**

Family is an institute that is subject to the influence of many economic, political and social factors. There were many attempts to explain and investigate the reasons that motivate people to form or dissolve a union, since the topic of family union dissolution presents an interest to many scientific spheres.

In recent years, divorce rates in Russia keep steady at around 60% level, and there are many potential factors that can explain it. Overall, when speaking of main divorce determinants, we can divide them into two main branches – social, that explore family crisis in the context of social environment this union is located in, and economical, which focuses on family financial behavior and context. Both these branches expand as the research interest to the topic stays strong. The socioeconomic predictors have been widely explored in USA (Amato, 2010, Lyngstad and Jalovaara, 2010) and to a lesser extent in Europe (Muszynska, 2008). Scientific articles usually agree on the most common divorce determinants, such as age, education level, number of children etc. There is also a persistent correlation between male financial well-being and his marital stability, however, same effect for females is ambiguous.

Discussing the marriage dissolution, one cannot ignore the demographic and political influence as well. Compared to EU countries, Russia has significantly lower age of entering the first marriage, which may affect the rationality of marital choice and lead to later marriage termination. But compared to long-term marriage disruption, younger people may receive more social acceptance (Hagestad and Smyer, 1982) and may more quickly adjust to post-divorce reality (Bloom et al., 1979). Continuing the discussion, Russian government does much to support the family primary function- reproduction. Since 2007, maternal capital is given for the birth of second and further children as a lump-sum payment, and recent announcement proclaims that now maternal capital will be given for the birth of the first child as well, which may serve as an additional factor that may motivate people to preserve marriage to take care of the children together.

Reproduction and child raising have always been considered an important function of the family. But Russia is continuously moving from classical patriarchal model, where the wife is a housekeeper that performs the majority of household duties and a man is a breadwinner who determines the family wealth and its distribution towards egalitarian partnership where both income earning and housekeeping activities are divided between the spouses. This trend has already been observed in other countries, however, its effect is yet to be discussed. Gender division, according to ‘role combination’ or ‘flexibility’ hypothesis (Cooke and Gash, 2010, Oppenheimer, 1997) only increases the internal strains of the family, whereas both spouses being employed in working and household activities complement each other better. In developed countries, where double-earner households have gained both economic significance and major share in household types, wife’s employment has a positive influence on marital stability. Double-earner households can afford higher consumption rate and are more secured against economic risks (Cooke and Gash, 2010). Moreover, higher education of both husband and wife has positive correlation with sustainability of a union, due to causal relationship of higher education and higher income earned in adult years.

The opposite view is known as ‘gender role specialization’ and claims that the above mentioned factors (higher education and wife’s employed status) have directly opposite influence on the probability of divorce. Followers of this viewpoint treat marriage as a union based on exchange of services – the husband provides economic resources and wife takes care of domestic work (Becker, 1981). Such couple specialization is viewed by many scientists as the most efficient way to maximize joint welfare, and deviations from traditional roles increases marital instability. Working women with higher educational capital are less dependent from men than classical patriarchal housewives and undermine traditional family settings. Their financial freedom makes them less tolerant to difficulties in couple relationship and may push them to divorce. In modern world, however, unemployment of the wife increases the economic pressure on husband, since he is responsible for maintaining a certain financial lifestyle and is the only earner in the household and less secured against financial crisis or other economic risk. Therefore, multiple equilibrium theory predicts that when dual-earner model becomes acceptable and dominant in the studied society, similarity in the roles of spouses performs as a marital stabilizer (Espring-Andersen&Billari, 2015)

Data empirical analysis proves both of this gender based divorce explanations, depending on the country chosen for the research. For instance, in developed countries some articles claim that female employment has a positive effect on marital stability (Amato and James, 2010, Cherlin, 1992), and others believe that the effect is directly the opposite and educational capital together with income earnings may contribute positively to the probability of divorce (Svarer and Verner, 2006). In some countries, like Czech Republic and Hungary, these factors have no influence at all (Liefbroer and Dourleijn, 2006).

As for Russia the effect of employed wives was not found statistically significant for the Soviet and the transitional periods (Muszynska 2008).

Another factor that influences the acceptance of dual-earner model is gender culture of the studied country and its impact on the partners task dissimilarity, that is, whether the dual-earner family will or will not face the critique of the society, which may disrupt the union. Previous researches of the kind focused on either between-country (Cooke, 2006) or within-country level (Killewald, 2016) to explore how does the social context influences the relationship between the marital division of work and divorce. Our research will focus on the longitudinal perspective of gender relationships in Russia.

The current research is made to find out what effect diminishing role of traditional gender labor distribution has on Russian households. According to Rosstat, in 2018 only 53,2% of women were employed, when for men this figure was equal to 67,8%. Still, growing number of financially independent women that choose career over classical family household duties represents a social fact which influence has to be studied.

**Subject of the research**: Divorced couples in the longitudinal database

**Background**: Past research has shown ambiguous result of whether the similarity of gender roles stabilizes or breaks the marital union. We investigate whether the relationship between paid work hours and divorce and relationship between household work hours and divorce has changed across time in Russia.

**Research aim**: Find out, how did the gender roles affect the probability of getting divorced in Russia and whether the egalitarian model of the family has the same stability in big cities and countryside, where the cultural context may differ.

**Object of the research**: Allocation of paid and unpaid work between the partners within marital union in Russia

**Implications**: Preventive research promotes new approach to gender division of labor within the family and may be useful for improving marital relations and well-being.

1. **Research methodology**

**Definitions of the main concepts**

**Paid work** – any kind of labor that allows one of the spouses to receive monetary income

**Unpaid work**  - household responsibilities or any type of work that does not receive monetary enumeration

**Couple** – pair of spouses, living together at the moment of the survey and being married

**Gender role** – social role encompassing a range of behaviors and attitudes that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their biological or perceived sex.

**Dual-earner household** – a type of household where both both spouses are engaged in paid work (not necessarily full-time employment)

**Methodology**

The empirical part of this research will be based on Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS). RLMS (Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey) is a series of nationally representative surveys designed to monitor the effects of Russian reforms on the health and economic welfare of households and individuals in the Russian Federation. The results contain a detailed description of the households and individuals lifestyle, including income, spending, healthcare etc., and most importantly, the panel data type together with the questions devoted to everyday family routine allow to track the effect of female employment over time.

The list of control variables will be composed based on studying the literature devoted to the topic of divorce determinants in other countries, together with the Russian country-specific shocks that could influence family unions. One of these shocks are financial crisises, out of which latest occurred in 2015. Financial crisis may be far more tough challenge for traditional families than for double-earner households, since logically for latter the probability of both spouses losing a job is smaller than the same probability for traditional breadwinner. It represents a certain research interest ot study which type of family stays more stable throughout severe economic times – a housewife from patriarchal family is not likely to leave a union is she does not have any financial safety, but such a union may be a heavy economic burden for a husband that he will decide not to carry.

Gender role effect will be measured by determining working status of each of the spouses and the allocation of unpaid work between them. To be considered dual-earner, both spouses in a household should each have at least one source of monetary income independent from each other. In Russia, it has been the norm that most women quit paid employment for several years after childbirth, during that time, they usually are engaged in childcare. However, nowadays more women prefer to join the work force within shorter period of time after giving birth. Since during the maternity leave women are being paid, if they were employed before pregnancy, such families will also be considered dual-earner ones.

Couples where both spouses are retired and not working will be removed from the database – despite pension being an independent source of income, such couples cannot be considered employed and therefore both spouses are occupied only in unpaid labor.

Basing on the factors, regression models studying the influence of gender roles and other socioeconomic factors will be outlined and tested to determine both the significance of the above-mentioned factors and their fluctuations over time.

1. **Research outcomes and limitations**

Finally, at the end of the project we expect to find an answer to the question has the decline of gender role specialization played any effect on divorce rates, does this effect vary with the amount of income and across different location types (city, countryside), moreover, it would also be useful to compare the influence of other socioeconomic variables to the same findings in foreign research.

Besides, obtained findings can contribute to the discussion of female emancipation in Russia and the influence of female financial independence on their social behavior, namely, marital choice.

**Appendix**

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