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ВЫПУСКНАЯ КВАЛИФИКАЦИОННАЯ РАБОТА

Отношение к вопросам гендерного равенства и уровень счастья в развивающихся странах

*Программа Бакалавр экономики
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Attitudes to gender equality and life satisfaction in transition countries

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Аннотация

Я использую данные опроса EBRD по 34 странам в переходной стадии экономики, чтобы понять зависимость между уровнем счастья и отношением к гендерному равенству. Оказывается, что в целом люди обоих гендеров счастливее, когда верят в равные способности мужчин и женщин. Однако, уровень счастья последних гораздо менее привязан к социальным нормам, установленным в стране. Так, я показываю, что мужчины, которые скорее не верят в равенство, как минимум на 10% несчастнее женщин, возможно, из-за ноши социальной роли, которой приходится соответствовать.

Abstract

Using the cross-country panel regressions and data from EBRD survey of 34 countries, I examine the relation between the gender equality attitudes and the life satisfaction level. It appears that people of both genders are happier if believe in equality. However, women's happiness is much less tied in with the society's believes. I show that men who unlikely to agree on the gender equality are at least 10% unhappier than women. This is probably because of the burden of a social role to be matched.

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1 Introduction

Life satisfaction is progressively perceived as a critical viewpoint of well-being (Stiglitz et al., 2009). Unlike classic economics indicators it reflects an important and subjective individual's perception of the life. There are also a lot of evidence of correlation of the happiness level and personal characteristics. For example, there is a gender gap in the life satisfaction level between men and women (Easterlin, 2006). It's also shown that happiness level changes over time with the picks for younger and older people (Easterlin, 2006). Some determinants are developed by the individual. So, in general people with a degree are happier than others (Easterlin, 2009) and not surprisingly the life satisfaction level is correlated with household income (Clark, 2007).

Of course there are also endogenous factors as economic situation or political regime. But the country-level characteristics affect the well-being not only in a direct way. Transition to market economy has led to a number of changes in the lives of citizens. The changes in the economic and political regime affect the institutions of education and employment that were built in planned economy. And the effect may be different for men and women. The importance of greater gender equality, especially in education and employment is supported by the growing number of evidence. Gender equality could promote economic growth through diversity of institutions. This growth in a direct way may lead to an increase of an individual's income and well-being.

Attitudes, views and beliefs also affect one's life satisfaction. For example, sometimes it might be that people whose views are different from the current state are less happier than others. Plausibly not only the views themselves impact individual happiness level but the fact that individual's community in general shares the same views.

In the current paper I want to show that the attitude to gender equality affects people's life satisfaction. It will be shown that people who are more likely to agree that genders are equal are happier than others. Moreover, I want to highlight that in general people with downward deviating perceptions of women's rights and abilities are less happy than those who share a more common opinion. Surprisingly, the effect on the life satisfaction level is much higher for men than for women. To do this I will use a European Bank's for Reconstruction and Development survey on Life in Transition. The most recent report of the year 2016 polled 51,000 households in 32 transition countries in central and eastern Europe.

2 Literature Review

In my work I focus on presenting how exact opinions and relativistic views on gender equality affect life satisfaction. First, we will look at the research made on life satisfaction and the major factors that impact it. This will help us to create the methodology that pays respect to the main results already received in this area. Then we will discuss some of the relevant social studies specified on the gender equality to understand better how it may affect an individual's happiness. I use this research to better understand and interpret outcomes I got in the paper.

We can observe a growing body of papers published in the leading economic journals that examine determinants of the life satisfaction level. Accordingly with my research, these papers fall under four main categories: income, developed characteristics, personal characteristics, and attitudes and beliefs . Obviously, some of the characteristics may correlate or interact with each other. There are also many others that may affect one's well-being but I find these groups relatively more significant and deterministic.

2.1 Income

Clark, A., Frijters, P., and Shields, M. A. in their broad literature review available *A survey of the income happiness gradient* came to a conclusion that generally the papers suggest a result of diminishing but positive returns to income. In *(Un)happiness in transition* Guriev and Zhuravskaya present that reported happiness is less tied in with both the country's and household's wealth in non-transition countries.

Of course there are plenty of research challenging this standard results. Mainly they show that there is indeed a positive but diminishing result. However, it is expected that not only the standard well-being indicators matter. There is consistency in the evidence that there is a large influence of non-financial variables on one's satisfaction. These papers will also later expand our knowledge on factors concerning gender, age, and minorities.

2.2 Developed characteristics

Richard Easterlin in his article *Lost in transition: Life satisfaction on the road to capitalism* investigates the less and more winning groups from the transition. He uses the World Value Survey which included several transitional countries starting from the 90s. He concludes that in general more educated people are happier. Moreover, among those who got their degrees later, education level is a more significant variable for the happiness level.

Another important determinant of well-being is health. There are several studies pointing out an expected result that health conditions and especially some diseases affect individual's wellbeing. Shields, M. and Wheatley Price, S. in *Exploring The Economic And Social Determinants Of Psychological Well-Being And Perceived Social Support In England* show that it's likely that the causality is here from the health to one's subjective well-being. However, it's still not evaluated how personal characteristics, mood, and self rated health status affect well being.

Although there are little deviations in results across studies, people in marriage report the highest levels of life satisfaction. Helliwell in his article *Wellbeing, Social Capital And Public Policy: What's New?* also points out that loss of relation with a significant other is associated with the lowest level of happiness, lower even than being divorced or widowed. In general being alone decreases the happiness level compared to being part of a partnership of any type.

Last, but one of the most important factors is a work status. Some mentioned above literature reviews and many others (Frey B. et al., 2003; Lelkes O, 2006) show that being unemployed in general means a lower life satisfaction from 5% to 15%. These results are consistent across different countries and datasets chosen. The difference is probably also caused by the fact that the researches choose different variables to control for. Still the evidence is strong and consistent.

2.3 Personal characteristics

Easterlin R. in *Life cycle happiness and its sources. Intersections of psychology, economics and demography* suggests to look at how life satisfaction differs with the age group controlling for generations. They get a consist with majority other papers result. Studies always support a U-shaped curve of the happiness-age relation. It means that the higher levels of well-being are approached at the younger and older age points and the lowest life satisfaction have middle age people, between about 30 and 50 years. However, Easterlin also explores the satisfaction with financial situation, health, social factors, etc. and we see how this determinants of a general satisfaction change over one's life. It's interesting that this different types of satisfactions sometimes do not correlate with the objective determinants as income or political regime. Meaning that subjective things as attitudes change with age and impact the life satisfaction level.

Another major factor is gender. Several researches come to an evidence that women

report higher levels overall satisfaction with life than men do. This again might be an objective factor but also an attitude causing some objective difference. For example, Alesina, A., Di Tella, R., and MacCulloch, R. in their article *Inequality and happiness: Are Europeans and Americans different?* explore whether and why inequality negatively affects individual happiness even after controlling for individual income.

2.4 Attitudes and beliefs

It's likely that different attitudes and beliefs correlate with each other. Moreover, very little part of papers claim causality from these subjective factors to the life satisfaction level itself. Thus I'm not using other results from this group of researches in my paper to avoid variable correlation. And I also do not claim that any of my results are deterministic.

Though this group of papers show that there's some part of happiness that objective factors can't explain. Thus, there is a lot of evidence that trust, tolerance, specific political views may affect life satisfaction. Helliwell also finds that the bigger trust in other people both close and passersby means in general higher levels of happiness.

The previous research gives us some ideas to develop. Firstly, for different countries in different years it was proven that there are important objective factors that influence one's happiness. Secondly, there are plenty of researches focused on finding how relatively more subjective determinants as attitudes, relativistic approaches and beliefs correlate with the life satisfaction level. Therefore, it might be interesting to see how attitudes to gender equality correlate with the life satisfaction level and what else may impact the response variable.

2.5 Social studies

Before we go to the social studies, there is a wide range of papers claiming there is a consistent impact of gender inequality on a macroeconomic level. Klassen and Lamanna in *The Impact Of Gender Inequality In Education And Employment On Economic Growth: New Evidence For A Panel Of Countries* use cross-country and panel regression to show that educational gender gaps may be a reason of a quite significant decrease the economic growth.

But above the conservative macroeconomic metrics, we can also look at the happiness level in the country. According to Holter's research *Gender Equality Gives Men Better Lives*, countries where the gender equality is on the low levels the men suicide rates are the

highest, whereas nations with higher levels of gender equality have a narrower gender difference in suicide. It has been shown that the prevalence of men's depressions peaks amid financial crises. And the outcome is consistent in all continents. During the economic downturn of 90s in Hong Kong, the suicide rate among middle ages men nearly doubled. Male suicide rates increased after 2007, as Europe experienced recessions. Though both men and women commit suicide during economic downturns, men commit suicide at a higher rate.

3 Data

The data I use is provided by European Bank of Reconstruction Development. The World Bank and the EBRD approached 51 thousands households. The similar survey was carried out three times, but we are interested in the latest of the year 2016. The survey was held in 34 countries, 32 of which are transition. I exclude Germany, Italy, Cyprus, and Greece as not transition countries from the data set. This is a rare opportunity when we can control for country effects while investigating the correlations.

The outcome variable of interest is the reported life satisfaction level. Every respondent was asked to agree or disagree with the statement: *"All things considered, I am satisfied with my life now"*. They were suggested to choose the level of agreement within a 5 grade scale. This is a standard way to collect the data on life satisfaction.

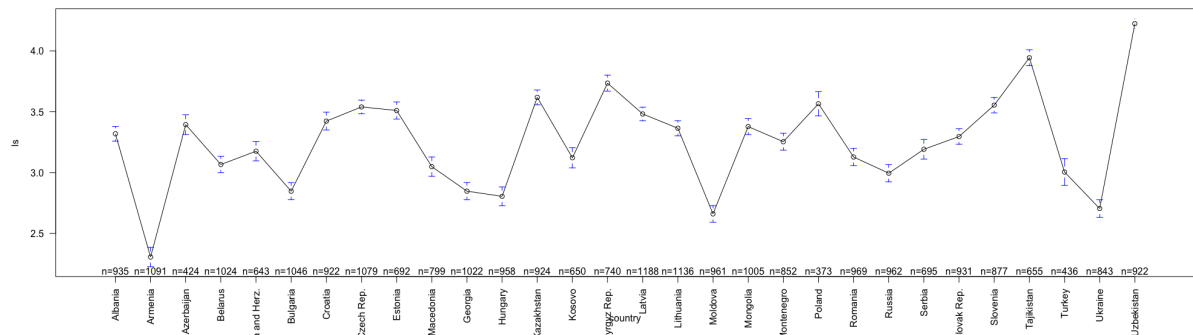


Figure 1: Life satisfaction, means

To measure the gender equality attitudes I used a statement: *"Women are as competent as men to be business executives"*. Candidates were also suggested to express their agreement on a 5 grade scale.

4 Methodology and Results

4.1 Baseline regression

I use OLS model controlling for country fixed effects. We see that the life satisfaction means are different for the different countries. This may mean that there are some country-level macro economic determinants that may affect the outcome variable. And they also could bias the explanatory variables I use, so we need to control for this.

Throughout the whole research I use a set of the same predictor variables to control for the major factors associated with the life satisfaction level. This is them being specified and also described why and how exactly I calculate them:

Gender is a factor variable of either an individual is female or male. I use it because there is an evidence that "women tend to report higher happiness level than men" (East-erlin, 2006).

Health is an answer on a 5 grade scale on the question: "*How would you assess your health?*". It is used because health is likely to be deterministic factor for one's life satisfaction level.

AdjustedIncome is an adjusted household income per capita (2010 US\$). There are plenty of research showing that this is a major factor for the happiness level.

Age, Age^2 are linear and squared age of the individual. Happiness levels are reported to grow and then fall with age.

MaritalStatus is the respondent's marital status being one of Single (never married), Married, Widowed, Divorced or Separate. It's also shown that being single associated with the major impact to happiness.

Education is the highest education level being completed by the respondent. I use it because of consistent result that more educated people are happier

EmploymentStatus is a factor variable of either the respondent worked in the last 7 days, at least one hour. If not, I consider them being unemployed.

4.2 Do gender equality attitudes affect life satisfaction?

First, I would like to understand if the gender attitudes themselves are associated with any change in the happiness level. To do this I use response on the question on the gender attitudes described in the Data section. We can expect that the gender attitudes is associated with the different pair of the happiness levels for men and women. So I add the interaction term to the model:

GenderEquality is a factor variable. I consider one is likely to 'Agree' if they answered 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' on the gender equality question. And if one answered

'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', they are marked as 'Disagree'.

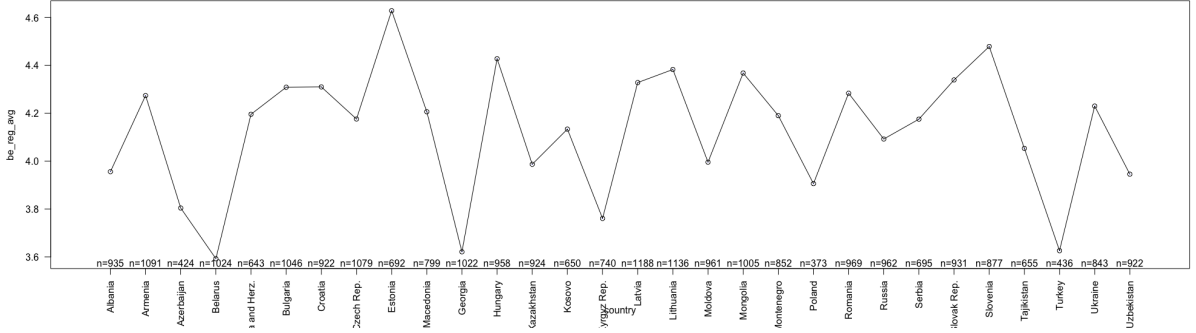


Figure 2: Gender equality attitudes, country averages

Figure 3 shows the results of the regression described in this subsection:

$$\begin{aligned}
 LS_i^1 = & \alpha + \beta_1 GenderEquality_i + \beta_2 GenderEquality_i * Gender_i + \beta_3 Gender_i + \beta_4 Health_i + \\
 & + \beta_5 \log(AdjustedIncome_i) + \beta_6 Age_i + \beta_7 Age_i^2 + \beta_7 MaritalStatus_i + \beta_9 Education_i + \\
 & + \beta_{10} EmploymentStatus_i + \epsilon_i
 \end{aligned}$$

And indeed we see that attitudes associated with the life satisfaction level differently for two genders. So men who are likely to agree that women as competent as men in business are 16% happier than those who don't. However, for women the gap in the happiness level holding all other factors constant is only 5%. I'll cover the interpretation in the paper below, but first let's see the other determinants.

4.3 Does deviation from the social norms affect life satisfaction?

Next, it is interesting if the deviation from the society's beliefs and attitudes reflects on the life satisfaction level. It is a well founded knowledge that people don't like to deviate from the social norms because it may lead to exclusion and therefore, we may suppose to the lower life satisfaction level (McDonald R.I., Crandall C. S, 2015).

To generate the deviation variable we use responses for the very same gender equality question. But this time we also need to calculate a country-wide average opinion. To do this I weight the responses using the sample weights and calculate a country mean, which is an average value of the response. Therefore we get:

DifferenceFromAvg is a factor variable. I consider it to be 'StrongUp' if one's response is at least 1 point higher than the average one. Qualitatively speaking, this means that an individual is much more confident that genders are equal comparing to their acquaintance. And vice versa, the variable is 'Strong down' if one's response is at least 1

<i>Predictors</i>	gender & attitudes	
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>std. Error</i>
GenderFemale	0.17 ***	0.04
Health	-0.26 ***	0.01
log(AdjustedIncome)	0.11 ***	0.01
Age	-0.02 ***	0.00
Age2	0.00 ***	0.00
MaritalStatusMarried	0.12 ***	0.02
MaritalStatusWidowed	-0.08 *	0.03
MaritalStatusDivorced	-0.17 ***	0.03
MaritalStatusSeparate	-0.23 ***	0.07
Education	0.06 ***	0.01
EmploymentStatusUnemployed	-0.08 ***	0.02
GenderEqualityAgree	0.16 ***	0.03
GenderFemale:GenderEqualityAgree	-0.11 *	0.05
Observations	18403	
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.092 / 0.090	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 3: Attitudes to gender equality & life satisfaction.

point lower than the country's average.

And again here we also may expect the result to be different for the genders. Figure 4 shows the results of the two regressions described in this subsection. One is simple linear and another includes variables interaction:

$$LS_i^2 = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{DifferenceFromAvg}_i + \beta_2 \text{Gender}_i + \beta_3 \text{Health}_i + \beta_4 \log(\text{AdjustedIncome}_i) + \beta_5 \text{Age}_i + \beta_6 \text{Age}_i^2 + \beta_7 \text{MaritalStatus}_i + \beta_8 \text{Education}_i + \beta_9 \text{EmploymentStatus}_i + \epsilon_i$$

$$LS_i^3 = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{DifferenceFromAvg}_i + \beta_2 \text{DifferenceFromAvg}_i * \text{Gender}_i + \beta_3 \text{Gender}_i + \beta_4 \text{Health}_i + \beta_5 \log(\text{AdjustedIncome}_i) + \beta_6 \text{Age}_i + \beta_7 \text{Age}_i^2 + \beta_8 \text{MaritalStatus}_i + \beta_9 \text{Education}_i + \beta_{10} \text{EmploymentStatus}_i + \epsilon_i$$

There are several outcomes we can see from running this regression. First, deviation indeed is associated with a significant part of the life satisfaction level. As it was expected, difference from the social norms is tied in with the fact that people adjust their energy

<i>Predictors</i>	deviation		gender & deviation	
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>std. Error</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>std. Error</i>
GenderFemale	0.06 ***	0.02	0.06 **	0.02
Health	-0.26 ***	0.01	-0.26 ***	0.01
log(AdjustedIncome)	0.11 ***	0.01	0.11 ***	0.01
Age	-0.02 ***	0.00	-0.02 ***	0.00
Age2	0.00 ***	0.00	0.00 ***	0.00
MaritalStatusMarried	0.12 ***	0.02	0.12 ***	0.02
MaritalStatusWidowed	-0.08 *	0.03	-0.08 *	0.03
MaritalStatusDivorced	-0.17 ***	0.03	-0.17 ***	0.03
MaritalStatusSeparate	-0.22 **	0.07	-0.22 **	0.07
Education	0.06 ***	0.01	0.06 ***	0.01
EmploymentStatusUnemployed	-0.08 ***	0.02	-0.07 ***	0.02
DifferenceFromAvgStorgUp	0.18 ***	0.03	0.22 ***	0.04
DifferenceFromAvgStrongDown	-0.08 ***	0.02	-0.13 ***	0.03
GenderFemale:DifferenceFromAvgStorgUp			-0.05	0.05
GenderFemale:DifferenceFromAvgStrongDown			0.11 *	0.05
Observations	18403		18403	
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.093 / 0.092		0.094 / 0.092	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 4: Deviation from the country mean & life satisfaction.

use to be more in line with their neighbors. And this may affect their life satisfaction level a lot.

However, what we see in this regression that in general downstream deviation is associated with a decrease while an upstream with an increase. Moreover, the upstream deviation means a higher delta in the happiness level of 22% while downstream is only 8%. This may be caused by the fact that people who tend to agree with gender equality is less tied by the social norms. I want to highlight here that these numbers are really big in real world sense. They are comparable with the income effect and marital status.

Also if we include gender interaction, we get another very interesting evidence. Men in general are more than 20% happier when deviate upwards. And we don't get any statistically significant result for women here. However, while downwards deviation for men means 13% lower life satisfaction, women do not report significant relation here.

Finally, we can have a look at the exact deviation. And, of course, again and consistently, we expect the result to be different for different genders. To understand the generic deviation itself I define a new variable:

DifferenceFromAvgABS is an absolute difference between the defined above weighted country mean and the respondent's answer.

Figure 5 shows the results of the regression described in this subsection:

$$LS_i^1 = \alpha + \beta_1 DifferenceFromAvgABS_i + \beta_2 DifferenceFromAvgABS_i * Gender_i + \beta_3 Gender_i + \beta_4 Health_i + \beta_5 \log(AdjustedIncome_i) + \beta_6 Age_i + \beta_7 Age_i^2 + \beta_8 MaritalStatus_i + \beta_9 Education_i + \beta_{10} EmploymentStatus_i + \epsilon_i$$

<i>Predictors</i>	absolute deviation	
	<i>Estimates</i>	<i>std. Error</i>
GenderFemale	0.03	0.02
Health	-0.26 ***	0.01
log(AdjustedIncome)	0.11 ***	0.01
Age	-0.02 ***	0.00
Age2	0.00 ***	0.00
MaritalStatusMarried	0.12 ***	0.02
MaritalStatusWidowed	-0.08 *	0.03
MaritalStatusDivorced	-0.17 ***	0.03
MaritalStatusSeparate	-0.23 ***	0.07
Education	0.06 ***	0.01
EmploymentStatusUnemployed	-0.08 ***	0.02
DifferenceFromAvgABS	-0.06 ***	0.02
GenderFemale:DifferenceFromAvgABS	0.07 **	0.02
Observations	18403	
R ² / R ² adjusted	0.091 / 0.089	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 5: Absolute deviation from the country mean & life satisfaction.

And again we get the same consistent result of that deviation in gender equality attitudes in general is associated with a lower level of life satisfaction. However this relation is more powerful for men than for women.

5 Conclusion and Further Research

We see that gender attitudes indeed are associated with a major part of the life satisfaction level. Moreover, being a social norm, perception of genders may affect one's happiness if deviated from. However, upward deviation in general is tied in with a much higher levels

of happiness comparable to an increase by 1 point on a five grade scale of life satisfaction.

At the same time downstream deviation from the social norm or in general lower beliefs in gender equality are not significantly associated or correlated to the life satisfaction level of women. And vice versa it is associated with a significant part of men's life satisfaction comparable to the income effect.

One may say that the results do not show the causation between the dependant variable and the predictors. And indeed this is true. However, we see that there is a strong correlation between gender equality attitudes or even social norms and the life satisfaction level. There is a place for more research made on how one's beliefs correlate with the political views, trust and many other attitudes. This particular outcome of variable correlation is interesting and valuable because it finds a lot of support in social studies.

I believe these gender differences occur because the more an individual associates with stereotypical conceptions of masculinity, the more insecure he is. In reality, it is shown that men with more patriarchal attitudes are more likely to have symptoms of depression or even suicidal thoughts (Coleman, 2015). It is a risk to relate on the traditional masculinity because it especially concerns men who are unable to meet that expectation due to some unfortunate life experiences as job loss or weak health. Of course, Coleman highlights, a more liberal view will not save people from depression or suicide but it may significantly release the pressure and cause the suicide rates decrease. Men simply will have a back-up and will be happier to have the support not pressure.

Although I don't claim any causality in my paper, I think the research made supports the related social studies on the gender equality. We see that men may suffer and benefit probably because of their own beliefs as well social norms set in their neighborhood. We can expect that women that are qualified and capable of working may reduce the financial burden that men bear. And this gives us a well-founded hope that once social norms are shifting to more liberal attitudes about gender equality the society in general will become happier.

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