

IMPACTS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES ON FAMILIES IN CZECH REPUBLIC

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As the state moves towards market economy, the expectation is that the standard of living for people will eventually improve. The purpose of the study is to investigate a sample of Czech families adjust to a changing economy during 1990–1995. This article presents the results of investigation from 1990, 1991. The connection between economic strain and individual well-being is investigated via mailed questionnaires from 234 households in the Czech Republic. For women, depression rises more with economic strain than does hostility, while men become more hostile than depressed in the face of economic strain. For women, social support is a buffer for economic strain and hostility, whereas self-esteem is a buffer for depression. For men, both self-esteem and social support exacerbate hostility due to economic strain.

• economic strain; depression; hostility; social support; self-esteem

In November of 1989, Czechoslovakia began a reform process, similar to other countries in Eastern Europe. The twin dimensions of this reform are democracy and a market economy. Personal consumption has recently developed, and the imbalance between demand and supply increased in Czechoslovakia during the 1990's.

Food prices increased by 26 percent in July of 1990, petrol prices by 50 percent, and the cost of train travel rose by 100 percent (P e c h a č o - v á , H r a b a , 1991). Prices of goods and services in the third quarter of 1990 were 14.1% higher than they were in the same quarter of 1989. Income increased from 1989 to 1990 by 6%, only 3.4% for wages, but money loaned to people rose by 24% (P e c h a č o v á , H r a b a , 1991).

In 1990, there were 7 866 200 workers in Czechoslovakia, 3 606 800 of which were women. Just over 300 000 report a second job. Nine percent of the people of retirement age still work. From March to August 1990, unemployment increased by 21 000 in Czechoslovakia, by 6 000 in August alone,

and thus there were 60 000 unemployed in November. Before 1989 wage differentials in Czechoslovakia favored men over women; skilled manual workers over most white-collar workers; workers in heavy industry, mining and agriculture over those in most other sectors; older workers over younger ones; and the party apparatus. For now, we can see a coping strategy on the part of the families studied, that relies not on starting new businesses; indeed the respondents said that conditions must change before they would venture in that direction, but on making do by using savings, seeking additional financial support, working more hours and curtailment of certain expenditures, such as those on services, transportation, vacations, entertainment and even food.

The respondents were asked how their families are adjusting to economic changes in Czechoslovakia. These responses are shown in Tab. I.

When asked if their monthly salary had changed, just over 49% said it had increased by less than 5%, and almost 20% said it had increased between 5 and 10%. Over 13% indicated a decrease in salary up to 10% and almost 5% reported a decrease between 11 and 20%.

The research project includes keeping a log of economic and political changes in Czechoslovakia. Each fall from 1990 through 1995, families will be asked about the impact of these changes on them. The purpose is to learn how these families experience economic and political change as ongoing life events, their adjustments, and the impact of this change on family members and their relationships over a span of five years.

Measures of life events include standard scales of family economic stress, economic hardship, economic strain, economic constraint and perceptions of economic opportunity. Initial assessments will be followed by additional annual ones in a longitudinal design. It is hypothesized that family members have both resources and liabilities for coping with stressful life events, and these will in part determine both the social and psychological outcomes for family members. For example, prior psychological states, family savings and interpersonal support outside the immediate family can be resources/liabilities critical to adjustments to the changes in the Czech Republic. The psychological states of household members are measured with standard instruments, such as self-esteem scales, mastery scales, and rates of these measures are considered resources/liabilities. Differences on these measures and those in subsequent years are considered psychological outcomes of ongoing life events in the larger change process. Family finances are recorded in terms of employment, income, as well as debts and assets, and initial measures of these are resources/liabilities and later readings of these same measures are both outcomes and resources/liabilities carried into subsequent years. Extrafamily-

I. Economic adjustments

Response	Percentage		Agricultural family	
	1990	1991	1990	1991
1. Took a second job	12.8	15.6	11.0	17.6
2. Spouse took a second job	12.8	15.2	10.1	15.1
3. Used savings	70.5	66.3	69.0	66.3
4. Sold belongings	6.8	7.0	10.2	7.0
5. Took out bank loans	15.8	12.1	17.0	12.1
6. Pawned furniture	1.3	0.5	2.3	-
7. Changed food purchases	63.7	77.9	61	77.9
8. Changed transportation	46.2	46.7	48.3	44.8
9. Decreased purchases of services	53.9	69.8	52.5	69.9
10. Decreased spending on entertainment	65.4	78.9	68.6	78.9
11. Decreased medical services	5.1	5.5	3.4	5.5
12. Non payment of taxes	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.5
13. Sold land	0.4	2.0	0	0
14. Children went into labor force	2.1	1.5	1.7	1.5
15. Children contribute to household income	4.3	11.1	7.6	11.0
16. Help with household duties	13.3	16.1	13.6	16.1
17. Child care	13.3	7.5	15.3	7.5
18. Children help with household duties	11.1	11.6	14.1	11.6
19. Borrowed money	19.7	19.6	21.2	19.6
20. Did not take a vacation	29.9	48.7	42.4	48.8
21. Sought support	17.1	11.6	21.2	11.6
22. Non-payment of bills	3.9	3.5	4.2	3.3
23. Made investments	6.8	11.6	6.8	11.6
24. Worked more hours	28.6	40.2	34.8	40.2
25. Children not getting more education	0.9	1.0	-	2.5
26. Stopped insurance payments	7.3	10.6	6.0	16.6
27. Decreased use of car	68.4	64.8	71.2	64.8
28. Went abroad to work	0.4	0.4	-	0.5
29. Started own business	2.1	7.0	2.5	7.0
30. Rented rooms or cottages	2.1	2.0	0	2.0
31. Sold own products	7.3	8.5	11.0	8.5
32. Sold own fruits, vegetables and flowers	12.0	15.1	17.0	15.1

liar resources/liabilities are indicated by standard measures of interpersonal support in times of stress. Measures of family structure and process, standard of living and social participation are also taken to gauge both the base rate and impact of economic and political change on family relations. These measures include those on marital instability, family conflict and distress.

Following the stress-distress paradigm, the link between economic strain, and depression and hostility are examined in this paper. Based on the findings of Elder (1974) and Conger et al. (1992) in the United States, it is expected that economic strain will result in depression for women and hostility for men. Also found in stress-distress research is that people are differentially vulnerable to stress due to mediating and moderating variables. For example, self-esteem has been found to be a resource in recognizing stress and doing something about it, and social support from others can ameliorate the effects of stress (Coyné, Downey, 1991). Social support and self-esteem are introduced as variables elaborating the relationship between economic strain, depression and hostility by gender in this paper.

METHODS

Sample

Two-hundred and ninety-four households in the Czech Republic were randomly selected from a 4 000 household sampling frame by the Czech Statistical Bureau in 1990. Questionnaires were distributed in person during October, 1990. The instruction was to mail completed questionnaires to the Agriculture University of Prague, at which time respondents would receive a stipend. Two-hundred and thirty-four questionnaires were returned. One-hundred and twenty-two of the households worked in agriculture, 24 were manual laborers, and 88 were non-manual workers (white collar). Almost two-thirds of the questionnaires were completed by women (66.38%), and one-third by men (33.62%). Over 78% of the sample was between 26 and 50 years of age. 36.6% lived in homes, 29.7% in cooperative apartments, 25.4% in state apartments, and 8.2% in other forms of housing. 28.13% of the respondents lived in villages of up to 999 population, 10.4% in towns of 1 000–1 999, 4.3% in towns of 2 000 to 4 999, 13.9% in towns 5 000–19 999, 20.8% in cities 20 000–99 999, and 22.5% in cities over 100 000. With regard to their highest level of education, 5.6% of the respondents had only elementary education, 10.3% finished training school, 57.6% finished practical high school, 5.1% finished gymnasium, and 21.8% were university graduates. With respect to family size, 11.1% were a single-person, 22.2% were a two-person, 23.1% were a three-person, 29.9% were a four-person, 10.3% were

a five-person. 3% were a six-person, and 0.4% were a seven-person household. The vast majority of the respondents reported per capita household incomes between 901 and 2 700 crowns per month. 16.1% had income of 901–1 200 crowns, 19.3% had 1 201–1 500 crowns, 13.9% had 1 501–1 800, 12.1% had 1 801–2 100, 10.3% had 2 101–2 400, and 5.8% had per capital income of 2 401–2 700.

Variable Measures

Economic strain. This measure was originally developed by Pearlín et al. (1981), and it has been found to link negative economic events to a subjective perception of economic problems (Conger et al., 1992; Pearlín et al., 1981). Economic strain includes items on cognitive, emotional and behavioral adjustments which indicate that respondents are experiencing difficulty in meeting family needs with resources. Economic strain measures the experience of economic hardship as a mismatch between a desired standard of living and the means to obtain that standard. It is a nine-item scale in this study that specifically measures the perceived affordability of housing, household goods, automobiles, sufficient food, clothing, medical care and desired leisure activities. The scale was found to be reliable with an α -coefficient of 0.67, mean = 1.43 and SD = 0.25. In this study, this measure is employed as an independent variable.

Depression. The measure of depression was developed by Derogatis (1983) and is part of the SCL-90-R. The depression dimension of the SCL-90-R is comprised of 13 items, asking about depressive symptoms such as loss of sexual interest, crying easily, low energy levels, thoughts of suicide, feeling blue and worried, hopelessness and worthlessness, etc. The scale was found to be reliable (α = 0.86), mean = 0.63 and SD = 0.59.

Hostility. This measure is also part of the SCL-90-R. The hostility dimension consists of six items, asking about hostility symptoms including feeling easily irritated, getting into frequent arguments, having temper outbursts, having the urge to harm someone or something, etc. The scale was found to be reliable (α = 0.75), mean = 0.66 and SD = 0.58.

Social support. This measure includes perceptions of support from others, reports of tangible support from others and a sense of belonging. For example, respondents are asked if they have someone who can give them advice on how they are handling their problems (perception of support), if they have someone who can help them make household repairs or take them to the doctor (tangible support), and if they have someone they can talk with when feeling lonely (sense of belonging). The scale consists of 40 items and it is reliable (α = 0.89), mean = 3.22 and SD = 0.35.

RESULTS

The associations between economic strain, and depression and hostility for both men and women are shown in Tab. II with all variables dichotomized at the median. The effects of economic strain on depression and hostility are greater for men than women. However, female respondents report more depression than males regardless of economic strain, consistent with previous findings in the United States (A n e s h e n s e l et al., 1991). At a low level of economic strain, Czech women report both more depression and hostility than do men, but under high economic strain more men report hostility but not depression.

We hypothesized that social support would moderate depression and hostility. The associations between social support, depression and hostility by sex are shown in Tab. III. Social support is associated with lower depression for both men and women, and the relation is statistically significant for women. Social support is weakly associated with lower hostility for women, but there is no relationship between social support and hostility for men.

Self-esteem was also hypothesized to moderate depression and hostility. The associations shown in Tab. IV show a modest relation between self-esteem and lower depression for both men and women, although neither association reached statistical significance. Self-esteem is associated with

II. Associations between economic strain, depression and hostility by sex

Economic strain		Male		Female	
		low	high	low	high
Depression *	low	35 (83.3)	22 (64.7)	55 (58.5)	29 (50.9)
	high	7 (16.7)	12 (35.3)	39 (41.5)	28 (49.1)
Hostility **	low	31 (73.8)	15 (44.1)	53 (55.3)	26 (45.6)
	high	11 (26.2)	19 (55.9)	42 (44.7)	31 (54.4)
Total		42 (100.0)	34 (100.0)	94 (100.0)	57 (100.0)

* χ^2 with 1 DF = 3.47 for male ($p = 0.06$), 0.84 for female ($p = 0.36$)

** χ^2 with 1 DF = 7.00 for male ($p < 0.01$), 1.34 for female ($p = 0.24$)

III. Associations between social support, depression and hostility by sex

Social support		Male		Female	
		low	high	low	high
Depression *	low	23 (65.7)	33 (82.5)	24 (38.1)	53 (64.6)
	high	12 (34.3)	7 (17.5)	39 (61.9)	29 (35.4)
Hostility **	low	20 (57.1)	25 (62.5)	26 (41.3)	50 (61.0)
	high	15 (42.9)	15 (37.5)	37 (58.7)	32 (39.0)
Total		35 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	63 (100.0)	82 (100.0)

Number of missing observations = 14

* χ^2 with 1 DF = 2.97 for male ($p = 0.095$), 10.18 for female ($p < 0.005$)

** χ^2 with 1 DF = 0.22 for male ($p = 0.637$), 5.58 for female ($p = 0.018$)

IV. Associations between self-esteem, depression and hostility by sex

Self-esteem		Male		Female	
		low	high	low	high
Depression *	low	23 (65.7)	33 (82.5)	44 (50.0)	34 (63.0)
	high	12 (34.3)	7 (17.5)	44 (50.0)	20 (37.0)
Hostility **	low	20 (57.1)	26 (65.0)	39 (44.3)	35 (64.8)
	high	15 (42.9)	14 (35.0)	49 (55.7)	19 (35.2)
Total		35 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	88 (100.0)	54 (100.0)

Number of missing observations = 17

* χ^2 with 1 DF = 2.79 for male ($p = 0.095$), 2.29 for female ($p = 0.139$)

** χ^2 with 1 DF = 0.49 for male ($p = 0.486$), 5.70 for female ($p = 0.017$)

lower hostility for women, but there is virtually no relationship between self-esteem and hostility for men.

Depression is moderated by social support for both men and women, as is hostility for women. However, does social support moderate the relationship between economic strain, and depression and hostility? For women, social support does not moderate the relationship between economic strain and depression, but it does moderate the relation between economic strain and hostility. There is a significant increase in reported hostility between low and high economic strain under low social support ($\chi^2 = 3.704$, $p = 0.05$), but no significant increase in hostility between low and high economic strain under high social support ($\chi^2 = 0.111$, $p = 0.74$). For men it is the reverse. Social support moderates the relation between economic strain and depression but not the one between economic strain and hostility. There is a significant increase in depression from low to high economic strain under low social support ($\chi^2 = 3.157$, $p = 0.076$) but not under high social support ($\chi^2 = 0.230$, $p = 0.631$). There is a significant increase in hostility from low to high economic strain under both low and high social support ($\chi^2 = 3.838$, 3.546 ; $p = 0.05$, 0.06).

We also found that self-esteem does not moderate the relation between economic strain, and depression and hostility for women. Both depression and hostility increased with high economic strain under both low and high self-esteem. No trend could be established for men because of low cell frequencies.

DISCUSSION

In the course of economic change in Czechoslovakia, we found that economic strain has a greater effect on the depression and hostility of men than women. Not being able to afford a desired standard of living appears to be more of a threat to the adult male role in Czech culture, at least it results in more stress symptoms, namely, depression and hostility for men. By the same token, more women report high depression and hostility under both low and high economic strain, and the only exception is that a slightly higher percentage of men report high hostility under high economic strain.

Under high economic strain, men's depression is affected by their social support, the more social support then the less depression increases with economic strain, but their hostility jumps with high economic strain regardless of social support. Under high economic strain, women's hostility is affected by social support, the more social support then the less hostility increases with economic strain, but their depression increases with high economic strain regardless of social support. Although the primary hypothesis that

economic strain would produce hostility in men and depression in women was not confirmed, these findings suggest a more direct effect of economic strain on hostility for men and depression for women. Men's depression is moderated by social support while their hostility is unaffected by their social support. For women, it is the reverse. Their hostility is moderated by social support, but not their depression. No such trends were established for self-esteem as a moderator variable.

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Společný česko-americký tým zahájil zkoumání dopadu ekonomických a společenských změn v ČR na rodiny v roce 1990. Druhá vlna průzkumu proběhla v roce 1991. Některé výsledky těchto šetření jsou obsahem tohoto sdělení a byly rovněž využity v návrhu projektu, který získal grant Národního ústavu pro duševní zdraví (National Institut of Mental Health) v USA na pokračování výzkumu v letech 1993 až 1996. Z tohoto důvodu dochází k postupnému publikování nálezů v USA a ČR a jejich prezentaci na evropských kongresech. V této studii je aplikován model stres-distres (důsledky stresu na fyzickou a psychickou pohodu), který byl ověřen americkými výzkumníky v období krize v USA (Elder, 1974) a v zemědělské krizi v roce 1980. V roce 1990 vzrostly ceny potravin o 26 %, benzínu o 50 % a jízdného

na železnici o 100 %. Ceny služeb vzrostly oproti roku 1989 o 14,1 %. Příjmy vzrostly o 6 %, mzdy pouze o 3,4 %, ale peněžní půjčky o 24 %. V prosinci 1990 bylo 79 tis. nezaměstnaných, v únoru 152 tis.

Stanovená hypotéza předpokládala, že lidé, kteří lépe kontrolují průběh svého života (životních událostí), kteří vydávají prostředky tak, aby ovlivňovali stres, a kteří si udržují sebekontrolu, sebeúctu a sociální vztahy, naleznou v nové situaci způsoby, jak dosáhnout vyšší životní úrovně.

Ve spolupráci s ČSÚ byl vybrán vzorek 294 domácností. Návratnost vyplněných dotazníků byla 80 % (234), z toho 66,4 % dotazníků vyplňovaly ženy a 33,6 % muži. Průměrný věk byl téměř 40 let, z toho více než 78 % dotázaných bylo ve věku mezi 26 a 56 lety. 11 % respondentů žilo samostatně, přes 22 % ve dvoučlenné domácnosti, 23 % ve tříčlenné, téměř 30 % ve čtyřčlenné, přes 10 % v pětičlenné, 3 % v šestičlenné a méně než 1 % v sedmičlenné domácnosti. 122 rodin bylo zemědělských, 24 pracovalo manuálně mimo zemědělství a 88 představitelů rodin byli zaměstnanci (ostatní). Pokud jde o vzdělání, 5,6 % respondentů mělo základní vzdělání, 10,3 % bylo vyučeno, 47,6 % mělo střední odbornou školu, 5,1 % gymnázium a 21,8 % vysokoškolské vzdělání.

Byly zkoumány tyto proměnné: ekonomické napětí, deprese, hostilita, společenská podpora, sebehodnocení, sebekontrola.

Zjistili jsme, že v průběhu ekonomických změn v České republice má ekonomické napětí větší vliv na depresi a hostilitu u mužů než u žen. Ukazuje se, že nemožnost dosáhnout očekávané životní úrovně ohrožuje tradiční mužskou roli a nakonec vyústí v symptomy stresu, zejména deprese a hostility, zatímco více žen přiznává vysokou depresi a hostilitu při nízkém a vysokém ekonomickém napětí. Pouze výjimečně o něco větší procento mužů udává vysokou hostilitu při vysokém ekonomickém napětí. Deprese u mužů je v tomto případě ovlivňována jejich sociální podporou (SP), tj. čím je větší sociální podpora, tím méně vzrůstá deprese při ekonomickém napětí (EN), ale jejich hostilita stoupá s vysokým EN bez ohledu na SP. Při vysokém EN je hostilita žen ovlivněna SP: čím je větší SP, tím pomaleji vzrůstá hostilita s EN, ale jejich deprese roste s EN bez ohledu na SP. Poznatky získané šetřením naznačují, že EN má větší vliv na hostilitu u mužů a depresi u žen. Mužskou depresi zmírňuje SP, zatímco jejich hostilita jí ovlivněna není. U žen je tomu naopak. Hostilita je tlumena SP, ale deprese nikoliv. Vliv sebehodnocení jako moderující proměnné v této fázi výzkumu potvrzen nebyl.

ekonomické napětí; deprese; hostilita; sociální podpora; sebehodnocení

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