

Title: The use of time during the daily life in the dual-earner couples. Productive and reproductive time in the south Europe countries from a gender perspective

Authors: Marc Ajenjo Cosp

Joan García Román

Keywords: use of time, gender inequality, productive time, reproductive time, Spain, Italy.

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to analyze the use of the time from a gender perspective, between the couples whose both members are employed, denominated by dual-earner couples. This paper will focus majorly in the aspects related with the use of the time—division between men and women of the productive and reproductive time, time spent in personal care, movements, or leisure time in all their dimensions, and others. The paper will focus in the Mediterranean Europe, more concretely in Italy and Spain.

During the last years, in south Europe countries, the dual-earner couples has increased considerably and it continues increasing (Alberdi, 1999; Franco y Wiqvist, 2002). In the Spain case, for example, in 1992 dual-earner couples represents one third of the households composed by persons between 20 and 59 years old, while in 2000 it reached the 45%. It represents an important increment, and it is also more important when we take into account that the biggest incidence is between the young couples, which has been formed more recently, so nowadays the proportion is probably majority.

The main reason of this increase is the entry of the women in the labour market, which in south of Europe countries is later than the rest of the continent (Alberdi, 1999). In the middle of the 90s, Spain and Italy were the two European Union countries with the lowest female activity rate, in spite of the important increase in the last decades, it has not reach the mean of the Union yet.¹

The increment is based in one of the most important changes in the Europe work structure in the last years, an increment in the work time diversification (Gasparini *et al.*, 2000). Higher international competence, new methods of production and organization form and, mainly, the higher women participation in the labour market are the principal explanatory factors of that diversification (Fagan, 2003). In that sense, even when the partial time work is usually announced as a way to promote flexibility in the labour market according with the familiar protection policies and redistribution of the work existing, it does not have the same meaning in all the contexts. So, in countries like Holland it is a very common form of work, in part because it is not a business opportunity to reduce costs, but their characteristics are similar to

¹ Information is available in <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>.

complete time work, something that doesn't happen for example in Spain (Meda, 2002; Borràs *et al.*, 2007).

This employment characteristic has a dramatic impact in the use of time, mainly in those couples where both members are employed.

Data

The data source used is the Time Use Surveys, which under the guideline of Eurostat and following a harmonized methodology some countries carried out between 1998 and 2004. So 15 countries members of the European Union —Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom and Norway—, by means of their respective national statistical institute, developed that harmonized version.

The analysis will be concentrated in Italy and Spain. Both countries carried out the field of work during 2002-2003. They also have the biggest sample size —55.760 and 46.774, for Italy and Spain, respectively.

In both cases the Survey collects sociodemographic information about all the household members, in the way that it is possible to select couples according to their characteristics, as the case of the dual-earner couples. Furthermore, the survey collects the “use of time diary”, where all the activities done during a day are registered in time intervals of 10 minutes. Between the activities that can be deduce there are the working day, the time used in displacements to the place of work, to domestic tasks, to take care of children, leisure... All these activities are collected in a detail and concrete way, which is properly for an exhaustive analysis of the differences between men and women.

Main objectives

The objective of this paper is to evaluate the differences between men and women in relation with the time used in different activities in the two countries, which have a lot of common aspects. From the perspective of this work, the similarities are:

- As we said above, in spite of the increase in the female activity rate in the last years, it is far from the observed in the other countries of the Union.
- Italy and Spain are the countries of the European Union where the differences between men and women are higher in relation with the productive time. In both countries, the time that men spend to productive activities exceed more than two hours the time used by women (in Italy men spend 2:23 more than women to the production and in Spain 2:15), while in the other countries of the Union the difference is around one hour and a half in favour of men.

- Something similar happens when we analyze the reproductive time, where both countries are in the top of inequality. The time used by women to the reproduction exceed in more than 3 hours the time used by men to domestic tasks (the difference in Italy is 3:45 and 3:18 in Spain), while for the majority of the countries the difference is around 2 hours.²

All these factors seem to indicate that Spain and Italy are the European countries where some of the basic principles that base the male breadwinner model persist. But, the only incorporation of female to the labour market, which represents the generalization of the dual-earner couples, breaks one of the main aspects of this model. As we said before, in Spain and Italy the entry of female in the labour market is later than the rest of the European Union and this fact affects the time indicators described above. It is evident that exists a direct effect between the lower number of female in the labour market and the lower time used to productive activities by women, and in consequence to the time used in reproductive activities.

So then, to achieve the objective of this paper only the couples where both members are employed are going to be analyzed .It is going to be evaluate if there are a higher equilibrium between male and female in relation with the time devoted to productive and reproductive time, an equilibrium where the difference were more similar than the observed in the rest of the European countries. Otherwise, in the case that the division of the time was very unequal, it will be analyzed the effect of the inequality in relation with other activities like the activities related with leisure. Moreover it is going to be analyzed the explanatory factors which generate a higher inequality: level of education of the couple, age/cohort, cohabitation, the existence or arrival of children, and others.

² Mentioned data is from the Use of time Survey and it is referred to the 15 European countries that conducted this Survey between 1998 and 2004: Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom and Norway. Moreover, the information about productive and reproductive time is referred to the population between 20 and 74 years old. The information is available in <https://www.testh2.scb.se/tus/tus/StatMeanMact1.html>.