

THE PRECARIETY OF PARENTAL LABOUR IN RUSSIA AND EXPERIENCE OF MEASURING IT

Edgar Ilves – Anna Bagirova

Abstract

Parental labour is one of the main mechanisms of the reproduction of human capital. In today's Russia, parental labour is of great social importance, yet it lacks prestige and status, and it is virtually unpaid. We believe that this type of labour in contemporary Russia has signs of precarity.

The paper presents a methodology for assessing the level of precarity of parental labour and the results of its application. We identified variables that could be viewed as indicators for parental labour precarity. Alongside this, we identified economic, social and organisational conditions for labour.

Our research showed an increase in the level of precarity of parental labour in Russia in the last 10 years. The most significant was the negative dynamic for indicators reflecting economic conditions of parental labour. At the same time there was a certain improvement in the organisational conditions for parental labour at the family level.

A full understanding of the precarity of parental labour will enable the development of strategies to mitigate this precarity. We believe that overcoming the precarity of parental labour is one of the most important mechanisms for improving the demographic situation and increase in efficiency of human capital reproduction in today's Russia.

Key words: parental labour, precarity, human capital

JEL Code: J13, J28

Introduction

Like many European countries, Russia is struggling with the reproduction of human capital. The challenges comprise both a decrease in volume due to falling fertility and declining quality. In turn, this is born of several reasons: poor effectiveness of fertility stimulation policies, migration policies, continued changes to Russian education systems and so on.

Many institutions shape the reproduction of human capital – family, the education system, professional activities. Traditionally, family is the main institute that ensures the reproduction of human resources. Family, compared to other institutions, can be said to have a fundamental role – families are responsible for an individual's initial socialisation and professional orientation, thus creating a basis for the operation of other institution, determining the nature and effectiveness of activities for forming overall human capital. Different researchers take different views as regards which elements (assets) of human capital families are responsible for forming. Thus, Dobrynin, Dyatlov & Tsyrenova (1999) say that family creates a reserve of health, knowledge, skills, motivation, psychological stability and intellectual mobility. Bowen & Clecak (1977) name motivation and energy among such assets, Dolan & Lindsey (1992) point to intellectual abilities, Ilyinsky (1996) – health and cultural capital, Becker (1964) says it forms a part of a person's overall state of being, Thurow (1970) highlights respect for political and social stability, Vlasov (2005) – cultural and moral capital and so on. Even simply recounting these points of view shows that family has a very important role in forming human capital. Family sees the investment of labour, time, material and emotional resources in the upbringing and education, and physical, psychological and intellectual health of a future carrier of human capital.

Parental labour is the main mechanism of the reproduction of human capital. This is a complex and multi-faceted activity, which includes both mental and physical elements, and comprises both creativity and routine. As a rule, it is long-term and constant work that requires varied and significant expenditures. The process of parental labour entails parents making investments in children. Yet this requires parents to make a certain choice, as described by Becker and Murphy (1998): “Since parents must reduce their own consumption (including leisure) to raise the time and resources they spend on child care and children's education, training, and health, even altruistic parents have to consider the trade-off between their consumption and the human capital of children”.

In turn, the effectiveness of parental labour directly affects the quantity and quality of future human capital. In today's Russia, parental labour is of great social significance and importance, yet it lacks prestige and status, and it is virtually unpaid. We believe that this type of labour in contemporary Russia has signs of precarity.

Precarity has been thoroughly researched by scientists in the context of professional labour. Such studies have been carried out internationally for different types of labour. Thus, Canadian scientists Zhang & Zuberi (2017) analyse this phenomenon by comparing a country's labour laws and its economic realities. Peuter (2013) finds growing precarity for the unstable

market of creative professions in the USA. In studying precarity, scientists usually advocate various mitigation mechanisms – active labour market policies (Greer, 2016), greater social security (Harris & Scully, 2015) and others. Some works assess both public and private sector measures being implemented to regulate precarity levels. For example, international corporations in India use theatre-based corporate training programs that are designed to inspire employees to be more dynamic, aspirational and self-motivated at work. However, in Saddler's (2017) assessments, the use of such programs only leads to greater precarity for employees.

Our research seeks to identify and evaluate indications of precarity of parental labour in contemporary Russia. Its actualisation requires developing a system of indicators that could be seen as signs of conditions of precarity for parental labour.

1 Data and Methods

We propose assessing the level of precarity of parental labour through the totality of indicators for conditions of this type of labour. To ascertain these, we sequentially identified the conditions of parental labour, the signs of its precarity, and the totality of indicators that enable evaluating each indicator.

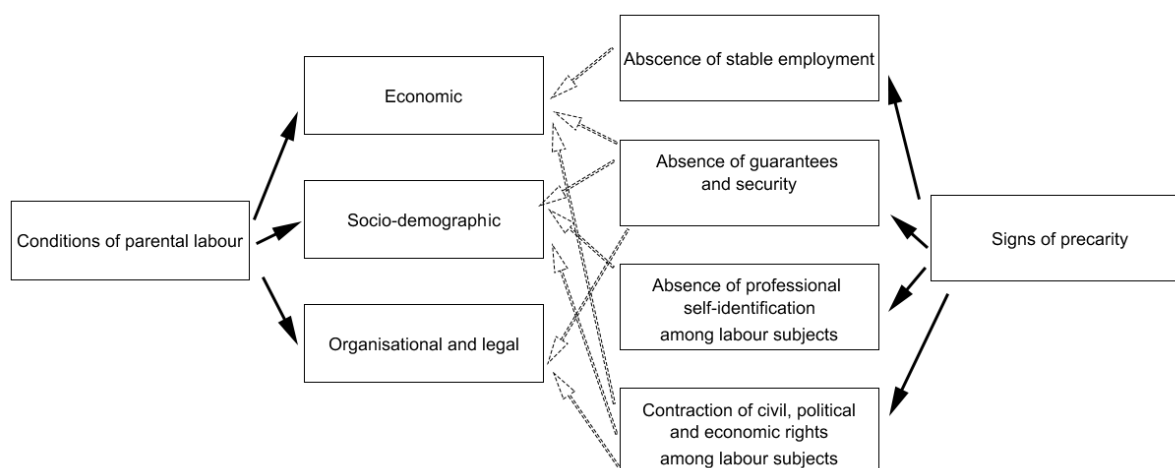
1. We have identified three types of conditions for parental labour:

- economic conditions, which create a base of parental material investment in the human capital of children;
- socio-demographic conditions, through which potential future subjects of parental labour acquire a social status that gives them desire to include having children into their life's strategy.

2. We compared the conditions for realising parental labour with known signs of labour precarity (Standing, 2014). This is shown in figure 1. The arrows highlight potential relationships between conditions and signs of the precarity of parental labour.

3. We identified potential indicators for evaluating each group of conditions for parental labour. We propose analysing the group of economic conditions of labour through a set of indicators related to people's incomes. Socio-demographic labour conditions can be measured through indicators related to a society's demographic structure, as well as subjective characteristics of people's attitudes toward parenthood and parents, and motives for having children. We propose evaluating organisational and legal conditions for parental labour through indicators related to the operation of social institutions involved in the reproduction of human capital (family, healthcare, education, legal services).

Fig. 1: Conditions and signs of the precarity of parental labour



Source: Developed by authors

4. The use of official Russian statistics has imposed certain restrictions on the number of indicators used in our research into the precarity of parental labour. These indicators included:

- economic conditions for the realisation of parental labour:

- 1) dynamics of people's real incomes;
- 2) proportion of the population with monetary income below subsistence levels;
- 3) proportion of unemployed persons;

- socio-demographic conditions for the realisation of parental labour:

- 1) number of women of childbearing age;
- 2) demographic load coefficient;
- 3) population migration growth coefficient;

- organisational and legal conditions for the realisation of parental labour:

- 1) ratio of marriages to divorces;
- 2) number of doctors of all specialisations per 10,000 people;
- 3) number of organisations that provide educational services for pre-school age children, and childcare and child-minding services.

We recognise that the pool of indicators that measure labour conditions is much wider. Full-scale research should draw on data beyond statistics and include information from public surveys and content analysis of legal documents. In this project, we deliberately limited the sources of information to official statistics only to focus on economic aspects of realising parental labour first and foremost.

5. For all named indicators, we calculated indices for the period 2005-2010 and 2010-2015. We then turned the indices for labour conditions into precarity indices. If there was a downturn in the labour conditions index, these two indices were treated as equal. If the content was such that a positive dynamic would indicate a worsening of labour conditions, we calculated the precarity index using the following formula:

$$i_{pn} = \frac{1}{i_n}, \quad (1)$$

where i_{pn} - index of precarity of parental labour for the n-th labour condition;
 i_n - index for the n-th labour condition.

6. The group precarity index was calculated using the formula:

$$I_{pm} = \sqrt[n]{i_{p1} \times i_{p2} \times \dots \times i_{pn}}, \quad (2)$$

where I_{pm} – precarity index for the m-th group of conditions of parental labour.

A group value index value that is greater than 1 shows deterioration of a particular group of conditions of parental labour and its increased precarity.

7. We calculated the integral index of conditions of parental labour for each period (I_p) using the following formula:

$$I_p = \sqrt[3]{I_{p1} \times I_{p2} \times I_{p3}}. \quad (3)$$

An integral index value that is greater than 1 shows deterioration of aggregate conditions for parental labour and its greater precarity.

2 Results

1. The results of analysis of the dynamics of economic conditions for parental labour are presented in table 1.

The group index of precarity connected to economic conditions of parental labour was:
 For 2005-2010:

$$I_{p1} = \sqrt[3]{1.06 \times 0.70 \times 0.83} = 0.85.$$

For 2010-2015:

$$I_{p1} = \sqrt[3]{1.10 \times 1.06 \times 0.91} = 1.02.$$

Accordingly, between 2005 and 2010, there was first improvement and then deterioration of economic conditions for parental labour. Moreover, the period between 2010 and 2015 saw a growth in the precarity of this type of labour. The most significant changes between 2005 and 2015 occurred in respect of the indicator “Proportion of population with monetary incomes below subsistence levels”.

Tab. 1: Results of analysis of the dynamics of economic conditions for parental labour in Russia in 2005-2015

Indicators	Labour conditions indices		Precarity indices	
	2005-2010	2010-2015	2005-2010	2010-2015
Dynamics of people’s real incomes	0.944	0.910	1.060	1.099
Proportion of the population with monetary income below subsistence levels	0.702	1.064	0.702	1.064
Proportion of unemployed persons	0.829	0.910	0.829	0.910

Source: Developed by authors

2. The results of analysis of the dynamics of socio-demographic conditions for parental labour are presented in table 2.

Tab. 2: The results of analysis of the dynamics of socio-demographic conditions for parental labour

Indicators	Labour conditions indices		Precarity indices	
	2005-2010	2010-2015	2005-2010	2010-2015
Number of women of childbearing age	0.948	0.981	0.948	0.981
Demographic load coefficient	1.063	1.182	1.063	1.182
Population migration growth coefficient	0.950	0.895	0.950	0.895

Source: Developed by authors

The group index of precarity connected to socio-demographic conditions for parental labour was:

For 2005-2010:

$$I_{p2} = \sqrt[3]{0.95 \times 1.06 \times 0.95} = 0.99.$$

For 2010-2015:

$$I_{p2} = \sqrt[3]{0.98 \times 1.18 \times 0.90} = 1.01.$$

Accordingly, between 2005 and 2010, there was first improvement and then deterioration of socio-demographic conditions for parental labour. Accordingly, there was a growth in the precarity of this type of labour between 2010 and 2015.

3. The results of analysis of the dynamics of organisational and legal conditions for parental labour are presented in table 3.

Tab. 3: The results of analysis of the dynamics of organisational and legal conditions for parental labour

Indicators	Labour conditions indices		Precarity indices	
	2005-2010	2010-2015	2005-2010	2010-2015
Ratio of marriages to divorces	0.928	1.002	0.928	1.002
Number of doctors of all specialisations per 10,000 people	1.031	0.160	0.970	1.092
Number of organisations that provide educational services for pre-school age children, and childcare and child-minding services	0.970	1.111	1.031	0.970

Source: Developed by authors

The group index of precarity connected to organisational and legal conditions of parental labour was:

For 2005-2010:

$$I_{p3} = \sqrt[3]{0.93 \times 0.97 \times 1.03} = 0.98.$$

For 2010-2015:

$$I_{p3} = \sqrt[3]{1.00 \times 1.09 \times 0.97} = 1.02.$$

Accordingly, between 2005 and 2010, there was first improvement and then deterioration of organisational and legal conditions for parental labour. The most significant changes between 2005 and 2015 occurred for the indicator “Ratio of marriages to divorces”. Moreover, there was growth in the number of organisations that provide pre-school education between 2010 and 2015, which softened the growth in precarity of parental labour.

We note that the two periods we analysed saw the following changes in the dynamics of various organisational conditions for parental labour: at the level of family and in the healthcare field – from improvement in the first 5 years to deterioration in the next 5; in education – from deterioration in the first 5 years to improvement in the next 5.

4. The integral precarity index for parental labour was:

For 2005-2010:

$$I_p = \sqrt[3]{0.85 \times 0.99 \times 0.98} = 0.937.$$

For 2010-2015:

$$I_p = \sqrt[3]{1.02 \times 1.01 \times 1.02} = 1.017.$$

The results of our calculations show that the level of precarity of parental labour in Russia fell between 2005 and 2010, but grew over the next 5 years.

3 Discussion

The results of our analysis point to an overall deterioration of conditions for the realisation of parental labour and growth in its precarity in Russia between 2010 and 2015. Indeed, during this period, Russia entered a prolonged demographic recession, which has had an inevitable impact on all parts of the country's economic life. Today's adverse trends that directly influence parental labour conditions include:

- 1) Growing demographic load. This increases pressure on processes related to the implementation of social policies;
- 2) Growing migration flows, which increase permanent population levels. This is accompanied by a growth in the number of people who draw on measures provided through social policies;
- 3) Reduced state funding for healthcare and education;
- 4) Falling real incomes, which increases demand for social security measures.

In turn, these adverse trends increase signs of precarity of parental labour. In particular, a deterioration of economic conditions leads to problems related to finding employment, reduced purchasing power and growing poverty. A deterioration of socio-demographic conditions – for example, growing migration flows – reduces stability of parental labour as it increases the number of people who use measures of social support. Worsening organisational and legal conditions for the realisation of parental labour result in difficulties in obtaining quality medical and educational services. This reduces guarantees and protection for parental labour subjects.

We see the following opportunities to reduce the levels of precarity of parental labour:

- 1) Recognising the labour nature of parental labour at the level of the state and developing mechanisms for its evaluation and direct financing;
- 2) Stimulating parental labour not only as regards birth, but throughout the entire process of forming children's human capital. Paying parents for parental labour will give certain

guarantees and increase protection for parents and children. The conditions for such payments could include, for example, information about a child's regular health checks and results of academic testing;

3) Allocating state-funded kindergarten places to younger children. This will allow parents to combine professional and parental labour. Such an instrument will help them preserve their professional skills and stabilise their employment levels;

4) Reviewing the tax burden on working parents on the basis of total family income and number of children;

5) Including the results of parental labour in setting employment pensions for parents.

Conclusion

Our results show that there are important signs of the precarity of parental labour in Russia and that there has been a deterioration of conditions for it and complication of this type of labour over the last 10 years. We consider promising areas for further research in this field to include identifying the nature of self-identification among parents; studying the specifics of parents' perceptions of their rights; analysing factors that contribute to the limitations of these rights. A full understanding of the precarity of parental labour will enable the development of strategies to mitigate this precarity. This is particularly pertinent today in the context of an adverse demographic forecast for Russia. We believe that overcoming the precarity of parental labour is one of the most important mechanisms for improving the demographic situation and increase in efficiency of human capital reproduction in today's Russia.

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Contact

Edgar Ilves

Ural Federal University

620002, 19 Mira street, Ekaterinburg, Russia

edgar.ilves@urfu.ru

Anna Bagirova

Ural Federal University

620002, 19 Mira street, Ekaterinburg, Russia

a.p.bagirova@urfu.ru