

New Research Search for Life Satisfaction in Family Environment and Presence of Children in the Family

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Lyubomira Spasova*

Department of Social Sciences and Business Language Training, Faculty of Economics, Bulgaria

Abstract

In the process of studying human satisfaction in general and life satisfaction in particular, the most widely used is the Life Satisfaction Scale (SWLS), Subjective Well-Being (SWB), FACES II - The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale with a cognitive component (life satisfaction) and an affective component (positive and negative emotions or emotional balance). These commonly used scales provide strong evidence of acceptability, reliability, validity and invariance for gender, while there is mixed evidence of invariance by culture and age, as well as the roles of marital status and educational level. This review article proposes an experimental operationalization between marital status and the presence of children in the family. The aim is to deduce the relationships between the number of children and the individual satisfaction of the members of a married couple. Research has found scalar invariance by gender and educational level and partial scalar invariance by marital status, but there are no relationships between marital status and number of children.

Introduction

The process of determining life satisfaction can involve a large number of significant problem situations. A number of current studies conducted at different times in different countries, covering the specific features of the local population, help the research teams to derive and formulate some of the determinants of life satisfaction. The urgency of the considered problem stems from placing humanity in a new situation, overcoming the crisis situation after the pandemic of COVID 19, as well as the transition to a smooth transition to the already established normal order of existence. The aim is to prevent and reduce depression, apathy towards life, aggression, by improving the overall well-being of the population in individual countries. Researchers in the field of sociology and psychology point out that each indicator can affect a person's overall satisfaction with life, as well as lower levels of feelings of satisfaction. Therefore, the problematic moment is found first in the determinants influencing the overall satisfaction, and secondly, how each of them can build the final subjective assessment of the life of the individual.

A large-scale study by the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) in Bonn, conducted in 2009, found that global life satisfaction is well described in four areas: work or daily activities, social contacts and family, health and income, with the most pronounced influence being social contacts and the family, followed by work and daily activities and health [1]. According to the author, the overall satisfaction of the person with life should be sought in precisely determined indicators, characteristic for the individual and corresponding to his assessment of "happiness". Deriving determinants of satisfaction on a global scale can help this determination, but in no way can it fully define it. In the present exposition, an independent variable is derived - belonging to a family, with the aim of establishing how this variable affects the dependent variable - the satisfaction of the individual at a certain stage of his life.

***Corresponding author:** Lyubomira Spasova, Department of Social Sciences and Business Language Training, Faculty of Economics, Bulgaria

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Theoretical Review

Researchers' interest in understanding and measuring Subjective Well-Being (SWB) has been growing in recent decades [2]. It (SWB) can be divided into a cognitive component (life satisfaction) and an affective component (positive and negative emotions or emotional balance). The cognitive component of life satisfaction refers to the global cognitive (cognitive) judgment that people make about their own lives according to personal criteria. This is an accurate way to formulate one of the satisfaction indicators, because it is indicated by the respondents themselves. The great difficulty arises when the researcher has to formulate everything that includes the cognitive and affective component, proving life satisfaction. This is why psychologists such as Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin [3] in their 1985 study applied a scale with the strongest psychometric properties to measure the cognitive component of Subjective Well-Being (SWB), called The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Findings made in studies from 2006 to 2009 [4] that respondents who are married declare higher levels of well-being than those who are divorced, single, widowed are not new. The reasons lie in the fact that marriage can provide an increase in life satisfaction compared to other types of relationships in society. It offers many incentives and benefits, such as lower mortality, sharing of common household goods and the possibility of combined accumulation of household assets. Stutzer [4] argue that marriage is positively related to individual well-being, as marriage is an additional source of self-confidence. [4-6]. Married people are also less likely to be single after losing a partner and have the opportunity to benefit from a supportive relationship [4]. In scientific circles, a comparative analysis is made between divorced, widowed and separated persons, who differ from the independent living, i. e. unmarried, and it is established that the first three groups have lower levels of well-being than single persons [5,6]. Stack [7] research only analyzes developed countries, as it does not provide clear evidence of possible differences between richer and poorer countries in terms of the relationship between marital status and life satisfaction [7,8].

Another important aspect of life satisfaction surveys is the presence or absence of children in the surveyed families, whose members must indicate determinants of satisfaction or lack thereof. The aim is to establish how the birth of children among married or non-married people affects life satisfaction, and positive relationships have been found between the two components among several socio-economic groups, especially among married respondents. The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), conducted among 10,000 households on an annual basis, conducts panel surveys [7,9,10].

BHPS tracks people leaving one of the selected households and interviews them together with all members (over the age of 16) of the new household to which they belong. Luis Angeles, as well as other researchers such as Blanchflower [11], have found that having children makes people less happy or, in any case, does not make them happier. Angeles even looks for the relationship between the independent variable - the presence of children in the family, and

the dependent variable - life satisfaction in the opposite direction, because the birth of children in some cases is a reason for marriage. The different data set collected from 2006 to 2009 suggests that it may allow researchers to explore the relationship between being a parent and life satisfaction, as opposed to its focus on the relationship between having children at home and life satisfaction. Therefore, research in this area offers a number of guidelines for future research, and the effects may be similar in terms of marriage outcomes, childbearing, and the causal relationship with life satisfaction [12-15].

Methods and Procedures

In the present scientific study, a new view can be offered on life satisfaction surveys, as the direction in the search for addictions is determined by some individual characteristics such as the feeling of belonging to a certain family, religion or community. An interesting and satisfactory approach would be a study comparing families and their level of life satisfaction, followed in some Asian countries such as China, Japan and India, against families from European countries such as Germany, England and France. The researcher believes that research in these different groups of countries will contribute to determining the overall assessment of life satisfaction, because cultural and social norms of communities, as well as family traditions can form new criteria for assessing ultimate personal satisfaction.

Based on the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are derived:

- a) Hypothesis 1: Life satisfaction is determined by marital status, the number of family members and the family's membership in a community.
- b) Hypothesis 2a: The growth of family members leads to an increase in the level of life satisfaction in different types of married couples.
- c) Hypothesis 2b: The decrease in family members in older children leads to a decrease in the level of life satisfaction in different types of married couples.

Research Design

Selection of the subjects - family and non-family, who will take part in the experiment on the principle of personal consent to participate. The only requirement for them is to be over 18 years old and to live in Bulgaria or Germany. The experimental design is intragroup; i. e. all persons fall into one of the groups. A total of 1,000 people from both sides will be tested.

Main tasks before the experiment:

- A. To choose two control groups - family and non-family;
- B. To divide the two groups into subgroups - with children and without children;
- C. Indicate the number of children in the family;

D. To bring out those families that have 2 or more children;

Operationalization

Stage I: Marital status is an independent categorical variable consisting of five categories of groups: single, cohabiting, divorced or separated, widowed and married. In order to determine the relationship between life satisfaction and marital status, a baseline model is initially calculated, which includes only time-invariant individual characteristics, in order to determine the relationship between marital status and life satisfaction, without monitoring for additional factors, which are expected to be associated with life satisfaction. If we want to find out if married people are more satisfied than all the other respondents, they should be surveyed on the Likert five-point psychometric scale (Likert scale) to measure satisfaction with the following statements: Very unsatisfied, Unsatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very satisfied.

Stage II: Family respondents who have children - 2 and more, are our final target group, which should be measured life satisfaction and whether it is associated with an increase in the number of children in the family. Two groups can be deduced - control group - satisfied with 2 or more children and non-control group - dissatisfied with 2 or more children. Both groups are asked to complete the questionnaire: FACES II - The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale, initially according to their current perception of their family (real) and secondly related to how they would like to be (ideal) [13,16,17]. The discrepancy or closeness between the two results will reflect the degree of satisfaction with their own family. The theoretical basis is family dynamics through three main factors: cohesion (or emotional connection between members), adaptability (or flexibility in the rules, roles and power structures of the family) and communication [16].

Stage III: After the respondents who are married with 2 or more children fill in the above questionnaire - FACES II, they must answer an additional questionnaire prepared by the researcher. This questionnaire will be formed by the final answers of the respondents (respondents) to determine what exactly needs to be improved in the lives of married couples with children to achieve higher satisfaction. In addition, the experiment takes into account not so much the global judgment expressed by the subject after comparing his / her family reality with an ideal, but rather as a sum of the affective (emotional) states of the individual as part of the family [16,2]. In conclusion, we could point out that a disadvantage of the experiment is that some of the variables can be manipulated. For example, one of the partners in the family to feel satisfied with the appearance of the children, and the other not to the same extent. In this case, it is difficult to assess the overall satisfaction of the family with 2 or more children. Other areas that deserve research are whether children's age matters and whether effects of satisfaction adaptation can be found [12,18,19].

These are not the only tools that have been used to assess family satisfaction - others may be limited to very specific age groups or may be part of more comprehensive tools with more general assessment objectives. The researcher believes that the

most accurate assessment of human satisfaction could be made by examining the same individuals (voluntarily giving their consent to such a long-term experiment) studied at different stages of their family life [20-22]. The purpose of such a large-scale experiment may be to establish the distribution of life satisfaction in men and women at different stages of their family life. The ultimate goal is to track variations in life satisfaction between the sexes and to identify similarities and differences. In conclusion, it can be added that the expected results are to be happier those who are able to maintain happy and stable relationships, and representatives of certain married couples. Therefore, some individual differences in personality would have a strong influence on the final subjective assessment of satisfaction with the life of the individual. The researcher believes that the most accurate assessment of human satisfaction could be made by examining the same individuals (voluntarily giving their consent to such a long-term experiment) studied at different stages of their family life. The purpose of such a large-scale experiment may be to establish the distribution of life satisfaction in men and women at different stages of their family life. The ultimate goal is to track variations in life satisfaction between the sexes and to identify similarities and differences. In conclusion, it can be added that the expected results are to be happier those who are able to maintain happy and stable relationships, and representatives of certain married couples. Therefore, some individual differences in personality would have a strong influence on the final subjective assessment of satisfaction with the life of the individual.

Conclusion

Despite the suggestions made on life satisfaction indicators such as marital status, education, number of children in the family, religion, gender and many others, the Life Satisfaction Scale (SWLS) in research shows strong evidence of acceptability and reliability for gender, marital status and the presence of children in married couples [23-25]. The two variables - the presence of children in the family and the creation of a family environment, are causally related, because the movement of satisfaction can be feedback, i. e. the two variables can be positively related [26] a number of study guidelines are proposed, and the invariance of SWLS with respect to marital status and the presence of a number of children in the family should be examined. A different set of data may allow researchers to explore the relationship between being a parent and life satisfaction, as opposed to our focus on the relationship between having children at home and life satisfaction, and the effects may be similar. In addition, it is necessary to examine how the age of children affects the satisfaction of individual members of a married couple and what are the effects of adaptation in each of the members [20,27-29]. As a recommendation for future research, the results of each country study should be compared to identify new trends and problem areas.

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