

Longitudinal analysis of the domains of satisfaction before and after disability: Evidence from the German Socio-Economic Panel

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to analyse the effect of the onset of disability on life satisfaction and five different domains of satisfaction (health, household income, housing, job, leisure) for German individuals. Particular attention is paid to examining whether individuals can adapt to disability over time before and after its onset in terms of satisfaction. Using longitudinal data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) for the period 1984-2008, we estimate an innovative fixed-effects model on life satisfaction and each domain of satisfaction for working-age males (aged 21-58), which allows us to estimate lag and lead effects and thus to test the anticipation and adaptation hypotheses. Although individuals attain a complete adaptation to disability in terms of global life satisfaction (5 years after the onset), this adaptation is not complete in all domains of satisfaction. For example, despite the fact that the levels of health satisfaction drop as the individual becomes disabled, after the onset it increases but the levels are lower than those reached before the onset. In contrast, the adaptation is especially faster in the terms of leisure satisfaction (3 years after the onset), household income and housing satisfaction (5 years after the onset in both cases). Our results support the findings obtained in other psychological studies that conclude that the domain of disability extends far beyond health related concerns to encompass the person's well-being, definition of self and social position. Finally, these findings may help policy makers and government to promote social and economic measures and actions lead to increase the scores of global well-being and specific domains of satisfaction of this collective.

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