

The Impact of Subjective Well-Being on Fertility across Societies: Universal or country-specific?*

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February 21, 2016

Abstract

Scholars from different disciplines converge in arguing that having decent levels of subjective well-being (SWB) represents a prerequisite for having children. In this paper, we follow this perspective but taking a broader view. We argue that if the quest for happiness is a precondition for fertility this should be true in any contemporary developed society, where having children is the result of an intended action. To substantiate this argument, we incorporate SWB as a determinant of fertility behavior using longitudinal data for Australia, Germany, Great Britain, Russia, Switzerland, and the United States of America. We find that higher levels of SWB are associated with higher probability to have children in the six considered countries, concluding that the quest for happiness before childbearing may be a universal fact in Western low fertility societies.

*In this paper, a specific Stata plugin called PanelWhiz (Haisken-DeNew and Hahn, 2010) has been used to correctly retrieve the data and to make easier using the panel. We thank John P. Haisken-DeNew for providing PanelWhiz. The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council, under the European ERC Grant Agreement n. StG-313617 (SWELL-FER: Subjective Well-being and Fertility): PI. Letizia Mencarini. The authors are grateful to Nicoletta Balbo, Sara Della Bella, Vladimir Kozlov, Marco Le Moglie, and Francesca Luppi for fundamental help with data management; X and Y for their comments on an earlier version of the paper. All errors are ours.

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