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

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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.

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