

The Satisfaction of Parents and their Children – To intergenerational Transmission of subjective Well-Being.

Introduction

Since the 80's the subjective well-being (SWB) is part of the research to well-being and quality of life, but only in the last 10 years, the group of minors was examined systematically. UNICEF has included the SWB of children as one of the first in their analyzes. The OECD and Eurostat have taken longer, but here too, the position has prevailed, that subjective well-being of children is one of the central components of their overall well-being. At the same time, it is observed that welfare states have to be measured on subjective well-being of the population (not only children) more frequently. Often the increase of quality of life including the subjective well-being is an explicitly formulated policy. The term of satisfaction is becoming increasingly important in this context as an indicator of social inequality alongside economic and other characteristics. The research on the factors influencing the subjective well-being is extensive and includes numerous findings for adult. Meanwhile also for children and young people exists a considerable output. Significantly fewer findings, there are on intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being. This is quite surprising when you consider that this kind of research is already common regarding economic aspects (social mobility), education (PISA) or health (KiGGS).

Therefore in this presentation the question is, whether parents transmit their subjective well-being to their children?

Previous findings

To intergenerational transmission of subjective well-being, there are few findings compared to other SWB contexts. Long-term twin studies estimate that 40% of life satisfaction are hereditary (Lykken and Tellegen 1996 Roysamb et al. 2003). In this case, the correlation of parental and filial wellbeing should not no smaller than .20. Casas however didn't observe such a correlation (Casas et al 2012a. 1032). With a smaller sample of 266 parents and their 12-16 year he found no empirical evidence that clearly demonstrate the connection between parental and filial subjective well-being (Casas et al. 2008). It should be noted that these studies are snapshots because they are based on cross-sectional comparisons. For this reason Casas and colleagues can not throw a view in the past and thus cannot picture or explain the progress of satisfactions of the parents or the children. A relevant study of Clair goes to the question of a possible link of parental and filial subjective well-being as well. The data base is a longitudinal data set of the British Household Panel. In the linear regression she shows a significant association of parental and filial life satisfaction (Clair 2012: 239). The identified

correlations are interpreted by a total as moderate and thus belong to the same category as the few other findings (Ben-Zur 2003 Casas et al. 2007 Casas et al. 2008).

Overall, there are few studies on the intergenerational transmission of SWB showing moderate or weak correlations. However, they are of limited relevance because they are often based on cross sectional calculations. Following the theoretical framework, long-term studies could well result in different findings.

Data and Methods

The following results are based on the data of the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) of the years 1984 to 2012. SOEP is a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany. The same private households, persons and families have been surveyed annually since 1984. To examine the question, the dataset of the GSOEP is used as longitudinal data. The panel structure of the SOEP allows linking the conditions of growing with children's future subjective well-being. These conditions include not only the experience of poverty episodes, living conditions, socio-economic and socio-demographic household characteristics, but also the subjective well-being of the parents.

The analysis is done in two steps. First currently findings should be confirmed with a cross sectional regression design. In a second step these findings will be compared with results from longitudinal data.

As part of the analysis, parents and children who have not attained the age of 18 years are examined. Here all children are included, which were 17 years old in the survey period from 2003 to 2012. The 17-year-olds enter information themselves about their subjective well-being, here the overall life satisfaction. By means of linear OLS regression with robust standard errors empirical factors are examined and compared in an overall model. The independent variables, which are known from other studies are included in the model to control for its influence within the regression equation, because the focus is on the relationship between parental and filial SWB.

For the longitudinal analysis a balanced panel of parents and children (persons who have not attained the age of 18) has been created. It means that the households where the children live, participated in the survey every single year, beginning at the child's first birthday. The information from the independent control variables were aggregated over time to connect them with the SWB of the 17-year-olds as historical information.

Summary and Conclusion

The concept of subjective well-being was interpreted according to the theoretical framing as habitual structure and as cognitive assessment and perception patterns.

The findings of a moderate or weak connection of parental and filial SWB's in cross section could be confirmed. The influence of parental SWB on the child manifests itself

in particular in the course of time. The effects in longitudinal section are about three times greater than in cross section. For mothers we observe, that they pass more than a third of their average life satisfaction during the child's development until the 18th year of the child regardless of other known factors (among men approximately one fifth).

Here we can certainly speak of a distinct and more than moderate impact. This demonstrates the need for longitudinal analysis in this research area.

Due to the fact that children in the SOEP are not consulted before they are 17 years of age, these findings may be indeed analysed over time. Unfortunately a look at the developments of this relationship is not possible with SOEP data and would be a worthwhile research target in connection with the previously obtained knowledge. The reciprocal influence of parental and filial SWB's could not be examined with the data.

Dies würde Daten erfordern, die auch frühe Angaben von den Kinder selbst im Zeitverlauf beinhalten.