

Testing Happiness Hypotheses among the Elderly

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Abstract

A growing strand of economic literature focuses its attention on the relationship between happiness levels and various individual and socioeconomic variables. Recent studies analyze the impact of income, marital status, health, educational levels and other socioeconomic variables on satisfaction with life. A large majority of these studies limit their attention to industrialized countries. In our work, we analyze data for a group of individuals living in a Latin American country (Uruguay) with age 60 or older. We use a rich data set that allows us to test different happiness hypotheses employing four methodological approaches. We find that older people in Uruguay have a tendency to report themselves happy when they are married, when they have higher standards of health and when they earn higher levels of income or they consider that their income is suitable for their standard of living. On the contrary, they report lower levels of happiness when they live alone and when their nutrition is insufficient. We also find that education has no clear impact on happiness. We think that our study is a contribution to the study of those factors that can explain happiness among the elderly in Latin American countries. Future work will focus on enhanced empirical analysis and in extending our study to other countries.

Keywords: Happiness, Health, Family, Censored Econometric Models, Semiparametric Methods, Treatment Evaluation

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