

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES FOR COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

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CONCLUSION

In recent textbooks about structural equation models, a multiple indicator approach is recommended for the estimation of and correction for measurement error. Although this approach is statistically correct, there are many practical and substantive problems with this approach. First of all, it is rather expensive to measure each theoretical variable at least in two different ways. It means that one doubles the interview time, which usually is quite costly. Secondly, it is difficult to ask the same question twice in one interview. Although it is possible, it is not easy to organize, and one risks the irritation of respondents who notice the repetition. As a substitute, researchers often vary the formulation of the repeated question. However, Heise (1969) and Saris (1982) have argued that variation in question wording might change the meaning of the variable one measures. There are also many studies that demonstrate this point even for the mean and variance of the variables (see studies of Schuman and Presser, 1981; Belson, 1981). Consequently, it is not clear what a multiple indicator model in such a situation represents. The latent variable will be a common factor of two or more indicators, but because these indicators are substantively different, it is unclear what this common factor stands for. On the other hand, correction for measurement error seems to be a necessity as we have tried to indicate. Corrected correlation coefficients are more comparable, not only across different methods within one study, but also across different studies and countries. Also, the correction for measurement error provides a better estimate of the explained variance in each equation. This is important for the evaluation of the quality of different explanatory models.

We hope to have indicated in this chapter that the procedure used in this book allows correction for measurement error even if only one indicator is used for each theoretical variable. When large methodological studies as described in Scherpenzeel and Saris (1996) have been done, and Tables like Table 6 in this chapter are constructed for other topics than life satisfaction as well (see for example Andrews, 1984; Rodgers et al., 1992; Költringer, 1993; Scherpenzeel, 1995), the procedure described here can be used for any correlation matrix and any structural equation model. This is what makes it an attractive approach for our study and any other study. The results of this approach will be further demonstrated in this book because in all chapters these corrections have been made.

SATISFACTION IN THE NETHERLANDS

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CONCLUSIONS

In their most recent report, the Social Cultural Research bureau in the Netherlands (the SCP) gives a description of the general welfare situation in the Netherlands during the eighties. According to the SCP report, the decade between 1980-1990 has been a relatively stable period with regard to the social and cultural situation in the Netherlands. The Welfare State in terms of, for example, health care, housing, education and leisure time, has not really been affected by the economic crisis in the first part of the decade. Unemployment was high at the beginning of the eighties, but has since decreased. Trust in the national economy was re-established, and most people think there is prosperity both in Dutch society (88 % in 1991) and in their own households (89 % in 1991). This description places in perspective the high overall satisfaction scores that were found in this study and those reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics. Some satisfaction scores in this study are not consistent with the trends found in the yearly studies of the CBS, but we have argued that this is probably due to differences in the scales used, order of the questions, and the interviewing situation. Moreover, this lack of comparability in the satisfaction levels probably does not have any implications for the analyses of the relationships between the satisfaction variables and other variables.

In the main part of this chapter, we have looked for differences in satisfaction between various groups. We started, as is usually done, with the effects of demographic variables on the satisfaction scores. The effects of the demographic variables gender, education, and life-stage turned out to be very small. Age, income and occupation had somewhat more substantial effects: satisfaction generally seems to increase with age and with income, except for satisfaction with health; and the "unemployed / disabled" were less satisfied with all aspects of life. Most effects were very small however, and they don't explain much of the variance in the satisfaction variables. Because the satisfaction data were corrected for measurement error, we can be sure that the estimates of explained and unexplained variance can be trusted and are not confounded with measurement error. It can therefore be concluded that the demographic variables have very little explanatory power. These results are consistent with the expectations of the effects of these demographic variables on happiness and life satisfaction in the Netherlands, based on Veenhoven's meta-analysis (see Chapter 1).

In the last part of this chapter, a rank ordering was made of the domain specific satisfaction variables that correlate highest with general life satisfaction, after correction for measurement error. It turned out that satisfaction with social contacts is most closely related to general life satisfaction in the Netherlands, followed by satisfaction with financial situation and satisfaction with work. The correction for measurement error increases the difference between the correlation of general life satisfaction and satisfaction with social contacts on the one hand and the other correlations on the other hand. The hierarchy remains the same after correction, though the differences are more pronounced. Scherpenzeel and Saris (1996) have shown that the ordering of the variables: satisfaction with social contacts, with Finances and with housing is consistent across four Dutch datasets, collected between 1989 and 1992 using different designs and

different data collection techniques. The rank ordering is also consistent to the ordering reported by Veenhoven (1984) in his meta-analysis of satisfaction studies for data from 5 different Western nations, one of which included the Netherlands.

As was described in Chapter 1, we expected to find that the rich western countries in this project would have a stronger relationship between general life satisfaction and satisfaction with social contacts, than between general life satisfaction and the other domain satisfactions. This expectation is confirmed as far as the Netherlands is concerned.

The fact that satisfaction with work is equally strongly related to general life satisfaction as satisfaction with finances is perhaps caused by the fact that interesting work and good income are often going together. Health seems to have become more and more important and a matter of great concern in western societies. Nevertheless, satisfaction with health is less strongly related to general life satisfaction in the Netherlands than satisfaction with social contacts, finances and work. A possible reason for this is that people with poorer health often have fewer social contacts, lower income, and hence, satisfaction with health can have an indirect relationship with general life satisfaction, through satisfaction with other aspects of life. Another possibility is that those in poorer health have resigned themselves to their situation and have adjusted to their present circumstances, in much the same way as those over 75 years of age. Housing appears to be the least strongly related to general life satisfaction. In the Netherlands, the housing shortage is very low nowadays (2%, SCP 1992), so not many people have to worry about their housing situation. People might also consider it to be less important relative to other aspects of their living situation.

In most of the explanatory analyses in this chapter, procedures for the correction of measurement error have been applied, as described in Chapter 2. It was shown that this correction had consequences for the results. The estimates of the variance in the satisfaction scores explained by the demographic variables were all higher after correction for measurement error. The differences in relative strength of the correlations between general life satisfaction and the different domain satisfactions also increased after correction. Although in neither case was the pattern of effects changed. Nevertheless, the correction for measurement error remained important, because it is a way to ensure that the pattern of effects is as close as possible to the true pattern. When the measurement error is larger than in the present study, and the corrections needed are therefore also larger, the pattern of effects can change dramatically. Because of the correction for measurement error, we know that in this study, demographic variables do not explain much of the variance in satisfaction scores. On the other hand, satisfaction with social contacts is strongly related to general life satisfaction at least in the Netherlands.

SATISFACTION IN THREE BELGIAN REGIONS

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Chapter 4: In: Willem E. Saris, Ruut Veenhoven, Annette C. Scherpenzeel & Brendan Bunting (Eds.) 'A Comparative Study of Satisfaction with Life in Europe' Eötvös University Press, 1995, Budapest, ISBN 963 463 081 2, pp. 99-115

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, satisfaction with life in general and with specific aspects of life are described in three regions of Belgium. In general, it was established that Flemings, Walloons, and residents of Brussels manifest a high degree of satisfaction with both life in general and with various aspects of life. This level of satisfaction, it is argued, may be partially attributable to social desirability. As regards satisfaction with life in general and satisfaction with the financial situation, a comparison with the European value studies of 1981 and 1990 was made. As expected, the data in this study are similar to those from the last European value study. During the period from the beginning of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, there was a slight decline in the percentage of those who were dissatisfied with life in general. Among this group there was an increase in the numbers endorsing the values of 'satisfied' among the Dutch speakers (Flemings + Dutch-speaking residents of Brussels). Among the French speakers (Walloons and French-speaking residents of Brussels) the percentage of those dissatisfied with the financial situation increased, leading to an increase in the numbers endorsing the undecided category. The Flemings in the panel manifest somewhat less satisfaction in the second study (1991), presumably because of the lessening of the effects of social desirability, which can occur in the postal survey.

In the many studies of the socio-economic determinants of satisfaction that have been conducted, the effect sizes have been invariably small. A number of factors have been cited in the literature to explain this, including (a) the problem arising from the poor measurement of the satisfaction variables (b) the relative evaluation of satisfaction, and (c) the mediating effects of personality characteristics. Differences in expressed levels of satisfaction can only be explained to a very limited extent by the variables of sex, age, education and income. In the Brussels region, on average only 8%, (corrected for measurement errors) of the variance is explained. In the two other regions, an average of only 5% of the variance is explained. The estimates of the explained variance are corrected for measurement error. We can conclude that the low explanatory power of these demographic variables for satisfaction reflects probably the real situation and is not an artifact of measurement error. Alongside the possibly more intuitively obvious effects, such as the positive association between income and higher level education with financial satisfaction, the relationship between age and satisfaction is striking. Both in Flanders and Brussels those 60 years and older are significantly more satisfied in most areas of life. One may wonder whether the over 60s do indeed have better living circumstances or whether they have shifted their aspiration levels.

What, finally, concerns the relations between satisfaction with life in general, on the one hand, and satisfaction with the domain-specific aspects, on the other, the hypothesis formulated in Chapter 1 is confirmed: Global life satisfaction, both not corrected and uncorrected for measurement errors, is associated most with satisfaction with social contacts and, with the exception of Brussels, least with satisfaction with the financial situation

SATISFACTION IN GERMANY

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Chapter 5: In: Willem E. Saris, Ruut Veenhoven, Annette C. Scherpenzeel & Brendan Bunting (Eds.) 'A Comparative Study of Satisfaction with Life in Europe' Eötvös University Press, 1995, Budapest, ISBN 963 463 081 2, pp. 117-132

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have looked for differences in satisfaction between different groups of people and over a considerable amount of time. In Germany satisfaction with life in general and specific domains like housing, income and social contacts seem to be rather stable from 1978 till 1993. The effects of the demographic variables gender, education, age and income did not turn out to be very high in terms of explained variance. This result corresponds to the finding of Veenhoven (1984). Because we have corrected for measurement error, at least in the dependent variables, we can place more trust in the estimates of explained and unexplained variance. This means that we now know with greater certainty that the demographic variables, included in the present study, do not explain much about satisfaction.

Women are significantly more satisfied with their life in general than men. On the other hand, older people tend to be more satisfied with housing and income than the younger ones. Respondents with highest as well as lowest level of education score very low on satisfaction with housing. Income has the most consistent effect on satisfaction. The higher the income the more satisfied are the respondents with life in general, housing, and especially income. However, money does not buy social integration, as there is no significant relationship between income and satisfaction with social contacts. In the last part, a rank ordering was made of the domain specific satisfaction variables that correlate highest with life satisfaction in general after measurement error was taken into account. After correction for measurement error, the variable income had the highest association with general life satisfaction both in the panel study and in the much larger German Welfare Study (GWS). This result deviates from the expectations mentioned in Chapter 1.

SATISFACTION IN NORWAY

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Chapter 6: In: Willem E. Saris, Ruut Veenhoven, Annette C. Scherpenzeel & Brendan Bunting (Eds.) 'A Comparative Study of Satisfaction with Life in Europe' Eötvös University Press, 1995, Budapest, ISBN 963 463 081 2, pp. 133-144

CONCLUSIONS

The effects of background variables such as gender, age, education and income were all relatively small. Little was gained by introducing the variables of life stage and occupation in an alternative model. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that some of the sociological variables did have interesting influences on life satisfaction as seen in the following examples. Single people, living alone, consistently reported lower satisfaction with life in general. This is in agreement with a large number of other studies of life quality. Older individuals, especially the retired, were likely to be more satisfied with their finances and housing when actual income was controlled. This, it was suggested, may be a consequence both of reduced expectations and of unmeasured aspects of their economic situation. Those on lower incomes also expressed less satisfaction with both their leisure and with life in general. This is also in agreement with previous research. Gender, education, region and the rural-urban dichotomy had little or no influence on the satisfaction scores. Models, which included an interaction between age and gender, did not add to the explained variance in satisfaction scores. Education however may have a conditional influence on satisfaction with life in general since in most urban regions, high education had a positive effect. In all the models the amount of explained variance was generally very low. Since in the present analysis we have corrected for measurement errors, the results indicate that more appropriate models using other variables are required. It is probably likely that we need both more appropriate psychological and sociological variables and more sophisticated modeling in order to explain more of the variance in life satisfaction. Therefore, as in the present case, we should be careful not to over interpret results based upon regression models where only sociological variables have been included as possible explanations for life satisfaction. However, one conclusion stands firm, even after correction for un-reliability and scale-induced invalidity: satisfaction with one's social contacts is a better predictor of satisfaction with life in general than are material possessions, at least in Norway.

SATISFACTION IN TWO SWEDISH TOWNS

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Chapter 7: In: Willem E. Saris, Ruut Veenhoven, Annette C. Scherpenzeel & Brendan Bunting (Eds.) 'A Comparative Study of Satisfaction with Life in Europe' Eötvös University Press, 1995, Budapest, ISBN 963 463 081 2, pp. 145-154

CONCLUSIONS

This small study in two very different areas by the western part of Sweden capture surprisingly well the situation of the late 80's and up to 1990. Inequality in Sweden at that time reached a baseline of being very low, in many indicators as the income-differences, lowest in the world. The small country of Sweden, with only 8.5 million inhabitants, is in an international comparison relatively homogenous when it comes to living conditions and quality of life. The scene has dramatically changed during the 90's, unemployment rate going up, reduction of the official sector causing especially many women to be pushed out of the labour market. Young people have great difficulties to get a regular job and therefore stay home longer, marry later than before. Because of high interests on loans and a shift of the housing market away from rental apartments to tenant ownership the costs for housing are a much too big part of the household income and many, many have been forced to leave new build houses and apartments in new buildings. In short, the picture of Sweden concerning living conditions is changing gradually towards an economically more and more unstable situation (during 1994) whereas in Norway the situation is much more stable mainly because of the findings of oil. The Swedish welfare system reached a peak in the late 80's reflected also in high levels of satisfaction shown in this and nationwide studies. The clear relationship between good living conditions and life satisfaction has given the Swedish people value for their high tax money. Now when the official sector has to be cut down, the politicians are very unsure of peoples priorities, what are valued the most. International comparisons between countries with very different living conditions such as this study will contribute to the understanding of what is possible to achieve under the economic constraints of the 90's.

SATISFACTION IN CATALONIA, SPAIN

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Chapter 8: In: Willem E. Saris, Ruut Veenhoven, Annette C. Scherpenzeel & Brendan Bunting (Eds.) 'A Comparative Study of Satisfaction with Life in Europe' Eötvös University Press, 1995, Budapest, ISBN 963 463 081 2, pp. 155-174

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we have reported a high degree of perceived satisfaction with some core domains of life for the Catalan population. This satisfaction was only moderate for the financial situation of the household and for some domains linked to politics or the government. This result was roughly similar to the ones obtained by the few other survey's available (CIRES and IM), although the methodology used is not strictly comparable. In agreement with the literature available we have only found weak relationships between social background and perceived satisfaction, even though we corrected for measurement error. Yet some of the effects reported were substantively interpretable, among them the negative effect of old age on overall satisfaction, the positive effect of education on satisfaction with the financial situation, the lower satisfaction with finance and free time for women, and the lower satisfaction with life in general and housing for respondents living in Barcelona.

The correction for measurement error was revealed as very relevant when establishing the strength of the relationships among the different domains of satisfaction which, before the correction, showed moderate to high attenuation bias because of measurement errors and the use of non-continuous measurement. Social contacts were the satisfaction domain most closely related to overall satisfaction, followed by satisfaction with housing and leisure. Satisfaction with finance comes after these three domains, which suggests that the satisfaction of material needs is no longer one of the main determinants of perceived satisfaction for a society as developed as Catalonia.

SATISFACTION IN ITALY

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CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has shown that the Italians are quite satisfied with their life. Out of the four domains studied in the context of the cross national study the Financial domain scores relatively low. With respect to the explanation of the satisfaction scores on individual level we have seen that the background variables used in the cross national study and also the extra variables introduced only in Italy do not explain very much. This is even true after correction for measurement error which means that we can be quite sure now that these variables can explain very little. Finally Italy is different from most West European countries in the sense that in Italy the correlation between satisfaction with life as a whole and satisfaction with finances is much higher. On the other hand this result seems to be in agreement with the finding that this domain also the domain is about which the Italians are the least satisfied of the three domains used in the cross national study.

SATISFACTION IN SLOVENIA

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CONCLUSION

This chapter reports on a study of life satisfaction in Slovenia, before the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. As the economic crisis strengthened during the 1990s it is not surprising that Slovene respondents were least satisfied with their financial situation. The percentages of very satisfied and satisfied respondents were much lower in Slovenia than in Western European countries.

The structure of Slovene respondents according to their life satisfaction is also studied. Six clusters were obtained: (a) a group of very dissatisfied people (about 10% of all respondents), (b) a group who were dissatisfied with their social contacts and also in general (about 20%), (c) a group who were dissatisfied with their housing conditions but not with their social contacts (about 15%), (d) those who were satisfied with social contacts and housing, but not with their financial situation (about 15%), (e) respondents who were satisfied in general, but not with their social contacts (about 20%), and finally (f) a group of very satisfied respondents (about 20%). of all the variables, satisfaction with social contacts differs the most across the six obtained groups.

The effects of social background variables (age, gender, marital status, occupation, education, and population size) on life satisfaction variables indicates that they have some small effect on life satisfaction in general. It should be noted that background variables have very different effects on different aspects of life satisfaction.

The relationships between general life satisfaction and other aspects of life satisfaction confirm the hypothesis stated in Chapter I. In the case of Slovenia, general life satisfaction (not corrected and corrected for measurement errors) is most highly correlated with satisfaction with finances and least with social contacts.

SATISFACTION IN DEBRECEN, HUNGARY

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CONCLUSION

Although the research in Hungary was done within a small area of middle sized town the results shown are in agreement with those obtained from a nation-wide study and hence we think that the results from this study can be generalized. This study showed that demographic variables could not explain very much of the variance in the satisfaction variables. It was - shown that this low explained variance was not simply due to the measurement error in the data because after correction for measurement error the explained variance was still low. So the conclusion has to be that the demographic variables cannot explain much of the variance in satisfaction. Furthermore we have seen that in Hungary, life satisfaction in general is most strongly related with satisfaction with ones financial situation. This result was to be expected on the basis of previous research (see Chapter 1) but in this research the estimates of the relationships were not corrected for measurement error. Although these corrections had considerable effect on the size of the correlations, the order of the relationships did not change. These results were also in agreement with the expectation that, after correction for measurement error, the relationship between general life satisfaction and one's financial situation would be the strongest. Based on the strong correlation between general life satisfaction and one's finances, it is suggested that when respondents are asked about general life satisfaction that the response is largely shaped by considerations of finance.

SATISFACTION IN RUSSIA

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CONCLUSIONS

As discussed in this chapter people in Russia are in general satisfied with their life although the percentage (completely) dissatisfied is considerable higher than in most West European studies. With respect to the satisfaction with the specific domains of life examined in this study, people in Russia are very satisfied with their social contacts (where the percentages are comparable to those found in the Western countries) and also quite satisfied with their housing. However not many people in Russia seem to be satisfied with their financial situation. The comparison between Russians and Tatars appears to indicate that these two ethnic groups have a lot in common in terms of their level of satisfaction. However, there was a general tendency for the Russians to express less satisfaction with life in general, housing and finance than Tatars.

In this study the effects of the demographic variables such as gender, age, education and income on satisfaction scores in Russian and Tatars populations have been estimated. The hypothesis stated in the introduction, that stronger effects of income and education would be found in East European countries than in West European countries, is not confirmed by the results of this study. The effects of these variables (income and education) are comparable to those reported in most of the West European countries presented in this book. The explained variance for the satisfaction variables increased by adding the extra demographic variables such as marital status, kind of housing and some others. The largest increase was found for satisfaction with housing, probably because of the additional predictor 'accommodation'. However, even after correction for measurement error also, a large amount of unexplained variance in the satisfaction scores still remains, therefore we can conclude that demographic characteristics are not the major determinants of satisfaction in Russia. In the Russian and in the other nationality groups, general life satisfaction is correlated most strongly with the domain specific variable of satisfaction with finance, somewhat lower with satisfaction with housing, and least with satisfaction with social contacts. This pattern is in accordance with the hypothesis concerning the relationships between the satisfaction variables in Eastern European countries, stated in Chapter 1. In the Tatars ethnic group, this hypothesis is not completely confirmed: satisfaction with life in general had a slightly higher correlation with the domain specific satisfaction variable of social contacts than with satisfaction with finances.

AVERAGE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION IN 10 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: A CLUSTER ANALYSIS

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CONCLUSION

There are many efficient ways to explore and compare the structures of units (and variables) in comparative studies. In this chapter we have demonstrated two: one on aggregate data using the mean scores in each country, and another using the individual scores of the respondents stacking the data of the different countries. The first approach led to a simple solution where most West European countries came together and all east and Central European countries plus Spain formed a cluster. The last result is remarkable but in Figure 1 one can see that it follows from the patterns of the means which is quite similar for Spain and the East and Central European countries. This analysis is not so very interesting because it does not give us much insight into the structure of the groups which are formed, although the grouping seems very strongly related to the income situation in the different groups of countries.

The second approach is in this respect, more interesting. In this approach typical groups looked for are those which can be found in all countries. It turned out that there were six such groups. These groups have been described as:

- 1 very dissatisfied;
- 2 dissatisfied in general, except with housing;
- 3 very dissatisfied with housing but not with social contacts;
- 4 satisfied in general;
- 5 satisfied but not with financial situation;
- 6 very satisfied.

If one thinks of the many groups, which could have been built using these 4 questions with 11-point scales, this clustering is a considerable reduction. Furthermore, we have shown in Table 6 that the number of people in the groups is very different depending upon the country. West Europeans are mostly found in categories 4 and 6 which contain mainly satisfied people, while the East Europeans and the Spanish population can mainly be found in the dissatisfied groups 1 to 3 while a relatively large number are also present in category 5 - dissatisfied with income.

Although these two principles are very different, the clustering which is obtained is quite similar, contrasting Western Europe with Central and Eastern Europe, while the representatives from the south of Europe are divided between the West and East Italy seems to be similar to the Western European countries and Catalonia, as a part of Spain, seems to be more similar to the Eastern and Central European countries. This picture was already obtained in Chapter 13 and has not been changed by the clustering procedures, which have been applied in this chapter. Therefore this analysis gives us more assurance that the clusters found are realistic clusters and therefore the connection between living conditions and satisfaction with life on an aggregate level seems to be a reasonable hypothesis.

STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF INDIVIDUAL INCOME CHANGES ON SATISFACTION IN RUSSIA

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CONCLUSION

On the basis of these results, we see that in this particular case if we analyze the differences between people in income or the changes in income for individuals the results are very similar: in average the people become happier by an increase in income but on an individual level it is very difficult to make any prediction with respect to the consequences of an increase in income. It seems that there are many other factors, which influence these feelings besides the income level itself. The lack of relationship between these two variables is very clearly demonstrated in Table 5.

These results suggest that a theory of satisfaction should be formulated which allows for a strong relationship between change in living conditions and change in satisfaction on aggregate level. but a very weak relationship on individual level. In the last chapter of this book we will try to formulate such a theory.

LIFE-SATISFACTION AND DOMAIN-SATISFACTION IN 10 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: CORRELATION AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

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CONCLUSION

When we compare the last clustering with the ordering of the countries or regions in Table 1 we can see that the ordering is identical except for Norway which was classified with the first group in Table 1. Comparing this result with Figure 1 the result is also the same if we combine clusters 1 and 2 (including Norway) in Figure 2 and the clusters 3 and 4. If we do this we get the clusters shown in Figure 1.

This means that even though the clustering criteria were quite different in the three approaches the results which have been obtained are similar. It seems that the ordering is very stable. In general it is the ordering which we had expected on the basis of the prosperity of the different countries in Europe (Chapter 1). Important exceptions are Germany, Spain, Italy and the Tatars. This result would appear to suggest that the sizes of the correlations do not simply represent the prosperity of the countries but possibly the importance of the different domains within each of the countries. Importance of a domain is also determined by the cultural differences between countries. This hypothesis can be tested by comparing our correlational findings with data on the perceived importance of life-domains. The present study did not consider this latter issue, but data on perceived importance about life domain in these countries are available from the World Value Study.

Table 2 presents the rank ordering of both the perceived importance satisfaction in two domains and the strength of their correlation with life-satisfaction. In both cases positive rank-order correlations emerged the more the domain is valued in a country, the higher the correlation between life -satisfaction and domain of satisfaction. *

*This information is taken from: The perceived importance of life-domains contained on the World Value Study II; Correlation life-satisfaction and domain satisfaction in Table 4 of this report.

Table 2.

Rank-order of the perceived importance of life-domains and the correlations of domain satisfaction with general life satisfaction.

Nation	Rank-order			
	Perceived importance of Finance	Correlation Life Satisfaction/ Finance satisf.	Perceived importance of Friends	Correlation Life Satisfaction/ Contact satisf.
Belgium	7	4	4	2
Netherlands	8	9	3	5/6
Germany	4	6/7	7	8
Norway	5	10	2	4
Sweden	6	6/7	1	1
Spain/Catalonia	10	8	5	3
Italy	9	3	6	7
Slovenia	3	2	8	5/6
Hungary	2	1	10	10
Russia	1	5	9	9
rank order corr.	+41		+87	

The relationships are not perfect, certainly not for financial satisfaction. This is probably due to the formulation of the question within the World Value Study. For finances the scores were derived from a question which asking about the appreciation of value change towards placing “less emphasis on money and material possessions (p.264) while the importance of social contacts was measured directly with the question “How important in your life are friends and acquaintances?” This social contacts question is a good alternative measure for the importance of this domain and is very highly correlated with the measures used in the present study. These results suggest that importance is not completely determined by deficiency in a particular area though it is a strong determinant. The interpretation of these correlations will be discussed in the last chapter

INTEGRATION OF DATA AND THEORY: A MIXED MODEL OF SATISFACTION

Willem E. Saris

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CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this book several relationships between satisfaction variables have been studied, with the maximum effort given to correct for measurement error in the data so that the best possible estimate of these relationships can be established. This research has led us to the conclusion that any theory on life satisfaction should at least be able to produce the results summarized in the first five statements mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Next we have tried to formulate a theory which can indeed explain the before mentioned empirical evidence. A mixed model of livability and comparison theory has been formulated within a number of equations and the necessary assumptions which make it easier to verify the consequences of this theory. It has been shown that all of the statements derived from the empirical evidence are in agreement with this model. It has also been argued and it could be demonstrated in a similar way too that both the livability theory and the comparison theory alone couldn't explain all the empirical evidence, which now exists in this field. This is, of course, a strong argument that our new theory, the mixed model in this research should be considered. An interesting feature of the mixed model is that it suggests that the correlations between life satisfaction and domain satisfactions are spurious relationships caused by positive and negative experiences. This means that the mixed model does not agree with either the top down or a bottom up explanation for these correlations. *

In the mixed model both positive and negative experiences play an important role. However, so far these variables have not been measured. It would be interesting to look for measures of these variables. In this way the model could be estimated and tested. It would be especially useful if the assumptions with respect to the equality of the parameters across persons and domains could be tested. An important role is also played by the subjective aspiration levels which people impose on themselves. These aspiration levels can cause a lot of bad experience if they are placed too high and a lot of positive experiences if they are placed rather low. However, it is not known how people determine their aspirational levels, or when people change these aspirational levels or how they are changed. This would be another important issue for further research.

* In principle both alternatives could be formulated with minor changes to the model but this will not be discussed here. We leave this puzzle for the reader.