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## **Determinants of subjective well-being among older marriages in Poland**

*Work in progress*

### **The study background**

In recent decades, the issue of life satisfaction and its determinants has been increasingly discussed in the scientific literature. One of the key determinants of life satisfaction is the fact of being in a relationship (formal or not), as well as its quality. The results of analyzes for other countries show that people who have a partner have a higher life satisfaction than people who do not live with their spouse, while divorced people have the lowest (and the highest level of depression). In addition to being in a relationship, its quality is also important: people more satisfied with marriage declare greater life satisfaction / happiness than those less satisfied. There are scientific results that explored many potential predictors of happiness in married couples. The strongest predictor for both sexes turned out to be a quality of marriage: people more satisfied with marriage declare greater life satisfaction/ level of happiness than those less satisfied. Moreover, marital quality is two to five times as important predictor as any other dimensions of subjective well-being (including measures of extraversion, satisfaction with housing, neuroticism, employment, health, financial situation, number of children, education, relationships with family and friends) LIT. Marital quality turns out to be not only sizable correlate of one's well-being, but also of momentary happiness (happiness during randomly sampled activities of the day) LIT. The literature does not clearly indicate whether this relationship is differentiated by gender or not. However, the association between marital quality and life satisfaction frequently become similar for older females and males as spouses retire and their social networks except from marital one lapse. Social

contacts narrowing may result not only of limited time spent with former colleagues, but also with older friends due to the deterioration of their health status and finally death. Marriage/ Union becomes then the only possible social contact generating individual well-being. To better understand robustness of relationship between marital quality and overall well-being this relation should be controlled for variety of characteristics that are associated with both marital satisfaction and personal well-being. It eliminates used variables as competing explanations for mentioned association. For this reason, such variables as education, finances, family related variables and demographic variables should be included in models built in this regard.

### **Objectives and/or research question(s)**

The aim of the study is to analyze the life satisfaction (expressed in terms of well-being and depression) among older people living with partner in Poland, putting emphasis on their individual (e.g. age, sex, health status, level of education) and household (living with other people, financial situation, etc.) characteristics. Importantly, the analysis takes into account the quality of the marriage approximated by the satisfaction of marriage declared by both spouses separately. In particular, I attempt to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Is there a relationship between the quality of marriage and life satisfaction among older people in Poland?
- 2) Are there any differences between older females and males with respect of quality of life related to marital satisfaction?
- 3) Are there differences between older spouses in terms of marriage satisfaction and life satisfaction?
- 4) Are there differences between older people in marriages and cohabitation with respect to relationship satisfaction and subjective well-being?

### **Data and methods**

For the purposes of this study I use data of ‘Social Diagnosis’ study carried out in 2015. ‘Social Diagnosis’ is a panel survey conducted since 2000, but for the purpose of this analysis I used the cross-sectional sample. This survey was designed to supplement institutional indicators with

additional aspects of life in Polish households and their members. The economic and non-economic spheres were examined (including health issues, stress management, problems, lifestyle, education). It contains information about various aspects of individual well-being, life satisfaction, opinion about one's whole past life as well as depression and loneliness. The final sample was limited to older couples living in the same household. This approach allowed to investigate subjective well-being and satisfaction with relationship in the dyads of spouses/ partners. Due to the character of dependent variables (subjective well-being and depression) the set of linear, logistic and ordered logistic regression models were estimated. I controlled for basic individual socio-demographic and economic as well as household (for couples) characteristics.

### **Preliminary results**

The obtained preliminary results indicate that older men in Poland have generally higher subjective well-being than women (in terms of individual life satisfaction and level of depression). Also, older men report higher levels of marital satisfaction than women do. Moreover, for both women and men the relationship between marital quality and subjective well-being is very strong, but stronger for women. Cohabiting older couples were less satisfied with life than spouses in formal marriages. The association between the quality of relationship and subjective well-being was similar in these two groups of unions.