“A contented mind is a perpetual feast”: subjective well being for social care services’ users
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PUBLIC HAPPINESS – HEIRs conference 2013, Rome 4-5 June

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Background: MACaD model
(*Multidimensional Analysis of Capabilities Deprivation*)

**Theoretical framework**
Capability Approach: multidimensional analysis of deprivation in the space of capabilities
(A. Sen and M. Nussbaum)

**Methodological framework**
• Primary data collection through a questionnaire
• Devising an ad hoc multidimensional index
• Graphical representation of the results on a cartesian space

**Application context**
Supporting planning and evaluation of local inclusion policies

**Characteristics of the research group**
Interdisciplinarity (research group members are experts in economics, psychology, statistics, political science and philosophy)
Starting point…..

Why social care services’ users do not state very low levels of SWB (happiness and life satisfaction)?

From our dataset of 570 social care services’ users:
- Mean level of happiness = 6
- Mean level of life satisfaction = 6.14

Hypothesis
- They have low aspirations
- They have high achievements

Objectives:
- To check which are individuals’ achievements when there are low or high levels of SWB
- To check the relationship between the level of SWB and aspirations
- To check the users’ levels of SWB when comparing it to other individuals/internal standards
SWB includes people’s emotional reactions to events, their moods, and judgments they form about their life satisfaction, fulfillment, and satisfaction with domains such as marriage and work.

Thus, SWB concerns the study of what lay people might call happiness or satisfaction (Argyle (2001), Diener (1984), Diener et al. (1999), and Kahneman et al. (1999))

Two components of subjective well-being (Rojas, Veenhoven 2011):

- Cognitive (All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life-as-a-whole? 1-10 scale)
- Affective (In the last four weeks, how happy have you been in a 1-10 scale?)

Although each of the components of SWB reflects people’s evaluations of what is happening in their lives, the facets of SWB show some degree of independence (Andrews & Withey 1976, Lucas et al. 1996) and therefore should be measured and studied individually.
SWB function

Measures of SWB, defined as the mean of happiness and life satisfaction:
- Absolute level
- Relative level (with respect to our own aspirations or compared to other individuals)

$$Perceived\ SWB = \frac{\log Y}{X}$$

where $Y = Achievements$, $X = Aspirations$
Which are the achievements within the six life dimensions?

- status variables (material and immaterial goods)
- functioning variables (states of being and doing)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status variables</th>
<th>Functioning variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB1 - Type of home ownership (property, mortgage, rent)</td>
<td>AB7 – Activation for the resolution of the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM3 – Quality of family relationships</td>
<td>AM 5 – Activation in problem solving with respect to the neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM4 – Presence of relevant issues / problems in the residence neighborhood</td>
<td>GR6 – Capacity to meet basic needs (one week on holiday / foods / medical care / house heating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM6 – Quality of relationships with people living in the neighborhood</td>
<td>E11 – Clarity of life objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E12 – Level of autonomy and freedom to live the life one wants to live</td>
<td>SA1 – Perception of health status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>SA2 – Risk behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AC5 – Frequency of activities useful to gain knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questionnaire

- **Questionnaire** divided into 6 areas (life domains):
  living in a house, being part of a community, expressing emotions, generating income, being healthy, developing skills/improving education

- 108 questions

- valid questionnaires collected: **570 on 1900 individuals in charge (2010)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Status indicators</th>
<th>Functioning Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expressing emotions</strong></td>
<td>E3 – Quality of life in the last 4 weeks</td>
<td>E1 – Emotional Maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E4 – Level of life satisfaction in different domains in the last four weeks</td>
<td>E2 – Level of happiness in the last 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E5 – Life satisfaction as a whole</td>
<td>E8.2 – Contribution to the realization of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E6 – Help from others in certain situations</td>
<td>E9 – self-efficacy and locus of control in the last 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E7 – Stress level in the last year</td>
<td>E11 – Clarity of life objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E12 – level of autonomy and freedom to live the life one wants to live</td>
<td>E14 – Opinion on the role of fate in personal life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being healthy</strong></td>
<td>SA7 – Difficulties in coping with health problems</td>
<td>SA1 – perception of health status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA8 – perceived level of health services in the area of residence</td>
<td>SA2 – risk behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing skills, improving education</strong></td>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>AC2 – Activate to improve knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AC1 – Usefulness of Education</td>
<td>AC 4.1 – Real chance to practice hobbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AC4 – Usefulness of having interests/hobbies</td>
<td>AC5 – Frequency of activities useful to gain knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AC6 – goods owned by the family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main characteristics of the sample

- municipality of Rome: 230,000 inhabitants
- the majority are women (62%)
- 45.6% belong to the age group 30-49
- marital status: significant number of widowed and divorced (28%) and unmarried / single women (21%)
- 33% live in households with 4 or more members
- 20% of the sample immigrants from countries of the EU (especially Romania)
- 54% has a low to medium level of education (primary and middle) and about 8% has a degree or equivalent
- employment status: significant percentage of unemployed (over 30%) and retired/pensioners (over 20%) but also workers with permanent contracts (20% approximately)
- about 60% is placed under the poverty threshold (headcount)
- most of the people have turned to social care services to request economic assistance or a job (employment grants)
MACaD index applied to the whole set of life domains

Source: Based on Isfol data, MACaD Survey 2011
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>happy</th>
<th>unhappy</th>
<th>satisfied</th>
<th>unsatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A – social inclusion</strong></td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C - deprivation</strong></td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New social care services’ users</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A - social inclusion</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C - deprivation</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Old social care services’ users</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>A - social inclusion</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
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<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C - deprivation</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Happiness and life satisfaction for some of the achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Who states to be happy…</th>
<th>Who states to be satisfied…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals not deprived in terms of <strong>housing</strong></td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who act to solve <strong>house problems</strong></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who act to solve <strong>community problems</strong></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who have a <strong>perceived control over their lives</strong></td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals who state to be in <strong>good health</strong></td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individuals who use internet, watch tv, read books and newspapers</strong></td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Achievements and happiness

0 = happy
1 = unhappy

Status achievements

Functionings achievements
Achievements and life satisfaction

0 = satisfied
1 = unsatisfied

Status achievements

Functionings achievements
Happiness/life satisfaction and aspirations
SWB
Psychological mechanisms

The psychological mechanisms that determine how life circumstances and events are perceived by individual, and that, in consequence, affect their well-being are:

• social comparison;
• aspirations;
• goals and strivings;
• adaptation;
• coping

( Diener, et al, 1999; Frey; Stutzer, 2002)
Happiness and life satisfaction: social and internal comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals who are in worst conditions with respect to others families</th>
<th>% of unhappy</th>
<th>% of unsatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>income situation compared to families living in the neighborhood</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inner perception of higher vulnerability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceived vulnerability for taking care of a sick family member</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

- For those who have high levels of SWB there are higher achievements and lower aspirations
- There are several psychological mechanisms able to explain different levels of life satisfaction and happiness
- Local public policies should:
  - increase achievements (ex: empowering policies)
  - encourage positive adaptation (coping, resilience etc.) and risk avoiding behaviours

**further developments**

- New questions on risk taking behaviour, hopefullness and coping
- Analyse social/ internal standards comparison effects on SWB
- Analyse adaptation process on a longitudinal bases
Thanks for your attention!

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The multidimensional index

\[ P_i(x) = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{if } x = 0 \\
\sum_{j \in \{1, \ldots, K\} : x_j = 1} \alpha_j & \text{if } x \neq 0 
\end{cases} \]

\[ \bar{P}_r = \left( \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} P_i^r \right)^{\frac{1}{r}} \]

- the index is based on the “counting approach” (Atkinson 2003), developed among others by Alkire and Foster (2007) and Bossert, Chakravarty and D’Ambrosio (2009)
- it is calculated for individuals
- the variables considered are dummy type where 1 = deprived 0 = not deprived
- it is adjusted, making it sensitive to the weights \( \alpha_j \) assigned by respondents to all dimensions considered