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Authors:

- MSc Kai Schudel, Ph.D. candidate, Institute of Educational Sciences, University of Zurich
- Dr. Martijn J. Burger, academic director at EHERO, Erasmus University Rotterdam and associate professor at the Erasmus School of Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands

Attending author:

- Kai Schudel, kai.schudel@ife.uzh.ch

Session:

- Health and well-being

Title of the presentation:

Protective resilience factors from adolescence moderating the effect of critical life events on life satisfaction in middle adulthood

Abstract:

In his seminal article Lucas (2007) challenged the set-point theory in research on life satisfaction and summarized three findings from the recent literature on the relationship between life events and life satisfaction. First, there are some changes in life circumstances that people's life satisfaction levels do not fully adapt from. Second, people differ in whether their life satisfaction levels adapt to changes in life circumstances. And third, people differ in the likelihood to experience some changes in life circumstances.

In our paper, we would like to investigate to further examine these empirical facts and examine whether inter-individual differences can be explained by protective resilience factors. We therefore examine three questions: (1) What kind of critical life events in the middle adulthood harm life satisfaction? (2) Are there protective resilience factors from adolescence that moderate the impact of critical life events on satisfaction in middle adulthood? And (3) are there protective resilience factors from adolescence that influence the chances to experience a critical life event in middle adulthood?

We answer these questions applying a long-term moderated mediation model using data from the unprecedented 30 years longitudinal Life Study, a German sample of 1,600 participants who were surveyed in their adolescence at age 15 in 1982, in their early adulthood at age 35 in 2002, and finally in their middle adulthood at age 45 in 2012. Preliminary findings show that: (1) Experiencing unemployment, sickness, family disputes and lovesickness decreases life satisfaction in general. (2) Several protective resilience factors from adolescence can reduce the satisfaction drop particularly from experiencing lovesickness, but also from the other critical life events in middle adulthood. And (3) several protective resilience factors from adolescence can reduce the likelihood of experiencing family disputes, but not of the other critical life events.