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Master Thesis Social Policy and Public Health

**Life satisfaction in relation to household composition and
changing norms and values in the Netherlands**

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Abstract

Background: Demographic and socioeconomic changes have shifted household structures in the Netherlands during the last twenty years, all while subjective well-being has stayed the same over the last two decades. This paper looked at life satisfaction and the variables household composition, age, and gender that may influence life satisfaction scores of Dutch citizens.

Methods: To answer this, three main hypotheses were analyzed using the dataset from the European Values Study of both 2017 and 1999. Linear regressions were conducted to analyze differences in household composition and age. A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze gender differences in life satisfaction.

Results: Results show that married individuals and cohabiting couples score higher on life satisfaction than single individuals. Household composition does influence one's life satisfaction score. The results show no effect of gender or age on overall life satisfaction.

Conclusion: To conclude, household composition was found to affect life satisfaction. There was no significant correlation found between life satisfaction and gender or age. Changing norms and values in the last twenty years do not seem to significantly affect the overall score of life satisfaction of Dutch citizens. It is possible that changing norms and values did change one's life satisfaction, but only in specific factors that influence life satisfaction such as job satisfaction or family life satisfaction. The overall life satisfaction score of Dutch citizens did not change.

Keywords: life satisfaction, happiness, subjective well-being, household composition, family composition, marital status, the Netherlands, Dutch citizens, changing norms and values

Introduction

The Netherlands has been on the top list of subjective well-being reported by its citizens for the last decades (de Looze et al., 2018). Subjective well-being is the main factor to understand one's overall mental health and psychological well-being and it is important to measure because this is the foundation for health promotion (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013). In the last twenty years, the level of happiness and life satisfaction of Dutch adults has stayed the same at 85 percent (CBS, 2019). Life satisfaction is an overall score, but differences are made between satisfaction with family life, a job, accommodation, and satisfaction with standard of living (Eurofound, 2019). Levin et al., (2012) state that positive family functioning is also one of the factors that influence life satisfaction in adults as well as children.

In Europe, the number of single-person households has grown, the number of households with children has shrunk and the types of household compositions have diversified (Eurofound, 2019). This is in line with what happened in the Netherlands in the last twenty years. Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (2021a) shows that, in absolute numbers, both single-person and single-parent households have increased. CBS (2012) also shows an absolute increase in cohabiting couples, an absolute decrease in married couples with children, but an increase in cohabiting couples with children (CBS, 2021a).

In the last twenty years, household compositions have changed because of demographic and socioeconomic changes in society (Eurofound, 2019). The shift in demographic behavior led to an increase in age when people have children, get married and get divorced (Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008). There are two main explanations for the changes in household compositions. The first explanation is the increase in individualization, and the second explanation is changing norms and values. First of all, the Netherlands has an individualistic culture. Citizens in individualistic cultures focus more on their desires and

goals and value personal well-being more than collective cultures do (Diener et al., 1995). Individualistic cultures also focus more on the responsibility of one's self, leading to mostly individualistic-based intervention (Berg, Harting & Stronks, 2021).

This is shown to be a powerful predictor of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1995). The paper by Heikel & Keizer (2015) states that individualistic cultures are more accepting of couples cohabiting instead of marriage and that this can lower the risk of an unsatisfied partnership, therefore leading to less divorce in the future. The rise of individualist cultures fuels the upcoming trend of singledom and leads to more single-person households (Kislev, 2018). Secondly, norms and values changed. One important aspect of this is familism. This is the ideology that puts a priority on the family and where families take responsibility for caring for each other instead of holding the government responsible. The familism that Dutch citizens experience has been declining since the 1980s, but family values have stayed the same (CBS, 2012). Unmarried individuals, couples without children, and divorcees score especially low on familialism (CBS, 2012). The increased focus on performance and success led to a decrease in common values (CBS, 2012). Compared to two decades ago, the normative belief changed about what is the 'right' way and time to form a household (Fingerman, 2017). Young adults leave their parents' house to go live on their own, instead of getting married right away (Fingerman, 2017). Individuals think that getting married is no longer required to live together or become parents (Hiekel & Keizer, 2015).

Underlying factors that have an impact on life satisfaction are gender and age. First of all, on average women leave their family home and start a family sooner than men, which leads to a higher proportion of women living in some sort of cohabitation situation than men, while men live alone for longer (Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008). Secondly, after the separation of a couple with children, more children go live with their mother than with their father, which also leads to a higher proportion of men living in a single-person household

(Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008). Thirdly, the chance of living alone during old age is more prevalent in women because on average women live longer than men and are more often widows living alone (CBS, 2021b). These factors indicate that there should be a difference in life satisfaction for men and women, however, some studies show no effect between genders (Della Giustam, Jewell & Kambhampati, 2011). Age also has a direct effect on life satisfaction. McAdams et al., (2012) state that after a person reaches middle age, certain areas that affect life satisfaction such as social life increase, while others such as health decrease. And between the ages of 18 to 25 years old, an individual's overall life satisfaction decreases more than at any other time in one's adult life (Maher et al., 2013).

Research by Anakpo & Kollamparambil (2021) states that it is interesting to further research the effects of household composition on well-being because limited research is done on this topic. Especially research that looks at different household compositions (e.g single) and the different individual factors that impact overall life satisfaction (Anakpo & Kollamparambil, 2021). Moksnes & Espens (2013) state that it is important to know which factors influence life satisfaction so the health and well-being of individuals can be improved. Therefore, our main question is how changing norms and values, household composition, age, and gender influence life satisfaction.

Relevance

Not much research is done on social or cultural factors that explain life satisfaction. Most research is focused on economic factors, however, most economic factors are weak at explaining a difference (de Looze et al., 2018). Since there is not much research done on the combination of life satisfaction and social or cultural factors, this paper aims to fill a knowledge gap in this area of research.

The social relevance is that this paper can be a source of information for the Dutch government, municipalities, and Dutch citizens. With the results of this paper, these stakeholders can have a better understanding of the risks, advantages, and disadvantages for individuals in different types of households that affect people's well-being. An example of a risk is loneliness ((Van Den Berg et al., 2016). These advantages and disadvantages are important to know because it helps to better understand the society we live in, and why policies should take these different factors into account.

Improving well-being is a complex problem that cannot be solved while only looking at it from one perspective, nor will it provide sufficient answers when looking at it from one perspective. A sociological perspective is used to describe the characteristics of Dutch citizens. The sociological approach is also necessary to test the data because this paper will use quantitative data. A psychological perspective is necessary to look at people's feelings and attitudes that affect one's subjective well-being. These perspectives together will provide a holistic view of the issue.

Research question

This study set out to answer the following research question: How have the changing norms and values in the Netherlands impacted household composition in the last twenty years, and how is this related to life satisfaction?

To further explore the problem and give a well-rounded answer to the main research question, two sub-questions are composed:

SQ1: Does gender influence the way in which household composition impacts life satisfaction? If so, in what way?

SQ2: Does age influence the way in which household composition impacts life satisfaction? If so, in what way?

Theoretical approach

Life satisfaction

There is a lot of research done on subjective well-being since the 1980s, but there are ongoing debates about the most effective way to measure subjective well-being (Ramia & Voicu, 2020). Subjective well-being research had grown rapidly between 1970 and 1980 because of the rise in interest in the subjective experience of the well-being of individuals (Diener et al., 1985). The term subjective well-being (SWB) described by Diener (1994) includes three different components. These are life satisfaction, longer-term levels of pleasant affect, and lack of unpleasant affect. This study only focuses on life satisfaction because among social science researchers, it is most common to measure SWB with life satisfaction or happiness, however, life satisfaction focuses on cognitive measures where happiness is an affective measure (Ramia & Voicu, 2020). SWB is often measured with surveys and self-reports using a scale to measure the exact area that the researchers are interested in (Diener, 1984).

There are many definitions for life satisfaction (Prasoon & Chaturvedi, 2016). One of the first definitions is from Tobin & Neugarten (1961), who states that “Life satisfaction is an operational definition of ‘successful aging’”. Ramia & Voicu (2020) say that life satisfaction is present among different areas of an individual's life, for example, job, home, and relationship satisfaction, and is therefore complex to measure. Rojas (2006) argues that a connection between life satisfaction in different areas of one's life and overall life satisfaction is assumed, while Diener (1984) states that overall life satisfaction causes an increase in satisfaction in other areas of one's life. Overall life satisfaction is not the average number of all areas included, some areas contribute more to life satisfaction than other areas (Rojas, 2006). Satisfaction in certain areas can also change during one's lifespan or during formative

events (Rojas, 2006). When researching life satisfaction in different areas of one's life, it is important to be aware that not everyone functions in every area that you want to research (Rojas, 2006), or that individuals may value one area more than another (Margolis et al., 2019). Job satisfaction is often taken into account when measuring life satisfaction, but what if people are out of work? Individuals also respond differently to the same situations because they all have different norms and values, past experiences, and beliefs (Diener, 1984).

To measure life satisfaction in the last three decades, usually, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener et al., (1985) was used. SWLS is a five-item instrument using a seven-point scale. This measurement does not mention specific areas in one's life but looks at overall life satisfaction. Margolis et al., (2019) developed a new tool to measure life satisfaction, the Riverside Life Satisfaction Scale (RLSS). They state that there are three main ways to measure life satisfaction. The first is to measure life satisfaction with a single-item question. Another way is to look at one's past, present and future. The last way is to measure life satisfaction by looking at satisfaction in different areas of one life (Margolis et al., 2019).

Household composition

The number of households in the Netherlands has grown faster than the increase in population (CBS, 2021b). The average number of people that form a household has declined from 3.54 persons per household in 1961 to 2.14 persons in 2021 (CBS, 2021b). At the beginning of 2021, there were 8 million private households in the Netherlands, 6.8 million in 2001, and 5.1 million in 1981 (CBS, 2021b). The definition of household composition that CBS (2021a) uses is "One or more persons who live together in a living space and that provides for the daily necessities for themselves, not commercially". Eurofound (2019) states that economic and social factors mostly influence the formation of a household.

CBS (2021b) distinguishes household composition into the following categories: single, cohabitation, and single-parent household. Cohabitation is divided into four categories. Unmarried without children, married without children, unmarried with children, and married with children.

In 2021, 49 percent of the Dutch population lived in cohabitation, while 18 percent lived alone (CBS, 2021b). The number of Dutch citizens that live alone has increased since the 1970s (CBS, 2021b). Three main groups are especially represented among single-person households: men, people in their 20s, and seniors, especially women, with an age of 70 or above (CBS, 2021b; Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008).

Different household compositions have different risks, advantages, and disadvantages. For example, between 1981 and 2009, the advantages people experience by being married have been reduced, mostly for men (Mikucka, 2016). But overall married couples have better subjective well-being than cohabiting couples (Eurofound, 2019). During 1981 and 2009, life satisfaction for unmarried men increased, while life satisfaction for married men decreased (Mikucka, 2016). For women, there has not been a significant difference in life satisfaction for both married and unmarried women (Mikucka, 2016). Other examples are that single-person households are more at risk for poverty than other types of households (Eurofound, 2019) and single parents are more at risk of attempting suicide (Gisle & van Oyen, 2012).

Theories

Research by Heller et al., (2004) states that there are mainly two theoretical approaches that are used to explain differences in life satisfaction on an individual level. These are the top-down approaches and bottom-up approaches. A top-down approach is a psychological theory that looks at individual factors such as personality differences, and bottom-up approaches look at the social situation, such as specific events that influence

satisfaction (Heller et al., 2004). Top-down approaches show how an individual's overall life satisfaction impacts satisfaction in specific areas of satisfaction such as health satisfaction (McAdams, 2012), or look at the impact of personality on life satisfaction while meditating for job and relationship satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2012). With a bottom-up approach, an individual's satisfaction per specific area, such as job satisfaction, dictates one's overall satisfaction with life (McAdams, 2012). Bottom-up approaches show that external factors can influence subjective well-being, but they can only explain a small part of the variance (Diener, 1984). One of the main questions that remain is if top-down or bottom-up approaches are more vigorous in explaining life satisfaction.

Another theory that could help is the life course theory (LCT). LCT is an interdisciplinary theory developed by sociologist Glen Elder that looks at different events in an individual's life and how this shapes them while looking at the cultural and historical contexts in which people live (Hutchison, 2011). The LCT is often used in longitudinal studies looking at health behaviors and health outcomes (Hutchison, 2011). LCT can help to better understand the life transitions individuals go through (e.g. getting married) and how these transitions, or lack off, affect people's well-being later in life (Hutchison, 2011). An example of the effect of a life transition and its effects is that divorced parents may hinder their adolescent children from transitioning into adulthood because those adolescents more often postpone leaving their family home or getting married (Elder, 1994).

Hypothesis

The main hypothesis in this paper is that household composition and changing norms and values of Dutch citizens affect their life satisfaction. The main expected effect is that life satisfaction is influenced by various factors, and depending on the variable, this can have a positive or negative on an individual's life satisfaction. Whether one's household composition has a positive or negative effect is dependent on which type of household someone belongs

to. One of the underlying assumptions here is that what makes people satisfied has changed. For example, it is more acceptable for couples to live together while not being married (Mills & Trovato, 2001). Age and gender are also important to take into account because earlier research has shown that this can lead to direct effects on life satisfaction. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1: There are differences in overall life satisfaction for different household compositions, where being married or living together with a partner has a positive effect on life satisfaction.

H2: There are differences in overall life satisfaction for different household compositions, where being single has a negative effect on life satisfaction.

H3: There are gender differences for overall life satisfaction, where men score higher than women.

H4: There are age differences for overall life satisfaction, where older adults score higher than young adults.

Methods

Design and procedure

This is a quantitative study using secondary data. It is necessary to do quantitative research because this research looks at the correlation between more than two variables. The data used are survey data collected by the European Values Study (EVS). The EVS is a large-scale and longitudinal research that has been repeated every nine years since 1981 in 34 European countries. It looks at how citizens in different European countries view family life, work-life, politics, religion, and society. EVS aims to provide knowledge about the values, attitudes, and preferences of European citizens. This study will look at data available from the Netherlands. This database is fit to test the hypotheses because this database tests all relevant

determinants for the research: life satisfaction overall and in different areas, gender, age, and household composition. Life satisfaction is assessed with a single item (How satisfied are you with your life?) rated on a scale from 0 to 10. This study will use the most recent data available, which is the data collected in 2017 and compare this to the data collected in 1999.

Participants, sampling, and data collection

The target population of this study is Dutch citizens. Statistics Netherlands provided the Dutch researchers collecting data for the EVS with a stratified random sample of the adult Dutch population. People living in institutions (e.g. jails, healthcare institutions, and monasteries) were excluded from the sampling frame. The target group that this paper uses are Dutch citizens that filled in the EVS in 2017 or in 1999. The data was anonymized and a consent form was filled in by the participants.

Validity was considered early, and an appropriate method and sample are chosen to measure what is intended to be measured. The internal consistency of the results will be checked across different parts of the process and across time to increase reliability.

Data analysis approach

For the data analysis of the data extracted from the EVS, SPSS Statistics 28 was used. The dependent variable, life satisfaction, is continuous. The independent variables of household composition and gender, are nominal. Age is a continuous variable because six age categories are used. Some assumptions about the data are made namely that the observations are independent, the variance is homogeneous and the data follows a normal distribution.

To analyze the data, first, a linear regression will analyze the data on life satisfaction and household composition. Secondly, a one-way ANOVA will analyze if there are gender

differences in life satisfaction. Lastly, a linear regression will measure if there are differences between different age groups for life satisfaction.

Results

Descriptive data

In this paper, older adults are seen as 65 or up, and young adults are the group between 15 and 24 years old. The total number of participants in the 2017 study is N=2404, of which 46.6 percent are male and 53.4 percent are female. The mode level of satisfaction among Dutch respondents was 8.104. The age group 65+ was represented by 31.9 percent and the age group of 15-24 was 6.3 percent.

The total number of participants in the study in 1999 are N=1001, of which 49 percent are male and 51 percent are female. The mode satisfaction level was 7.85. The age group 65+ was represented by 16.3 percent and the age group of 15-24 was 4.8 percent.

Household composition and life satisfaction

First, a linear regression was used to test two hypotheses, where overall life satisfaction is the outcome variable (on a score of 1 to 10) and household composition is the predictor variable. The household composition was categorized as: married, divorced, separated, widowed, and single/never married.

The first hypothesis states that being married or living together with a partner scores higher on overall life satisfaction than other types of households. Being married was found to have a significant effect on life satisfaction in both 2017 ($0.000 < 0.005$) and in 1999 ($0.00 < 0.005$). In 2017 married people scored 8.18 and in 1999 this was 8.03. In 2017 there is also a significant difference between people living with a partner and those that do not ($<0.001 <$

0.005). This is in line with the hypothesis that being married or living together with a partner has a positive effect on overall life satisfaction.

The second hypothesis states that single-person households score lower on overall life satisfaction than other types of households. Being single was found to have a significant effect on overall life satisfaction in 2017 ($<0.001 < 0.005$), but not in 1999 ($0.008 > 0.005$). In 2017 single people scored 7.73 and in 1999 this was 7.77. The outcome in 2017 is in line with the hypothesis that being single has an effect on overall life satisfaction, while the outcome of 1999 contradicts this hypothesis.

Table 1

The relationship between overall life satisfaction and household composition 2017 and 1999

Year survey		B	Mean	Std. Error	Sig
1999	(Constant)	8.031	8,03	,056	,000
	Divorced	-,665	7,37	,156	<,001
	Separated	-,813	7,22	,280	,004
	Widowed	-,538	7,49	,166	,001
	Single/never married	-,259	7,77	,098	,008
2017	(Constant)	8.165	8,18	,042	,000
	Divorced	-,777	7,39	,105	<,001
	Separated	-1,227	6,94	,217	<,001
	Widowed	-,429	7,74	,114	<,001
	Single/never married	-4,36	7,73	,073	<,001

Gender and life satisfaction

Secondly, a one-way ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis that men score higher levels of life satisfaction than women, with life satisfaction as the outcome variable and gender as the predictor variable. In 2017, men score 7.90 and women score 7.92 on life

satisfaction. But gender was not found to have a significant effect on life satisfaction ($0.665 > 0.05$). In 1999 this effect was also seen ($0.604 > 0.05$) and men scored 7.82 and women score 7.87. This suggests no significant effect of gender on life satisfaction and contradicts the hypothesis that men score higher levels of life satisfaction than women.

Table 2

Gender as an outcome predictor for life satisfaction 2017 and 1999

Year survey		F	Sig.
1999	Between groups	,269	,604
	Within groups		
	Total		
2017	Between groups	,188	,665
	Within groups		
	Total		

Age and life satisfaction

Lastly, a linear regression was used to test the hypothesis that older adults score higher on levels of life satisfaction than younger adults, with life satisfaction as the outcome variable and age as the predictor variable. In 2017, age was found to be correlated with life satisfaction ($0.001 < 0.05$), however, there is not a significant difference between younger- and older adults ($0.173 > 0.05$). The mean level of life satisfaction for older adults was 8.10 while young adults scored 7.92. In 1999 the significant effect for age effect was also shown ($0.005 < 0.05$), but also here there was no significant difference between younger- and older adults ($0.008 > 0.05$). The mean level of life satisfaction for older adults was 7.82 and for young adults, this was 8.42. These outcomes contradict the hypothesis that older adults score higher on life satisfaction than younger adults.

Table 3*Age as an outcome predictor for life satisfaction 2017 and 1999*

Year survey		B	Std. Error	Sig
1999	(Constant)	7.835	,104	,000
	Age 15-24	,581	,218	,008
	Age 25-34	,165	,136	,227
	Age 35-44	-,014	,133	,917
	Age 45-54	-,189	,140	,177
	Age 55-64	-,083	,162	,608
	2017	(Constant)	8.104	,055
Age 15-24		-,184	,135	,173
Age 25-34		-,235	,103	,023
Age 35-44		-,411	,096	<,001
Age 45-54		-,320	,097	<,001
Age 55-64		-,217	,089	,015

Discussion

Main findings

This analysis supports the hypothesis that household composition has an effect on overall life satisfaction. Age and gender were not found to have a significant effect. The level of satisfaction of Dutch citizens has stayed roughly the same for the last twenty years, but during the last twenty years, it increased from 7.85 in 1999 to 8.104 in 2017. This is in line with research done by CBS in 2019 that states life satisfaction at an eight.

Findings in context

In line with the hypothesis that there is a difference between household compositions, this study shows that there is a significant difference between household compositions.

Eurofound (2019) also claims that married couples experience better well-being. This is a two-way street since research by Luhmann, Lucas & Eid (2012) shows that higher life satisfaction is also associated with a higher chance of getting married and a lesser chance of separation. Not only marriage but also living together with a partner has an effect on life satisfaction. This is contrary to the research by Ševčíková et al., (2021) who states that there is no difference in life satisfaction score between people living together and those who are not. However, they also state that even people in LAT relationships score higher than single persons. So having a partner (LAT, married, living together) contributes to higher life satisfaction. The negative effect on life satisfaction for singles is shown in multiple studies, such as the one by Vignoli et al., (2014). It is notable that in 1999, EVS only asked about marital status, so it was not possible to compare results between people living together with the results in 2017. The fact that the question about living together with a partner was added in the EVS 2017 also shows the change in norms and values that occurred in the last twenty years, and how European societies view the importance of marriage and other forms of partnership.

Contrary to the hypothesis that men score higher on life satisfaction than women, this study found no significant difference between men and women in life satisfaction. This outcome is opposite to the claims of Joshanloo & Jovanović (2020) that there is a small but significant difference between genders. The outcome of this study is in line with the claims of Della Giustam, Jewell & Kambhampati (2011) who state that average levels of life satisfaction for men and women are alike. However, they also state that there is a systematic difference between men and women and the variables that explain their overall life satisfaction (e.g. household chores, paid work). So if you look at differences in overall life satisfaction for gender, it is important to differentiate life satisfaction into multiple questions and areas (job-, health- and leisure time satisfaction). The paper by Joshanloo & Jovanović

(2020) does state that after the age of 63, men do score higher on life satisfaction than women. This may have to do with a decline in resilience for women (Joshanloo & Jovanović, 2020), more women living alone in old age (CBS, 2016), or the gendered ageism women face in old age (Bouson, 2016).

Also contrary to the hypothesis that older adults score higher on life satisfaction than younger adults, is that there is no significant difference between these groups. There is however a significant difference in the overall variable age. It is also notable that life satisfaction for young adults decreased by -0.5 points between 1999 (8.42) and 2017 (7.92), while life satisfaction for older adults increased by 0.28 points from 1999 (7.82) to 2017 (8.10). This outcome is contrary to the results of Reaolo & Dobewall (2011) that state young adults are the happiest of all age groups, but in line with the hypothesis that life satisfaction increases during one's lifetime (Bibi, Chaudhry & Awan, 2015). Research about well-being and age can be difficult because of omitted cohort effects (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008).

Implementations and recommendations

Misinterpretations and wrong assumptions about the meaning of life satisfaction will not lead to improved subjective well-being. This is because if you try to improve the wrong factors that do not influence life satisfaction, overall life satisfaction will not improve. It is also important to look at how different cultures value the importance of good life satisfaction. Cultural values will reflect in different policies in different cultures. Therefore, future studies should take into account the different interpretations people and cultures can have about life satisfaction. And to better understand the effect of age on life satisfaction, future studies could compare all age groups and not be limited to young- and older adults. Further research is also needed to establish what factors contribute to gender differences, and why in some

studies men and women score significantly differently on life satisfaction, while in other studies there is no effect.

The main takeaway for policymakers is to recognize and include family diversity, the effect it has on household composition, and therefore on life satisfaction in policies. The implementation of these policies should not be individual-based, but support groups as a whole. All households have different benefits and risks attached that should be taken into account. A policy recommendation is to support young adults in living independently from their parents as this may improve their well-being. A second policy recommendation is to support single-person households with financial aid (when necessary) to decrease the chances of poverty and increase well-being.

Strengths and limitations

There are three main strengths of this study. The first one is that the European Values Survey is representative and has a large number of participants. This increases the methodical strength. Secondly, the results are generalizable for the Dutch population and this supports the external validity of this study. Lastly, this paper helps us understand the complexity of life satisfaction and what variables influence it a little more. This paper shows that many variables do, or do not, influence how a person scores their overall life satisfaction and that researchers from different disciplines and across time all show different variables that impact life satisfaction.

There are four main limitations of this research. First of all, a confounding variable such as ethnicity or income level may have been a bigger predictor of life satisfaction which also threatens the internal validity. Secondly, the reliability of the data is affected because the data used is from 2017, so the last five years were not included in this dataset. This includes the Covid-19 period with lockdowns and other restrictions that have

impacted all citizens, especially young adults. This threatens the internal validity of this paper because it is possible that norms and values have changed in the last five years and that the results of this paper are therefore outdated. Thirdly, situational factors such as location or the researcher may impact the results and therefore also the external validity. Lastly, the correlation that this paper shows is not the same as causation. Therefore it is beyond the scope of this paper to say what the cause is for the correlation between the variables.

Conclusion

Concluding, by analyzing age, gender, household composition, and the changing norms and values in the Netherlands in the last twenty years, this paper has shown that age and gender do not seem to affect life satisfaction. We found no significant difference between older- and younger adults in life satisfaction, nor between men and women. However, household composition does seem to affect life satisfaction as married individuals score higher on life satisfaction than single individuals. The changing norms and values in the last 20 years do not seem to significantly affect the overall score of life satisfaction of the Dutch population since the life satisfaction score has stayed the same during the last two decades. However, it is possible that changing norms and values, such as the rise of individualism, did influence the life satisfaction of Dutch citizens, but only in specific factors that predict life satisfaction such as job- or family life satisfaction.

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Appendix 1: instruments and data analysis syntax used

* Encoding: UTF-8.

* Filter on Dutch data and year 1999 & 2017.

FILTER BY filter_\$.

EXECUTE.

* Split output by year.

SORT CASES BY S020.

SPLIT FILE LAYERED BY S020.

* Start output of results.

FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=A170 X007_02 X007 X001 X003R

/BARCHART PERCENT

/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

MEANS TABLES=A170 BY X003R X001 X007 X007_02

/CELLS=MEAN COUNT STDDEV.

* Oneway - Living with partner.

CROSSTABS

/TABLES=A170 BY X007_02

/FORMAT=AVALUE TABLES

/CELLS=COUNT

/COUNT ROUND CELL.

* Crosstabs - Marital status.

CROSSTABS

/TABLES=A170 BY X007

/FORMAT=AVALUE TABLES

/CELLS=COUNT

/COUNT ROUND CELL.

* Oneway - Age.

CROSSTABS

/TABLES=A170 BY X003R

/FORMAT=AVALUE TABLES

/CELLS=COUNT

/COUNT ROUND CELL.

*** Regression - Age.**

```
REGRESSION
  /MISSING LISTWISE
  /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA
  /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10)
  /NOORIGIN
  /DEPENDENT A170
  /METHOD=ENTER AGE1524 AGE2534 AGE3544 AGE4554 AGE5564.
```

*** Regression - Marital status.**

```
REGRESSION
  /MISSING LISTWISE
  /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA
  /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10)
  /NOORIGIN
  /DEPENDENT A170
  /METHOD=ENTER MA_DIVORCED MA_SEPARATED MA_WIDOWED MA_SINGLE
  MA_DISEWI MA_APART.
```

*** Oneway - Sex.**

```
ONEWAY A170 BY X001
  /ES=OVERALL
  /MISSING ANALYSIS
  /CRITERIA=CILEVEL(0.95).
```

*** Oneway - Marital status.**

```
ONEWAY A170 BY X007
  /ES=OVERALL
  /MISSING ANALYSIS
  /CRITERIA=CILEVEL(0.95).
```

*** Oneway - Living with partner.**

```
ONEWAY A170 BY X007_02
  /ES=OVERALL
  /MISSING ANALYSIS
  /CRITERIA=CILEVEL(0.95).
```