



Young people's well-being and the economic crisis: How does parental unemployment and family wealth affect the downturn experience?



Diana Frاسquilho^{a,b,*}, Margarida Gaspar de Matos^{b,c}, Tânia Gaspar^{b,d}, J.M. Caldas de Almeida^e

^a Nova Medical School and CMDT, Nova University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

^b Aventura Social, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

^c William James Center for Research, ISPA, Lisbon, Portugal

^d Lusíada University, Lisbon, Portugal

^e Department of Mental Health, Nova Medical School, Nova University of Lisbon, Portugal

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 April 2016

Received in revised form 24 August 2016

Accepted 24 August 2016

Available online 26 August 2016

Keywords:

Adolescents

Economic recession

Life satisfaction

Parental unemployment

Perceived family wealth

Portugal

ABSTRACT

Background: Portugal is among the European countries most severely hit by the economic recession and the fifth with the highest unemployment rate. Given that adolescents' development is highly influenced by their living contexts, monitoring the repercussions of the economic recession is essential for the evaluation and improvement of their current and future public health.

Objective: To investigate youth perceived repercussions of the economic recession, its association with life satisfaction, as well as to assess differences across parental employment status and family perceived wealth.

Methods: Data were drawn from the Portuguese 2014 Health Behaviour in School-aged children survey, a WHO collaborative cross-national study, with a nationally representative sample of 2748 students (Mage = 14.7 years ± 1.2; 48% boys). Descriptive statistics and linear regression models were performed.

Results: Levels of life satisfaction are lower when young people perceive that the economic recession generated negative lifestyle changes. Having unemployed parents was found to be significantly associated with perceiving such repercussions and family wealth to decrease the perception of repercussions of the recession.

Conclusions: Findings enhance our understanding of how Portuguese youth are being affected by the socioeconomic conditions surrounding them. Such information contributes to improve future research and also allow some considerations about the policies aimed at protecting young people's wellbeing during a period of high unemployment and socioeconomic downturn.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Adolescents are highly affected by the socioeconomic context where they live and grow because of the profound neurological, hormonal and psychosocial maturation processes they go through (Sawyer et al., 2012; Viner et al., 2012). Many studies have demonstrated this social gradient phenomenon among young people (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Pillas et al., 2014; Starfield, Riley, Witt, & Robertson, 2002). This means that what happens during young years influences life trajectories and future achievements which shape adulthood health and well-being outcomes and, therefore, social expenditure of countries (Patel, Flisher, Hetrick, & McGorry, 2007; Sawyer et al., 2012).

In 2008–2009 an economic recession struck European economies with already low growth. This was the case of Portugal, the context of this particular study. In order to re-establish the confidence of international financial markets, a financial assistance programme was agreed

between Portugal and the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This programme was based on fiscal consolidation and structural adjustments which accompanied reduced public spending, marked increase in unemployment rates (from 9% in 2008 up to 17% in 2013) and an overall reduction of available income (World Bank, 2013; European Commission, 2009, 2011; ILO, 2013).

The negative repercussions entailed by this economic recession (e.g. unemployment and economic decline) may affect families and adolescents' well-being across the social gradient (Frasquilho et al., 2016). Because of its possible public health implications, the economic recession's repercussions in youth are an increasingly important topic to international policy. In 2014, UNICEF highlighted that recessionary contexts impact families and in turn young people's well-being. The channels of transmission of the recession repercussions in the family context may be essentially three: labour market (e.g. unemployment), financial market (e.g. low income), and public sector (e.g. health and social protection). As a consequence, in countries with high exposure to the economic recession and high unemployment rates, young people's well-being might be at risk, and this may generate long-term consequences (Fanjul, 2014). A specific UNICEF report from Portugal shows that families and young people are

* Corresponding author at: Aventura Social, Faculdade de Motricidade Humana da Universidade de Lisboa, Estrada da Costa, 1495-688 Cruz-Quebrada, Portugal.

E-mail addresses: diana.frasquilho@hbsc.org (D. Frاسquilho), mmatos@fmh.ulisboa.pt (M.G. de Matos), tania.gaspar@edu.ulusiada.pt (T. Gaspar), caldasjm@fcm.unl.pt (J.M. Caldas de Almeida).

struggling with the economic recession due to family income deterioration and unemployment (Wall et al., 2013).

Of all variables that seem to moderate the impact of the economic recession, parental labour market situation is of particular importance (Fanjul, 2014). Unemployment is a reality that affects a growing number of families with children in countries that are facing economic recession and harsh market pressures. In Portugal, the number of young people living in unemployed households doubled from 5% before the crisis in 2008 to 10% in 2013 (Eurostat, 2016).

The detrimental effects of parental unemployment on the well-being of their children have been established in the literature (Borges, Matos, & Diniz, 2011; Siponen, Ahonen, Savolainen, & Hameen-Anttila, 2011; Sleskova et al., 2006). For instance, there is evidence showing that young people living with unemployed parents are more likely than their peers to report lower life satisfaction (Kind & Haisken-DeNew, 2012). This data is important since life satisfaction is a valuable measure of adolescents' both physical and psychological health (Cavallo et al., 2015). Additionally, families in which parents are unemployed may experience lower levels of income and higher financial hardship than working families which may have a partial negative effect on adolescents' well-being (Fanjul, 2014; Wall et al., 2013). Therefore, during recession periods, young people living with unemployed parents and facing family wealth decline may be even more vulnerable to the negative lifestyle changes of their living socioeconomic context.

Despite the international evidence, the research gap of the recessionary effects and unemployment on families and youth well-being is especially large in Portugal. This is a timely opportunity to assess adolescents' perceived repercussions of the economic crisis and how it relates to well-being and how it differs by socioeconomic position. This information may be useful for informing public health policy makers in Portugal and in other countries enduring economic downturns. Therefore, using the most recent wave of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey (Matos & Aventura Social, 2015), this study aims to provide an overview on how Portuguese school-children perceived the consequences of the economic recession in their daily lives, the association with life satisfaction, as well as to assess whether parental employment status and subjective family socioeconomic position play a role on such perceptions.

1. Method

1.1. Study population and procedures

The population included in this study was a representative sample of 2748 Portuguese students ($M_{\text{age}} = 14.7 \text{ years} \pm 1.2$; 47.8% boys; response rate of 79%) that were surveyed by the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey (HBSC/WHO) conducted in 2014 in Portugal. This survey is carried out in collaboration with the World Health Organisation every 4 years in 44 European and North American countries. The study is comprised by a HBSC/WHO international standardized research protocol, that recommends that the participants are recruited via a clustered sampling design (in our study the whole classes were used as sampling units) (Currie et al., 2014). All participants voluntarily self-completed the survey that was administered in the classroom by the school teachers. All answers were anonymous.

Ethically, approval for the 2014 Portuguese HBSC was given from the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Health, by the ethics committee of São João Hospital, by the national ethics committee, by all schools that participated as well as students' legal guardians who gave signed informed consent.

1.2. Measures

1.2.1. Economic crisis repercussions scale

This scale is composed by 15 items aimed to assess the repercussions of the economic recession. The scale was inspired by the findings of the

research report of UNICEF Ireland "Change the Future: Experiencing Youth in Contemporary Ireland. Happiness, Bullying and the Recession" (UNICEF Ireland, 2011), and was further developed between the Portuguese, Spanish and Greek HBSC teams (Kokkevi, Stavrou, Kanavou, & Fotiou, 2014). In Portugal the items were revised by a panel of experts from the Aventura Social research team and were pilot-tested following its inclusion to the Portuguese HBSC 2014 survey. After data collection, principal components analyses were conducted to combine the responses. The items were loaded on 3 factors of an orthogonal rotation method (varimax) that explained 41.4% of the variance: 1) minor lifestyle changes; 2) negative lifestyle changes; 3) major negative lifestyle changes. For this study, only the first two subscales were used in the analysis because the third factor showed collinearity issues with parental employment status (e.g. "parents are jobless and spend more time at home").

Minor lifestyle changes assessed experiences of having to adapt to minor lifestyle changes: "I value more what I have"; "I feel more responsible for having good grades"; "I try to save money that people give to me or on house expenses (electricity, water...)"; "When with my friends we now choose to do things that do not make us spend money"; "We are more united/closer together at home"; "I reuse and recycle things to save pocket money"; "In my spare time I now volunteer to help others". The coding was 0-no and 1-yes, such that higher scores denoted more adaptation experiences to the crisis.

Negative lifestyle changes this variable assessed the perceptions of negative changes in daily life due to the recession: "There is less money around"; "My parents are more irritable and nervous than before"; "There are less family outings and vacations and we need to spend more time at home"; "I feel my parents need my support". The coding was 0-no and 1-yes, such that higher scores denoted more negative experiences related to the economic crisis.

Parental employment status was assessed using two groups: 1) both parents employed; 2) at least one parent unemployed (both parents were unemployed and looking for job; only the father was unemployed and looking for job; only the mother was unemployed and looking for job).

Life satisfaction of young people was measured by the Cantril Ladder (Cantril, 1965), which is a scale ranging from worst possible life (0) to the best possible current life satisfaction (10). This variable has been recommended as a measure of subjective well-being in adolescents' studies (Muldoon, Levin, van der Sluijs, & Currie, 2010).

Perceived family wealth was used to increase knowledge about the adolescents' socioeconomic position (rather than just using the indicator of parental employment status). This variable combines the perception of family absolute and relative economic position and has been used as a wider concept of adolescents' socioeconomic position that correlates well with health and well-being variables (Jeon, Ha, & Choi, 2013; Quon & McGrath, 2014). The young people were asked to evaluate 'How well-off do you think your family is?'. The response ranged from 1) 'not at all well-off'; 2) 'not so well-off'; 3) 'average'; 4) 'quite well-off'; to 5) 'very well-off' (Griebler, Molcho, & Samdal, 2010).

Table 1
Descriptive characteristics of the Portuguese HBSC sample.

	% (N)
Gender	
Boys	47.8 (1317)
Girls	52.2 (1441)
Parental employment status	
Both employed	81.1 (2236)
At least one parent unemployed	18.9 (512)
	$M \pm SD$
Age	14.7 \pm 1.2 (12.6–19.9)
Minor lifestyle changes	2.5 \pm 1.9 (0–7)
Negative lifestyle changes	1.6 \pm 1.4 (0–4)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6833671>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6833671>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)