



## Brief Report

## Institutional rearing is associated with lower general life satisfaction in adulthood

David Richter<sup>a,\*</sup>, Sakari Lemola<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> German Institute for Economic Research, Mohrenstr. 58, 10117 Berlin, Germany<sup>b</sup> University of Basel, Department of Psychology, Missionsstrasse 62a, 4055 Basel, Switzerland

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Available online 20 November 2013

## Keywords:

Life satisfaction  
Set point theory  
Early adversity  
Institutional rearing

## ABSTRACT

We analyzed whether individuals reared in institutions differ in their general life satisfaction from people raised in their families. The data comprised of 19,210 German adults (51.5% female) aged from 17 to 101 years and were provided by the SOEP, an ongoing, nationally representative longitudinal study in Germany. Compared to people raised in families, individuals reared in institutions reported lower general life satisfaction in the manner of a dose response relationship controlling their parents' education and occupational prestige. The association was moderated by participants' age such that with increasing age the association between institutional rearing and lower general life satisfaction decreased. Further, the relationship was partly mediated by the individuals own education/socio-economic attainment in adulthood, physical health, and relationship status.

© 2013 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

In many societies orphaned or abandoned children are reared in institutions which may involve early psychological neglect. Consequently, it has been reported that children reared in institutional settings are more likely than children raised in their families to have deficits in many domains such as cognitive function (e.g., O'Connor, Rutter, Beckett, Keaveney, & Kreppner, 2000), language production and comprehension (e.g., Windsor et al., 2011), and to show various forms of psychopathology (Zeanah et al., 2009), and difficulties in social functioning (e.g., Rutter et al., 1999). Higher risk of mental disorders, substance use, and personality disorders across the life span emerged after a temporary separation from parents for an average time span of 1.7 years among children evacuated from Finland to Sweden and Denmark during World War II compared to their peers who remained with their own families in Finland (Räikkönen et al., 2011).

The present paper studies possible long-term consequences of the duration of institutional rearing on general life satisfaction in adulthood. Research on the association of institutional rearing with subjective well-being and general satisfaction with life is sparse and has focused on life satisfaction during institutional care in adolescents. Sastre and Ferriere (2000) compared the life satisfaction of 50 adolescents aged between 12 and 19 years living in institutions with 50 adolescents who lived at home with their parents

and found considerably lower life satisfaction in the former group. However, only little is known whether there is an enduring difference in life satisfaction that persists into adulthood.

Several theoretical accounts predict decreased levels of life-satisfaction during adulthood in individuals reared in institutions. A first explanation for the developmental problems related to exposure to institutionalization during (early) childhood involves compromised neural development due to less than optimal childcare quality in institutional settings (Sheridan, Fox, Zeanah, McLaughlin, & Nelson, 2012). A second explanation involves programming of the neuroendocrine stress-axis activity which may permanently increase vulnerability to stressors (Räikkönen et al., 2011). Drawing from attachment theory, a third explanation involves development of an insecure attachment representation during childhood which may make it more difficult to engage in satisfying intimate relationships during adulthood and eventually also hamper general life-satisfaction and mental health (Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000). Finally, children reared in institutions may lack the social and economic support from their parents during young adulthood which may lead to poor life-time socio-economic prospects.

In the present study, we first tested whether individuals reared in institutional settings differ in their general life satisfaction from people raised in their families using data from a large national representative dataset – the German Socioeconomic Panel Study (SOEP). As such critical childhood experiences may be determined by one's parental socio-economic background and education, we additionally measured and statistically control for parents' education and occupational prestige along with the participants' age and

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [drichter@diw.de](mailto:drichter@diw.de) (D. Richter), [sakari.lemola@unibas.ch](mailto:sakari.lemola@unibas.ch) (S. Lemola).

sex. Second, we tested whether such differences in life satisfaction are moderated by age as it is possible that institutional rearing is differentially associated with life satisfaction at different stages of adulthood. Moreover, with an increasing time span after having left the institution a decrease of the association of institutional rearing with life satisfaction would be possible (Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid, & Lucas, 2012). Third, we tested whether the association between institutional rearing and adulthood life satisfaction is mediated by life circumstances during adulthood including educational attainment, employment status, occupational prestige, net income, health, and relationship status. Previous research has shown that life satisfaction is related to the circumstances people are living in including educational, socio-economic, health, and relationship status (for review, see Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). In turn, these life circumstances during adulthood might also be determined by critical childhood experiences such as institutional rearing.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Sample

The sample comprised of 26,713 German adults of whom data from 19,210 aged from 17 to 101 years ( $M = 44.79$  years,  $SD = 18.74$  years; 51.5% female) were analyzed in the present paper who reported their general life satisfaction and either grew up at home with both parents throughout their childhood ( $n = 18,962$ ) or were raised in an institutional setting for at least some time ( $n = 248$ ). Data from 7503 participants were not analyzed in the present paper as they were raised in different settings (e.g., they never spent time in an institutional setting and were raised by a single parents for at least some time). The data are from the SOEP (Version 28), which is an ongoing, nationally representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany initiated in 1984. Comprehensive information about the data collection, design, participants, variables, and assessment procedures is reported in Wagner, Frick, and Schupp (2007). All data have been collected by a professional high-quality fieldwork organization (TNS Infratest Social Research, Munich).

### 2.2. Materials

During the 12 years<sup>1</sup> of data collection the respondents reported their general life satisfaction (“All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life in general?”) at the end of each yearly interview using an 11-point scale ranging from 0 “totally dissatisfied” to 10 “totally satisfied”. Single-item measures of life satisfaction have reasonable validity as shown by moderately strong relations to measures of well-being and positive affect assessed by questionnaire, written interviews, informant reports, and measures of daily affect (Sandvik, Diener, & Seidlitz, 1993). Respondent’s general life satisfaction was estimated by calculating the mean of all data available ( $M = 7.28$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ). On average the participants provided 5.84 ( $SD = 3.94$ ; range = 1–12) data points of general life satisfaction. Participants’ age was computed as the mean of their age at the assessment time points when they reported their life satisfaction.

When entering the panel study, respondents reported where they had grown up during the first 15 years of their lives as well as their own and their parent’s occupation and education. The question wording of the institutional rearing variable was “How many years of your childhood (up until age 15) did you live with

the following persons? Please round off to the nearest year”. For our analyses, we used data from the response options “with both your father and mother (biological or adoptive)” and “in an orphanage”. The other response options as well as frequency distribution of the institutional rearing variable are provided in [Online Supplement 1](#). Occupational prestige was scored from 13 to 78 using the Standard International Occupation Prestige Score index (SIOPS; Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996; respondent’s:  $M = 33.70$ ,  $SD = 17.94$ ; respondent’s fathers:  $M = 38.38$ ;  $SD = 15.31$ ; respondent’s mothers:  $M = 26.74$ ,  $SD = 16.29$ ). Occupational prestige was not available for 6352 (33.01%) of the respondents and for 9330 (48.57%) mothers and 2301 (11.98%) fathers of respondents. In most cases these individuals had no occupational prestige due to being homemakers or being unemployed. In rare cases, however, the participants also did not know their parents’ occupation. Missing occupational prestige was scored with the lowest value possible following the logic that being unemployed or homemaker is regarded as lower in prestige than all other paid work. Education of parents was scored from 1 to 3 (no education [1]: no school attendance, no degree obtained, other degree obtained, or respondent did not know, respondent’s fathers:  $n = 2728$ , 14.2%, respondent’s mothers:  $n = 2895$ , 15.1%; low education [2]: basic-track secondary school, respondent’s fathers:  $n = 10,674$ , 55.6%, respondent’s mothers:  $n = 10,813$ , 56.3%; and high education [3]: intermediate-track or academic-track secondary school, respondent’s fathers:  $n = 5808$ , 30.2%, respondent’s mothers:  $n = 5502$ , 28.6%). Education of respondents was scored using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-1997; OECD., 1999). Prior to the analyses, respondents’ ISCED-Scores were collapsed into three categories (low education [1]: ISCED-Scores 0, 1, and 2,  $n = 3560$ , 18.5%; medium education [2]: ISCED-Scores 3 and 4,  $n = 10,347$ , 53.9%; and high education [3]: ISCED-Scores 5 and 6,  $n = 5303$ , 27.6%). Missing information on education ( $n = 56$ , 0.29%) was scored as the lowest category.

Yearly data on respondent’s employment status were coded (full-time employment was coded 1.0, regular part-time employment or vocational training were coded 0.5, marginal, irregular part-time employment was coded 0.25, and not employed was coded 0.0) and collapsed into a mean score to represent respondent’s general employment status ( $M = 0.45$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ). Missing employment status ( $n = 17$ , 0.09%) was replaced with the sample mean. Respondent’s generalized monthly net income in Euros was estimated by calculating the mean of all yearly data available ( $M = 1021.92$  Euro,  $SD = 1298.39$  Euro). As a measure of global physical health, we calculated the mean of the reverse-coded yearly responses to the question “How would you describe your current health?” answered on a 1 (very good) to 5 (bad) scale ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ). Missing self-reported health ( $n = 2$ , 0.01%) was replaced with the sample mean. Imputing missing values for occupational prestige, education, employment status, and health using *stata12* and the *mi*-command leads to comparable results. Finally, respondents’ relationship status was dummy coded (i.e., in a relationship was coded 1, not in a relationship was coded 0) and collapsed into a mean score to represent the respondent’s general relationship status across the years they reported their life satisfaction ( $M = 0.64$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ). The correlation matrix of all variables with means and standard deviations is provided as [Online Supplement 2](#).

### 2.3. Analyses

To examine the association of institutional rearing with general life satisfaction, respondents were categorized into four subgroups. Three groups reared in an institution for 1 to 5 years ( $n = 145$ , 49.0% female), 6 to 10 years ( $n = 57$ , 49.1% female), and 11 to 15 years ( $n = 46$ , 50.0% female) were compared with respondents

<sup>1</sup> Data on respondents’ life satisfaction was available for 28 years as life satisfaction was measured since the very beginning of the SOEP study in 1984. However, the information where respondents had grown up in the first 15 years of their life was only available for respondents who entered the panel after the year 2000.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/951310>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/951310>

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