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Who is happier: The housewife or working wife?

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Abstract

The earlier studies that came out around the 1970s, as more and more women started to leave the homes, so to speak, and took paid work found no statistically significant difference in the happiness between the housewife and the working wife. This paper revisits the same issue using data from the 2000s but refining the focus of the analysis, namely: paid work is differentiated into full-time, part-time, or self-employment. The findings are still consistent with the earlier studies. What the paper finds more interesting, however, is that a disparity in the happiness between the housewife and the working wife is perhaps more because of idiosyncrasies shaped by culture and social context but less about the paid work status itself.

JEL Codes: B54; D10; I31; J13

Key words: Happiness; life satisfaction; housewife; working wife

1. INTRODUCTION

There is an on-going revival, albeit a gradual one, of an earlier notion of utility that takes actual “experience” as a concept of well-being (Kahneman et al. 1997).¹ “Experienced utility” refers to the subjective assessment of well-being or “subjective well-being.” It is indicated by a self-report

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¹ Kahneman and Krueger (2006) and Krueger (2009) note that there were only four papers on experienced utility in the 1990s (25 for the whole of the 1990s) but the number exceeded 260 papers by the 2000s.

of a person on one's own the state of being. Experienced utility differs from the dominant notion of utility used in economics today, which refers to "decision utility" or the preferences of a person that are manifested by one's choice-action. In conventional economics, the latter notion of utility is considered a representation of the "objective well-being" and the standard metrics are income, price, and output. However, economic thinking since the 1930s meant a detachment of utility from the analysis of choice-actions. The renaissance of anchoring analysis on utility, especially when subjective well-being is brought together with objective well-being (e.g., Di Tella et al. 2001; Inglehart et al. 2008; Diener et al. 2009; Frey et al. 2010, among others), is thus a welcome development because it promises not only a richer but also deeper examination of individual and social welfare.

As expected, subjective well-being (SWB) studies present interesting findings. In general, there is a positive quadratic relationship between age and SWB (Blanchflower and Oswald 2008); that is, SWB tends to decline with age and, after a turning point, it tends to increase with age. Along with it, studies find that women tend to report higher SWB than men. Recent findings also suggest that a switch in the pattern across the genders take place during the life cycles (Stevenson and Wolfers 2009; Easterlin 2010).

Marital status is important to SWB. Indeed, family and married life is the most significant life domain with respect to SWB (Campbell et al. 1976). It is especially the case if a married person is compared to counterparts who were previously married or did not marry (Argyle and Furnham 1983; Lucas et al. 2003). There is also evidence that SWB of married individuals tends to decline after their wedding year, which marks the high point in SWB (Lucas and Clark 2006; Stutzer and Frey 2006). Yet, there is further evidence that the pattern over the life cycle appears to be positive quadratic (Rollins and Cannon 1974; Walker 1977). In other arrangements, such as marital unions arranged *ex parte*, the pattern exhibits a J-curve relationship (Gupta and Singh 1982). Marriage

dissolution certainly brings significant adverse effects on SWB but adaptation to ex-married life is not discounted (Clark et al. 2008), albeit the adaptation can take time and there is no guarantee of a full recovery (Lucas et al. 2003).

Studies on the effect of children on SWB present interesting findings. Some studies find children to have zero, if not very small, overall effect on SWB (Veenhoven 1994). Others find children to have negative effect on SWB but it is linked more to child rearing and associated issues (Glenn and Weaver 1979). Overall, the extant literature on the effect of children on SWB is ambiguous because the circumstances in which children are evaluated in terms of SWB are relevant. That is, it matters if the children are viewed within the background of the early, middle, or later part of the life cycle of the parents (Walker 1977; Feeney 1994), the income status of the family (Alesina et al. 2004), or the marital relationship of the parents (Frey and Stutzer 2000). There are also studies that find mothers to be more susceptible to the so-called “empty nest syndrome” compared to the fathers (Black and Hill 1982; Raup and Myers 1989; Feeney 1994), thus linking children to the life cycle of a parent.

Findings on job status are remarkable, too. Unemployment can definitely pull SWB down. This effect is observed regardless of age, gender, and marital status. The key finding of such studies is that the loss of a job can bring not only large but also lasting adverse impacts on SWB (Lukas 2005; Clark et al. 2008). While gender-gaps in terms of employment, opportunities, and salary levels remain valid concerns, studies find that employed women tend to report higher SWB with their jobs than men (Clark 1997). There are also gender-dimensions to changes work status. In terms of SWB, for instance, women tend to be affected by unemployment less compared to men and they recover from unemployment faster compared to men (Clark et al. 2008).

For the most part, the decision of the wife to pursue a job is a decision of the family. Of course, in

some settings, the decision is determined by internal household dynamics. Among the factors that come into considerations are the valuations of the costs between staying at home or working outside the home (Mincer 1962), the decision on who specializes as the home- and the wage-worker (Becker 1965), the importance of socialization and norms (Akerlof and Kranton 2010), the consideration of class relations and conflict (Folbre 1982; Sen 1990), among others.

Given the disparate findings of SWB studies, this paper asks the question: “*Who is happier: The housewife or working wife?*” The earlier studies that came out around the 1970s especially in the United States, as women started to “leave” their homes, so to speak, and started to take up paid jobs, found no statistically significant difference in the happiness between the housewives and the working wives (Campbell et al. 1976; Wright 1978; Freudiger 1983; Benin and Nienstedt 1985). Variation in the attitudes of the housewives and the working wives were found to be negligible once the relevant control variables were included in the analysis (Plutzer 1988). Even so, there are also studies that reached different conclusions. For instance, Ferree (1976) and Ferree (1984) concluded that the working wife is happier compared to the housewife (c.f., Nathawat and Mathur 1992 on India), whereas Stokes and Peyton (1986) said the converse (c.f., Chen and Lin 1992 on Taiwan).

More recent studies like Booth and van Ours (2008) on United Kingdom, Booth and van Ours (2009) on Australia, and Booth and van Ours (2010) on Netherlands argued that pursuing part-time employment may be the “best of both worlds” option of the married woman. Their findings show that the married women who took part-time jobs tend to be happier than women who took full time jobs or chose to be housewives. Their findings are also consistent with Inglehart (1980), who earlier noticed that some women might choose to be permanent housewives and others might decide to be temporary housewives. The latter, according to Inglehart (1980), might pursue paid work once the children get older and are of schooling age. Such decision is also conditional to the

other household circumstances (Granrose 1984; Granrose and Kaplan 2006).

The other recent studies point to another option to the married woman, namely: self-employment. There are finding that the self-employed wife is more satisfied with her life compared to her other counterparts (Blanchflower and Oswald 1998) despite the expected states of self-employment like lower salaries and more hours spent at work compared to regular employment (Hamilton 2000). But the self-employed wife experiences more happiness with her life because self-employment allows her to achieve self-determination, independence, and sense of worth that may be lacking, if not absent, to a housewife who aspires to work someday (Ferree 1976). The self-employed wife might even enjoy more freedom compared to the working wife who needs to operate within the rules of the workplace and report to a boss (Hundley 2001).

This paper is an attempt to bring an old issue to the present scenario by examining data from the 2000s. The paper has four parts. Part 2 presents the methodology, covering the SWB framework and its application to the housewife and working wife problematic in this paper, the dataset and the indicators, the data manipulation, then the regression procedure. Part 3 presents the findings. The last part concludes the discussion.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Subjective well-being framework

There is only one way to know the subjective well-being (SWB) of a person, and that is to ask the person directly about it. This approach is indispensable because only the person knows one's own actual state of being. The claim is that the person who makes an assessment about state of being is also able to differentiate life circumstances as happy, sad, or in between, etc. If the ordering of

things, events, or scenarios is an activity that is natural to people as they go about their lives, then it is likewise natural for people to examine and classify the nature of their states of being and to report on them when asked. Such declaration is deemed truthful because the presumption is that there is no incentive or reason to do otherwise.

Yet, if experienced and decision utilities represent different conceptualizations of utilities, there is the possibility of disarticulation. Such case is observed with irrationality, which can occur due to cognitive errors like biases and heuristics (Kahneman et al. 1982; Gilovich et al. 2002), reference point effect (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Thaler 1980), framing effect (Tversky and Kahneman 1981), or mental accounting (Thaler 1985). It can also occur because of structural and institutional factors that are not within the control of the person like corporate power, political expediency, and class interest. The claim is that irrational decisions need not bring positive experiences.

Accordingly, SWB is not about what an external observer thinks of the state of being of another person. It is not about using the declared state of being of one person as proxy of the state of being of another. It is different from an action taken by a person like buying or selling or about what the person sees as available options. Rather, SWB asserts what a person considers and reports as one's own state of being.² Making SWB as an entry point for analysis does not mean that other notions of states of being are irrelevant. Instead, SWB focuses on one's own consideration as a type of characterization of well-being. Of course, using SWB does not mean that one's social values, relationships, etc., are disregarded in the consideration of well-being. Rather, SWB means that in the consideration of one's own state of being there is, by necessity, the consideration of

² Affect and judgment are the two components of SWB. They are known to be separable and independently measurable (Diener and Emmons 1985; Lucas et al. 1996). Affect refers to feelings that can be positive or negative. Judgment refers to cognitive evaluations about the overall life circumstance or about specific life domains (Diener et al. 1999). Judgment is known to be relatively less volatile than affect. Such property is important for economic analysis.

one's own sense of values and relationships. Thus, in carrying out an SWB analysis within the framework of the housewife and working wife, it is necessary to take the woman as the starting point of analysis.

All things the same, the argument is that reported SWB is a monotonic translation of the internal SWB (SWB*). Or, algebraically, $SWB = h[U(\cdot)]$, where $U(\cdot)$ is SWB*. The expression implies that $SWB_2 > SWB_1$ if $U_2(\cdot) > U_1(\cdot)$, where the state of being in situation $i+1$ is higher than situation i . The translation from that which is internal to that which is declared may not be exact; that is, $SWB^* - SWB = e$, where e is an error term to stand for the gap. All the same, SWB approximates SWB* if there is a sufficiently large number of observations collected for analysis. It is therefore possible to express the SWB function in reduced form like $SWB = h(Z, \mathbf{X})$, where Z is the variable of interest, and \mathbf{X} is a set of control variables.

The counterpart of the identification issue explained earlier is measurement. For brevity, there are well-developed procedures for obtaining a measure SWB (c.f., Andrews and Robinson 1991; Kahneman et al. 1999; Eid and Larsen 2008). The debate, though, remains on whether SWB is ordinal or cardinal. The literature in economics acknowledges that states of being can only hold the property of ordinality. Few in economics are ready to accept cardinality (Ng 1996; Ng 1997; van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell 2004). Elsewhere in the social sciences, SWB can hold the property of cardinality (or, to be specific, *interval* cardinality (c.f., Stevens 1946)), which is most evident in the psychology literature. All the same, Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Frijters (2004) argued that empirical results do not change in a significant way whatever the assumption on SWB.

What is clear in the extant literature on happiness is that the quantitative quotations of SWB are reliable, robust, and valid. For instance, data from the same person obtained at different points during an interview (Andrews and Withey 1976; Ehrhardt et al. 2000) or the same person but

obtained at different periods (assuming no extraordinary life-events between the periods (c.f., Diener and Larsen 1984; Costa and McCrae 1988; Schimmack and Oishi 2005; Krueger and Schkade 2008)) present consistent and stable results. As for validity, studies find that people with high SWB tend to smile more (Ekman et al. 1990; Pavot et al. 1991). Spouses, relatives, or friends of people who report high SWB corroborate the high SWB (Costa and McCrae 1988; Sandvik et al. 1993). There are even indications that such correspondence between self and other assessment is confirmed until the third degree of relations (Fowler and Christakis 2008). Other corroborative findings include a convergence between the location of intense brain activity and SWB (Davidson 2003). Other studies point out that SWB is also comparable across persons and time (Larsen and Fredrickson 1999) and places (Diener and Suh 2000).

In view of the housewife and working wife problematic in this paper, the structural model takes the form $SWB(Z, \mathbf{X}) = \alpha + \beta_i \cdot Z_i + \varphi \cdot \mathbf{X} + e$, where the variables are as defined earlier. In this model, Z_i is defined as the work status of wife (particularly, the working wife) and \mathbf{X} is a vector of control variables covering the wife's objective conditions (i.e., the socio-economic and demographic profile (see below)) and her subjective considerations (i.e., attitudes (see below)).

2.2 Dataset and Indicators

Raw data are taken from the World Values Survey, a nationally representative non-longitudinal survey covering a large number of countries. There are four waves of Survey so far. Here, the most recent data of the countries surveyed in the third and fourth waves comprise the raw dataset. Completeness of information is the only basis for the data compilation.

Subjective well-being

Here, happiness is represented as subjective well-being (SWB). Its indicator is "life satisfaction"

(see footnote 2), which is obtained as the responses to the question: “*All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?*” In the World Values Survey, the person reports life satisfaction using a 10-point scale, where 1 means ‘completely dissatisfied’ and 10 means ‘completely satisfied.’ The life satisfaction question elicits an overall evaluation of life and not on a specific life domain.

Objective conditions

The objective indicators for the socio-economic and demographic profile of a person are age, gender, marital status, children, education, work status, and income status. The information is collected using the design of the World Values Survey. Age is reported in years. Gender is reported as male or female. Marital status stands for married, living together as married, divorced, separated, widowed, or single. Children are reported in total number from zero to eight (or more). Education refers to the level of formal schooling. It is reported in seven categories, namely: no formal education, incomplete primary school, complete primary school, incomplete secondary school, complete secondary school, some university-level education, or university-level education.³ Work status is either paid or unpaid work. Paid work covers the full-time, part-time, and self-employed, and unpaid work covers the retiree, housewife, student, unemployed, or “other” status. Income status refers to household income decile indicated from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) levels.

Subjective considerations

Three subjective considerations of the person that represent attitudes are included in the regression analysis, in particular financial satisfaction, independence and self-determination, and

³ Secondary schooling refers to the technical/vocational type or university-preparatory type.

self-fulfillment.⁴ First, financial satisfaction is the key domain of the wife's life satisfaction (c.f., Argyle and Furnham 1983). Information is obtained by the World Values Survey as responses to the question: "*How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household?*" Data are reported on a 10-point scale, where 1 means 'completely dissatisfied' and 10 means 'completely satisfied.' Second, independence and self-determination (c.f., Ferec 1976) and self-fulfillment (c.f., Hamilton 2000; Hundley 2001) affect life satisfaction of the wife.

Independence and self-determination is represented by the question on free choice and control in the World Values Survey. Information is obtained as responses to the question: "*Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, while other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them.*" Data are reported using a 10-point scale, where 1 means 'no choice at all' and 10 means 'a great deal of choice.'

Third, self-fulfillment is represented by the "indifference" of the wife between being a housewife and being a working wife. Information in the World Values Survey is available as responses to the question: "*Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay.*" Data are reported using a 4-point scale, where 1 means 'strongly agree' and 4 means 'strongly disagree.'

2.3 Data manipulation

The preliminary step before the regression analysis is to edit the raw dataset using the following hierarchical iteration categories: female, married, and housewife or working wife. The resulting dataset is arguably *quasi*-homogenous that is comprised 20,588 observations from 57 countries.

Some properties of the edited dataset are worth pointing out. First, gender issues are effectively

⁴ Information like marital satisfaction and family conflicts are not available from the World Values Survey.

excluded from the analysis because male respondents are removed from the dataset. Second, other marital states like separation, divorce, or death and occupational states like being a student or retiree are irrelevant because they are also removed from the dataset. For the regression analysis, the housewife status is chosen as the reference state. The status of the working wife in turn can be one of the following states: full-time, part-time, or self-employment. The regression analysis then is focused on the married woman who specializes in either paid or unpaid work.

Lastly, the countries are clustered into regional country groupings to control for culture and level of economic development even at a rudimentary level. This procedure minimizes the loss in the number of observations. There are six groupings in all, namely: West Europe and North America (n (i.e., countries) = 13; observations = 3,682), East Europe ($n = 9$; observations = 2,706), Asia ($n = 9$; observations = 4,226), Africa ($n = 11$; observations = 3,589), Latin America ($n = 8$; observations = 2,771), and Middle East and North Africa ($n = 7$; observations = 3,614). West Europe and North America also represent the rich countries and the other groups represent the emerging countries. The list of countries is in the Appendix.

2.4 Regression procedure

The structural model indicated earlier in Section 2.1 is estimated for each country grouping using ordinary least squares with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. The first strategy uses the standard dummy setup in which individual dummies are created for the relevant categories under each indicator. The second strategy uses the domain setup in which each indicator is introduced as a single variable (c.f., Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell et al. 1976; Emmons and Diener 1985; Michalos 1985; van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell 2004). The latter setup can also serve as robustness test.

Some issues concerning the regression strategy need to be pointed out at this point. First, the time invariant and relatively steady but unobservable variables (e.g., personality) are not addressed in the regression analysis. The World Values Surveys, being one-period cross-section dataset, are not designed to handle, say, the first difference procedure. Using aggregate-level fixed effects might be an option for country-level indicators but not so for the individual-level indicators. Using fixed effect is an option but an inconsistent result is a possibility (Maddala 1983).

Another issue is endogeneity between the work status and SWB. Does paid work make a married woman happy, or does a happy married woman go for paid work? Does unpaid work make a married woman happy, or does a happy married woman go for unpaid work? The one-period cross sectional dataset from the World Values Survey cannot address this endogeneity problem.

Lastly, e is treated as the “catch all” item for the regression analysis. The size of e is not expected to distort the correlations or undermine the reliability of the results, albeit efficiency may remain a concern. Ensuring that regression results have heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors can help deal with efficiency issue.

The above issues limit how the regression results can be generalized. Nevertheless, the results are still useful in pointing out the general direction of analysis with regard to the happiness of the working wife relative to the housewife.

3. FINDINGS

Tables 1 and 2 present the standardized values of the regression and show the relative contribution of each work status on SWB relative to the housewife status. Across the country groupings, the results indicate that the working wife is not necessarily happier than the housewife. In short, paid

work is necessarily better than unpaid work.

The above inference can be qualified once the specific results for the country groupings are also examined. None of the work statuses in West Europe and North America is better than the housewife status, whereas the other groupings point to the possibility that one type work status might be relevant for comparison. For instance, full-time work status turns out to be better than the housewife status in East Europe but not so in Africa and Middle East, where the working wife turns out to be less happy than the housewife. Only in Latin America does one find part-time work status to be better for the working wife. Self-employment means more happiness to the working wife only in Asia but the situation is reversed in Africa.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 Here]

The consideration of the work status by the wife is presumed in line with her intention to pursue paid work. That is, the intention to pursue paid work often materializes as the pursuit of paid work because of a positive evaluation of paid work by the wife. Given that both the objective profile and subjective considerations of the wife are already accounted for in the regression, the analysis cannot anymore rely on the correspondence between intention and actual position. Put another way, the individual characteristics and attitudes of the wife could not anymore explain the results of the country groupings. The differences in the results might then be due to other factors that are not individual dependent but, more specifically, culture and social context dependent. This direction of analysis is appealing because paid work turns out to be a “good” in some places but a “bad” in other places.⁵ The analysis then has to proceed to an inspection – even if it is in broad strokes for now – of the conditions that might explain the results of the country groupings.

⁵ The model is $SWB(Z, Y) = \alpha + \beta_i \cdot Z_i + \phi \cdot Y + e$, assuming Y represents income decile as the numeraire.

The results for West Europe and North America indicating no difference in the happiness between the housewife and working wife appear surprising at first glance. What they perhaps indicate is that, in West Europe and North America, the wife does not face significant pressure to choose between paid and unpaid work. Of course, there are economic implications when the wife chooses to take up paid work. But, at least, the wife has relatively open or greater access to the labor market than elsewhere and, effectively, she enjoys greater mobility to shift from one role to another with ease. The tables show that full-time work status has the largest potential impact on happiness compared to the other work statuses, perhaps consistent with the belief that the full-time status is the better option if ever the wife chooses to pursue paid work.

The hysteresis of work status is a possible explanation for East Europe. Haas et al. (2006) explain that women in East Europe normally took full time paid work. Childcare and other basic services were guaranteed by the government. Even with the changes brought about by economic transition and the burden for childcare and social services transferred to the households, there remains the pull of the wife to pursue full-time work status. Or, precisely because childcare and social services are now responsibilities of the households that the wives must seek paid work. Women in the region are therefore in a situation wherein full-time paid work is necessary to meet their obligations at home; yet, at the same time, they face greater competition for paid work given that employment is not anymore guaranteed by their governments as before.

Culture and social expectations might be the underlying explanations of the results for Africa and Middle East. The relatively low status of women makes the enjoyment of full-time paid work difficult. In these regions, women are not normally expected to take paid work because of cultural

Thus $-\frac{dSWB}{dZ} = \frac{SWB_Z}{SWB_Y} = \frac{\beta_i}{\phi}$ is the marginal rate of valuation Z_i . If $SWB_Y > 0$ (i.e., marginal utility of income is positive), as confirmed by the regression analysis, Z_i is a “good” if $SWB_Z > 0$ and “bad” if $SWB_Z < 0$.

and social expectations that they assume the greater share for taking care of the household and, in the case of Africa, farm work as well. Thus, at the outset, the labor market is biased against the women seeking paid work. Other biases come in the form of predispositions against women and female children like limited access to education and training (hence, skills remain low), start up capital or funds (hence, the opportunities for self-advancement is constrained), property rights, health care, etc. (c.f., Arbache et al. 2010 for Africa; c.f., World Bank 2004 for Middle East and North Africa). Despite the autonomy and self-assertion that are possible with paid work, these barriers limit the advancement of well-being and remain difficult to surmount because women would come face-to-face with the cultural and social biases against them taking up paid work. Changes in the gender composition of these societies in recent years plus the improvements in education and social services like in the Middle East and North Africa have allowed women to be more aggressive in becoming visible outside their homes, so to speak, and seek paid work. In Africa, however, even self-employment turns out to be a worse avenue for the women perhaps because doing so implies that they are asserting themselves not only by moving into the setting of work but also going against the rigid cultural and social views about their role and position in the home and society.

Self-employment turns out to be a better avenue for women in Asia because it allows them greater control and independence of their time and contribute more to the household. Paid work in Asia actually puts the women at a disadvantageous position in terms of wages, advancement, etc. A lot of self-employment in Asia is home-based or family-run businesses precisely because of the bias against women going into traditional paid work, albeit yet, they enjoy relatively easier access to work compared to their counterparts in other emerging countries (ILO-ADB 2011). Self-employment, however, is typically the low productivity and small-scale type with the associated low returns and informality (ILO-ADB 2011). As such, women continue to comprise a large underutilized resource in the region. Nonetheless, being their own bosses as self-employed

workers, women in Asia enjoy more flexibility than their counterparts in other emerging countries in terms of time and control over their lives. As such, they are able to balance work and home responsibilities much more easily. Self-employment is therefore like a “best of both worlds” option to experience higher states of being for women in Asia.

The counterpart of self-employment as “best of both worlds” in Asia is part-time work in Latin America. Most women in Latin America who can pursue paid work choose part-time over full-time paid work because it allows them greater flexibility and thus a “balance” between work and home responsibilities despite the insecurity associated with part-time work itself (IDB 2008). Part time paid work is the refuge for women who are seeking or failing to find paid work. In fact, self-employment is less attractive than part-time paid work at least to women in Latin America. There is indication, though, that self-employment is associated with informality that is, in turn, also associated with part time work (IDB 2008). In closer inspection, though, perhaps part-time work is better than the other work statuses because women are not constrained by the workplace yet are still able to fulfill their obligations at the home.

4. CONCLUSION

Data from the World Values Survey were used to answer the question: *“Who is happier: the housewife or the working wife?”* Relative to the unpaid work of the housewife, paid work was defined in three categories, namely: full-time, part-time, or self-employment. In general, the paper found no clear evidence of a difference in the happiness between the housewife and the working wife. What the paper found instead was some evidence that if ever a disparity in the happiness between the housewife and the working wife existed it might be associated with culture and social context. What might apply to the working wife in West Europe and North America need not apply in the other areas, etc. Certainly, there is a lot of variation from the results across

the emerging country groupings. For instance, the results pointed out that paid work regardless of status may be perceived as a “good” in some areas but a “bad” in others. These disparate results require explanations that go beyond the individual characteristics and attitudes of the wife. More specifically, the differences in the happiness between the housewife and working wife might be more the outcomes of idiosyncrasies produced by culture and social norms.

APPENDIX

List of Countries

Algeria	Nigeria
Argentina	Norway
Australia	Pakistan
Bangladesh	Peru
Brazil	Philippines
Bulgaria	Poland
Burkina Faso	Romania
Canada	Rwanda
Chile	Russian Federation
China	Saudi Arabia
Egypt	Serbia
Ethiopia	Slovenia
Finland	South Africa
France	Spain
Georgia	Sweden
Germany	Switzerland
Ghana	Tanzania
Guatemala	Thailand
India	Turkey
Indonesia	Uganda
Iran	Ukraine
Italy	United Kingdom
Jordan	United States
Malaysia	Uruguay
Mali	Venezuela
Mexico	Vietnam
Moldova	Zambia
Morocco	Zimbabwe
Netherlands	

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Table 1: Regression of working wife SWB relative to housewife SWB (dummy setup), standardized coefficients

Status of the Wife	West Europe and North America	East Europe	Asia	Africa	Latin America	Middle East
Working wife: Full time employed	0.8248	1.3642*	0.1358	-0.7395*	0.4486	-1.4759***
Working wife: Part time employed	0.6873	0.2497	0.1831	0.1724	0.4787*	-0.2414
Working wife: Self-employed	0.1317	0.2273	0.7807**	-1.1882***	-0.3653	-0.1214
Control Variables: Objective						
Age ¹	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of Children ²	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education ³	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income Quintile ⁴	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Variables: Subjective						
Satisfaction of household financial situation ⁵	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free choice and control of one's life ⁶	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
House- and Working wife equally fulfilling ⁷	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R-squared	0.2416	0.3272	0.4197	0.3929	0.2159	0.3568
Observations	3,682	2,706	4,226	3,589	2,771	3,614

Notes: Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. P-values are *** = 0.01, ** = 0.05, and * = 0.10. The notation in parentheses (in the footnotes) refers to the estimated coefficient.

Footnotes:

- Age is in years: West Europe and N. America (-) ***, East Europe (-) **, Asia (+), Africa (-)**, Latin America (+), Middle East (-). Age-squared: West Europe and N. America (+) ***, East Europe (+)*, Asia (+), Africa (+)**, Latin America (-), and Middle East (+). Thus, SWB declines with age but rise after a turning point.
- Number of children is from 0 to 8: West Europe and N. America (+)***, East Europe (+), Asia (-), Africa (-), Latin America (+), Middle East (-)*. The contribution of children to SWB is region specific; but, in general, there is no definite positive relationship between children and SWB.
- Education is entered as three dummy variables representing completion of primary education, completion secondary education, and completion of tertiary education. Thus, no education or incomplete primary education is the reference state. Results, in order, are West Europe and N. America [(+), (+), (+)], East Europe [(+)***, (+)*, (+)*], Asia [(+)**, (+)**, (+)**], Africa [(+), (+)**, (+)*], Latin America [(-)*, (-), (-)], Middle East [(+)*, (+), (+)]. In general, higher educational attainment raises SWB. In Latin America, though, the completion of primary education alone is worse than no education or incomplete primary education. In the Middle East, completion of primary education makes some difference for women. In West Europe, education attainment is not statistically significant since women have access to education.
- Income quintile is entered as four dummy variables representing four quintiles with the lowest quintile as reference state. Results, in order, are West Europe and N. America [(-),(-),(-),(-)], East Europe [(+)*, (+)***, (+)**, (+)**], Asia [(+)***, (+)***, (+)***, (+)***], Africa [(+), (+)**, (+)***, (+)***], Latin America [(+), (+)*, (+)***, (+)*], Middle East [(+), (+), (+), (+)*]. Thus, income quintile is positively correlated with SWB. In West Europe and N. America, income quintiles are not statistically significant because their societies are relative equal, albeit there are signs of worsening inequality.
- Financial satisfaction is entered as four dummy variables representing four quintiles with the lowest quintile as reference state. All regions have the same results of [(+)***, (+)***, (+)***, (+)***]. In general, financial satisfaction increases SWB.
- Free choice and control is entered as four dummy variables representing four quintiles with the lowest quintile as reference state. Results, in order, are West Europe and N. America [(+), (+)***, (+)***, (+)***], East Europe [(+), (+)***, (+)***, (+)***], Asia [(+)*, (+)**, (+)***, (+)***], Africa [(+), (+)**, (+)***, (+)***], Latin America [(+), (+)**, (+)***, (+)***], Middle East [(+), (+), (+)***, (+)***]. In general, free choice and control increases SWB.
- Fulfillment is entered as a dummy variable with no fulfillment as reference state. Results are West Europe and N. America (-)***, East Europe (-)*, Asia (-), Africa (-)**, Latin America (-)***, Middle East (-)***. The negative notation confirms the indifference between the housewife and working wife states.

Table 2: Regression of working wife SWB relative to housewife SWB (domain setup), standardized coefficients

Status of the Wife	West Europe and North America	East Europe	Asia	Africa	Latin America	Middle East
Working wife: Full time employed	1.1429	1.5604**	0.1340	-0.6949*	0.3188	-1.4544***
Working wife: Part time employed	0.7607	0.2821	0.0699	0.1279	0.4555*	-0.2929*
Working wife: Self-employed	0.1372	0.1736	0.7003**	-1.3297***	-0.2694	-0.1052
<i>Control Variables: Objective</i>						
Age ¹	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of Children ²	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education ³	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income Decile ⁴	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Control Variables: Subjective</i>						
Satisfaction of household financial situation ⁵	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free choice and control of one's life ⁶	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
House- and Working wife equally fulfilling ⁷	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R-squared	0.2603	0.3421	0.4187	0.4018	0.2121	0.3710
Observations	3,682	2,706	4,226	3,589	2,771	3,614

Notes: Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. P-values are *** = 0.01, ** = 0.05, and * = 0.10. The notation in parentheses (in the footnotes) refers to the estimated coefficient.

Footnotes:

- Age is in years: West Europe and N. America (-) ***, East Europe (-) **, Asia (+), Africa (-)*, Latin America (+), Middle East (-)*. Age-squared: West Europe and N. America (+) ***, East Europe (+), Asia (+), Africa (+), Latin America (-), and Middle East (+). In general, SWB declines with age.
- Number of children is from 0 to 8: West Europe and N. America (+)***, East Europe (+), Asia (-), Africa (-), Latin America (+), Middle East (-)*. The contribution of children to SWB is region specific; but, in general, there is no definite positive relationship between children and SWB.
- Education attainment is entered as values 1 to four, representing no education or incomplete primary education, completion primary education, completion secondary education, and completion of tertiary education, respectively. Results, in order, are West Europe and N. America (+), East Europe (-), Asia (+)*, Africa (+)***, Latin America (-), Middle East (-). Women in Asia and Africa benefit from education. In general, there is at least no effect of education on SWB.
- Income decile is entered as values 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Results are West Europe and N. America (-), East Europe (+)***, Asia (+)***, Africa (+)***, Latin America (+)***, Middle East (+)*. Thus, income decile is positively correlated with SWB.
- Financial satisfaction is entered as values 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). All regions have the same result of (+)***. In general, financial satisfaction increases SWB.
- Free choice and control is entered as values 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). All regions have the same result of (+)***. In general, free choice and control increases SWB.
- Fulfillment is entered as values 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Results are West Europe and N. America (-)***, East Europe (-), Asia (-), Africa (-), Latin America (-)***, Middle East (-)**. The negative notation is expected given the reverse order of the values. In general, acknowledging the proposition that being a housewife or working wife is equally falling is important to increase SWB.