A cross-cultural examination of life satisfaction among mothers of infants: The role of social status

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Introduction

• Satisfaction with life is an important component of overall well-being, as it has been shown to be linked to both mental and physical health risks (Strine et al., 2008).
• Subjective social status has specifically been linked to life satisfaction - even when controlling for more objective measures of socioeconomic status (e.g., income; Collins & Goldman, 2008).
• One study conducted in the UK found lower perceived social status to be related to lower life satisfaction (Bannink, Pearce, & Hope, 2016).
• Another study in Germany found strong associations between low social status, poor health outcomes, and low life satisfaction (Laubach et al., 2000).
• While more recent work has been done to explore the social components of life satisfaction, little has been done to highlight this relationship in first-time mothers.

Method

Participants
• 395 first-time mothers of 14-month old infants
• 47% UK; 30% NL; 23% US
• 91% White, 5% Asian, 3% Other, 1% Black
• Average age at first childbirth = 32 years old; SD=3.85
• Average income 2x the median for that site (M=80,838.20; SD=2,493.54)
• 17% w/less than BA, 37% w/BA, 33% w/MA, 14% w/PhD

Procedure and Measures
Mothers completed a computerized battery of self-reported questionnaires at home. Constructs and measures in this analysis include:

- **Subjective Social Status (SSS):** MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler & Stewart, 2007); 1 item.
- **Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS):** Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985); 5 items- Alpha=.89.

Research Questions
• Is there a link between subjective social status and life satisfaction?
• If so, does this relationship differ by culture?

Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>SSS</th>
<th>SLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

• Zero-order correlations illustrate a moderate correlation between subjective social status and life satisfaction.
• SLS is also weakly correlated with income; SSS with age, education, and income.
• Main effect: First-time moms with a higher subjective social status are more likely to be satisfied with life.
• Interaction: The strength of the relationship between SSS and SLS differs by culture.
• Subjective social status might play a larger role in life satisfaction for Americans. Perhaps due to:
  - Universal coverage of social safety nets in the NL & UK
  - History of social stratification in the US (cultural diversity, era of slavery, American Dream ideology)
• Subjective status may be more important than objective status in determining life satisfaction.
• Perhaps even the belief that you are of a high status may influence life satisfaction, thus potentially improving health, wellbeing, and other related outcomes.

Acknowledgements

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Table 2. Models predicting satisfaction with life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>9.57**</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>23.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>-0.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSS</td>
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<td>.19</td>
<td>-1.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>-2.78**</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>-9.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>-2.80**</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>-15.42**</td>
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<tr>
<td>NL X SSS</td>
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<td>0.57</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK X SSS</td>
<td>1.69**</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. †marginally significant (.1).