

ECONOMIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF WELL-BEING IN ITALY: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

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This paper aims to analyze the determinants of well-being by considering economic and sociological perspectives. These perspectives emphasize the relationship between well-being and "consumption of time", a concept that relates to the "hyper-identity" status. Data are collected starting from a dataset realized by ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) for the period 2005-2016 and considering a sample of 130 indicators (12 relevant domains) collected by Italian regions, updated annually in the so-called BES (*Benessere equo e sostenibile*) 2017 report. Taking into account the socio-economic literature collected on the topic, we have structured five econometric models using a stepwise regression methodology. All models have been structured taking into account life satisfaction as the dependent variable and other explanatory variables. The study contributes to the existing literature on the theme of individual well-being and its main determinants, also highlighting possible practical implications in terms of corporate governance and human resource management. Results reveal a positive impact associated with family relationships, mobility satisfaction, and job satisfaction while showing a negative relationship regarding proxies related to the subjective perception of insecurity and uncertainty (deep material deprivation, and home theft).

Keywords: Measuring Well-being, Measuring Intangible, Identity Drivers, Cultural Statistics, Comparative Analysis, ISTAT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The definition of well-being has dramatically changed in the last decades. In recent years, happiness and well-being concepts have experienced a radical shift from an area of material possession and accumulation to a "slight zone", an immaterial zone made up of experience, individual knowledge, affirmation, identity, and lifetime management.

This view addresses a society where well-being is made of "consumption of time", a concept of time different from the past, referring to the affirmation of hyper-identity¹. Following the definition of Bauman (2000), we refer to the concept of "liquid

¹ This term is used in pedagogy during a unique moment of self-affirmation (e.g., when the child tests his or her motor skills); in this context, the search for "other" (virtual or real) that leads to further self-affirmation is undertaken.

time”, a perspective in which time is located in a small area where the human being struggles to find a constant consensus and orientation, based on relationships and trust.

Starting from the famous Easterlin paradox, which states the existence of a reversed U-shaped relation between happiness and income in the US in the period 1946-1996 (Easterlin, 1974, 2001), social scientists have devoted attention, to identify the main determinants of individual well-being.

The objective of this article is twofold. The first is to contribute to the abundant literature on the subject, highlighting the social and economic dynamics of individual well-being and satisfaction with life in Italy, as well as the main drivers that explain its variability. The second was to reformulate and reconsider the impact of some variables following a sociological perspective, with the aim of studying and defining individual well-being by adopting both an economic/quantitative and a sociological/qualitative approach.

Data were collected by the ISTAT database (Italian National Institute of Statistics) from 2005-2016 and updated annually in the BES (*Benessere equo e sostenibile*) report (ISTAT, 2017).

The layout of this paper is as follows. In Section 2, we report a brief literature review on the definition and main factors that determine individual well-being. Section 3 and Section 4 present the sample and the methodology, respectively. In Section 5, we describe the main findings, which are discussed in Section 6.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Historical context that led to the definition of well-being

The twentieth century marks an important step in terms of well-being; first Taylorism and later Fordism contributed to give a face to “mass production” and “assembly line” (Ford & Crowther, 1922). In those years, possession of material objects was considered tangible proof of happiness. In the 1980s, the relationship between man and object was further “refined”; strong economic expansion led to a greater capacity for spending and purchasing goods. Technology will allow further customization of each application and each object. This defines a new environment (Crocì, 2013), a more individual space, where the relationship between man and object is one-to-one. Over time, this tendency of overproduction developed exponentially, to unbridled consumerism of “disposable things” within a policy of egocentric life, of life politics (Bauman, 2008) and, as a result, goods have lost their meaning leaving the testimony of happiness and well-being to something much less tangible.

As stated by Morin (2012), “The politics of civilization requires a full awareness of the poetic needs of the human being”. In recent years, we have witnessed the redefinition of the variables attributable to happiness. Material possession, profit, and the related purchase of goods no longer comprise the main engine. With globalization, media, and new technologies, the variables in the field of self-assertion have become something other.

Access to credit, shared services, low cost, and the global environment (Rifkin, 2000) are some of the main indicators that have marked the transition

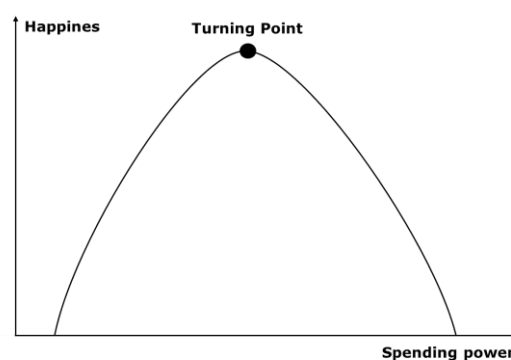
from material to immaterial well-being, consisting mainly of the relationship with time and experience (Pine & Gilmore, 2000). Experience is now one of the main drivers of identity, which is cemented through phenomena, new tools, and supports, like immaterial and direct experience.

2.2. Economic and social dimensions of well-being

Sustainability can be defined as maintaining. Social scientists have devoted a large quantity of research to identify the main determinants of individual well-being and life satisfaction. Except for income, which has a U-shaped relationship with well-being, the selected variables can be distinguished on whether they are positively or negatively related to well-being.

According to Easterlin (1974), people’s true happiness depends very little on changes in income and wealth. His thesis states that when income and economic well-being increase, human happiness increases but only to a certain extent, and then it begins to decrease following an inverted U-curve (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Easterlin paradox



Armenau, Vintilă, and Gherghina (2018) examined several drivers of real gross domestic product growth rate, under the hypothesis that impact on sustainable economic growth is produced by education, business environment, infrastructure and technology, population lifestyle, and demographic changes. Their results suggested that expenditure on education contributes to individual development, reduces social inequalities, and influences economic growth.

An important established result (Frey & Stutzer 2002a, 2002b; Van Praag & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2004; Bruni & Porta, 2005), is that “money is not enough to make people happy”, and in addition to economic factors such as income, low inflation rate, being employed, there are noneconomic variables which have a significant and positive effect on life satisfaction.

Other authors in recent years have tried to explain the importance of the affirmation of well-being on material possession. Van der Pol (2007) wrote that it is essential to measure the impact that culture and creativity produce on the whole society.

To this end, The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), in 2013, developed a framework that enables countries to estimate the size of their creative sector.

The percentage of GDP attributable to household expenditure on recreation and culture

shows, for most OECD countries, a positive correlation with per capita income.

Furthermore, Srakar, Vecco, and Tóth (2017) tried to build a composite index that takes into account various cultural aspects. The authors showed that the constructed index is assumed to be positively correlated with economic (in terms of GDP per capita) and social welfare (in terms of subjective well-being) and negatively related to the level of unemployment and inflation.

We analyze the positively related variables. The first one we consider is leisure time satisfaction. Time is increasingly becoming an important aspect of modern society (Bauman, 2008; De Masi, 2018; Croci, 2013). De Masi (2018) defined free time, which is intertwined with the domain of social relations (relational time, usually spent with family or friends) and subjective perception of one's own well-being (inner time, which is highly subjective and different from the conventional one). St. Augustine defined inner time as "the true reality of the time" where the key elements are awareness and presence².

Furthermore, recent empirical studies suggest that happiness is directly related to good relationships (Waldinger, n.d.).

Another very interesting aspect is that related to the unconscious search for relationships that arose through the use of smartphones but that underlies a 'not conscious' search to "be connected". In 2017, almost 42 million Italians had a smartphone, equal to 69% of the population; we look at the phone 200 times a day and 4 out of 5 people check it within 15 minutes of waking up.

There are several studies on teenagers that agree with the issue of addiction to smartphones and their constant use (Turkle, 2016).

Globalization and technology have also brought significant advantages in terms of mobility and access. New generations prefer "not to waste time" obtaining their driving licence (Schoettle & Sivak, 2013). We are facing a radical change; the car is no longer a symbol of independence (Ratti & Claudel, 2017). Today, we can find downloadable services via an application in "smart-cities", marked by the advent of widespread computing that allows connections, interactions, and real-time communications (Ratti & Claudel, 2017).

The post-Tayloristic vision is where the outlook on work is holistic (Magatti, 2018) or integrated within a completely new concept of self, compared to the 20th century.

Also, job satisfaction is positively related to well-being. Job, well-being, time, identity: together these four appellations define the new worker. From individual to social (Kotler, Hermawan, & Iwan, 2018), working today also means being connected to national and international platforms and people, thus to be connected and "belonging" to a physical and intangible world, which offers services and facilities to its employees but, for some people, requires a 24-hour connection.

Social participation is understood as activities within cultural, recreational, and ecological associations, promoters of civil rights, etc. It represents the ability to recognize and produce relational assets that can lead to an increase in individual and collective social capital over time. Well-being constituted by relationships that help to diminish vulnerability and social exclusion in

cultural, health, and work fields³. Those who devote themselves to voluntary activities also satisfy subjective needs, thus increasing their state of well-being.

The growth of renewable sources also affects individual well-being. In fact, one of the objectives of the modern era is to "transform the world into a better place" (Kotler, Hermawan, & Iwan, 2018) and to know how to communicate how you are doing it through your products.

Environmental responsibility is a very present-day value, the individual orientates his or her gaze not only towards the product but also towards the "vision", the guidelines of the promoting corporate companies.

Cultural participation is closely linked to social participation. The need to communicate is univocal and cultural activities that involve the sharing of spaces and objects imply a predisposition to relate to the surrounding world.

Srakar, Čopič, and Verbič (2018) also build an indicator to measure the economic and social conditions of culture, mainly referring to the reports by Gordon and Beilby-Orrin (2006) and UNESCO (2009).

Recent studies have also found that life satisfaction, quality of life, and happiness indicators are positively correlated with participation in arts and culture activities. A study by Fujiwara (2013) found that regular visits to museums or being an audience in the arts community are positively correlated with an increase in mental well-being and life satisfaction rates. A study by Grossi, Blessi, Sacco, and Buscema (2012) showed that culture plays an important role in increasing psychological well-being, even among the elderly. DeMarrais and Robb (2013) cited four main social impacts of the arts: 1) they help to share the understanding of the world; 2) they allow individuals to create and express values; 3) they allow individuals to assert social capital; 4) they allow the generation of venues and media for social relations.

Finally, Madden (2005a) noted that indicators for measuring the social impacts of arts and culture are difficult to develop because quantitative statistics are difficult to obtain for this kind of impact and, if they exist they do not often adequately show the social benefits and impacts produced.

Public spaces, museums, libraries, theatres, modern places of aggregation, are environments where consumption has shifted from material to immaterial and where research is towards a knowledge; a knowledge that manages to have a fluid narrative, easy to be shared (meta-communication) and able to move at the same time (Croci, 2009).

The entire economy is "culturalizing" and the emerging consumption models (well exemplified by the theses of liquid modernity of Bauman (2000) increasingly resemble those models of access to cultural experiences.

We describe below the variables that are negatively related to well-being. A deep deprivation severely limits the ability of each individual, both relational and social. It is described as the lack of resources in relation to the standard of living of the society in which one lives, very low quality of life. In a condition of great deprivation, insecurity also

² The "distensio animi", a relaxation of the soul.

³ <http://www.irefricerche.it/news.interna.php?notizia=70>

plays a strong role in relationships, with very similar effects to those listed in the theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1969, as cited in Holmes, 2017).

Parke, Stevenson-Hinde, and Marris (1991), based on their work in slums, argue that the cycles of unfavourable conditions that result from social factors, such as poverty, degraded housing, unemployment, cultural deprivation, educational disadvantages, poor health, and poor diet, are experienced as a vacuum or devoid of meaning, equivalent to those felt by a person who has suffered a loss.

In their relationships, individuals are confronted with uncertainty or security, poverty or wealth, loss of fullness, violence or compassion, and neglect or care (Holmes, 2017).

A very polarized society favouring manifestations of dysfunctionality, such as delinquency, drug trafficking, and mental illness (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). In a continuous search for a security, culture is certainly not contemplated (La Piscopia & Croci, 2012) and daily life is fuelled by a constant perception of insecurity.

Our well-being is strongly connected to a private sphere and the intrusion into it, as in case of home theft, is a strong cause of the malaise. What we are most afraid of is interference in our intimate and personal field (Gehl, Tintori, & Borghi, 2012). Home is seen as a reference point for identity and orientation.⁴ The term “home” is an example to express a place where you feel safe and the intrusion by a stranger is, therefore, anthropologically perceived as a “state of alert, danger”.⁵

With the new century, the human being has started to face individual well-being differently than in the 20th century. Technology, scientific research, and all related sciences have led people to change their views on themselves and the world around them. These factors have impacted significantly on their lives, even on a daily basis, shaping and changing the weight of variables that previously were not evaluated as distinctive elements in the definition of well-being. Based on this new view, our study aims to identify the main determinants of individual well-being following a macro perspective based on both economic and sociological assumptions. Our research question aims to fill the gap generated by the change of perspective, due to the greater attention of people (and therefore greater impact on individual well-being) towards relational and time management aspects. As in our analysis, we mainly have indicators referring to economic and social dimensions of well-being, we test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Wealth, in terms of spending power, has a marginal effect on individual well-being.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): A greater time availability and greater attention to relationships increase the perception of individual well-being.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The perceived insecurity and uncertainty has a negative impact on individual well-being.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Some drivers of individual well-being have a different impact depending on the income class to which the individual belongs.

3. DATA COLLECTION AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Data have been collected from a database structured by ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) for the period 2005-2016. This period has been selected for the analysis because it showed updated and uniform data. Furthermore, we have decided to opt for this period of observation because from 2000 to 2005 the definition of “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2000) has become established. During this phase, sociologists and humanists faced this new term and began to carry out more specific analyses and considerations on the change in society. Thus, 2005 saw a definitive development of the concept, from which we set out to verify its substantial impact on individual well-being. The original sample contained in the database consisted of 130 indicators collected by Italian regions, illustrating the 12 relevant domains, for measuring well-being, and updated annually in the so-called BES (*Benessere equo e sostenibile*) report⁶ (ISTAT, 2017). In order to assess our research hypothesis, an “in-depth analysis” has been performed with the aim of identifying the appropriate variables and reorder them with the new logic based on a sociological perspective. These variables have been selected from the largest set of those reported by ISTAT with the purpose of explaining those assumed as a proxy for well-being.

On account of the aforementioned analysis, the final sample consisted of 264 observations across 20 Italian regions, representing all existing regions. However, it is also clear that if emotional and family relationships increase our well-being, the use and constant search for “connections” proves worthwhile.

We have decided to select the data on the Italian regions as the final sample, considering some peculiar characteristics that concern Italy and the limitations related to cross-countries’ studies that concern this specific topic. These limitations are related to data production, since it is extremely rare for cultural data to be gathered in exactly the same way in different countries because of differences relative to definitions and surveying methodologies, and to the lack of an appropriate underlying theory guiding the selection of data, justifications for countries to be included and approach to analysis (Madden, 2005b; Cacace, Tintori, & Borghi, 2013). One of the peculiar characteristics associated with the Italian context is explained by Bauman (2017): “[...] You Italians are lucky people, because your family and neighborhood ties are, compared to the rest of Europe, incredibly stronger.” For example, Sweden is a much more wealthy country than Italy, with 68% of Stockholm residents living in a one-person household but 40% of Swedes say they feel alone and, over the past year, the use of antidepressants has increased by 25%.

The definitions of the dependent and independent variables are provided in Appendix (Table 1). In particular, we have identified life satisfaction as the dependent variable, defined as the percentage of people aged 14 and over who

⁶ The report defines well-being in its various dimensions, paying particular attention to territorial aspects. The report presents the results every year in terms of developing indicators on the state of health in Italy. The 130 Bes indicators are divided as usual into 12 domains: health; education and training; work and lifetime balance; economic well-being; social relations; politics and institutions; security; subjective well-being; landscape and cultural heritage; environment; innovation, research and creativity; quality of services.

⁴ See the F.O.I. model (trust, orientation and identity), used in the context of reconstruction after wars or cataclysms (La Piscopia & Croci, 2012).

⁵ The perception of insecurity, as well as being a source of stress, is one of the first indicators in war zones.

expressed a life satisfaction score between 8 and 10, and independent variables, those identified in the previous paragraphs. In order to identify the independent variables, we have used the indicators proposed by ISTAT, reorganising them according to more qualitative criteria and assumptions dictated by the sociological and psychological literature.

Table 2 (see Appendix) shows the descriptive statistics for each variable considered in our database. Data reported in the table are the following: number of observations (N), mean, coefficient of variation (Std.Dev.), minimum value (Min), and maximum value (Max).

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 do not show any particular anomalies regarding values for all the variables analyzed.

Specifically, Table 2 shows that 44% of Italians express a life satisfaction score between 8 and 10 and 66% consider themselves quite satisfied with their free time but only 36% are satisfied with family relationships. Even lower is the result recorded with regard to the satisfaction for mobility services, only 21% of users on average are satisfied. As far as social participation is concerned, only 27% of Italians state that they have carried out social participation activities at least once in 12 months (e.g., meetings of associations or trade unions). The average per capita income is 17,804 euros. On the other hand, the current public expenditure on cultural heritage amounts to only 11 Euro on average. The average job satisfaction score at the national level is 7. This score is based not only on earnings expectations but also on the number of working hours, type of working time, working environment, home-work distance, and interest in work. As for the proxy variables on the perception of security and uncertainty (home theft and deep material deprivation), statistics show that 8 out of 100 people experience at least 4 of the following 9 problems: 1) not being able to settle unexpected expenses, 2) having arrears in payments (mortgage, rent, bills, miscellaneous debts); not being able to afford: 3) an annual week holiday away from home, 4) an adequate meal (protein) at least every two days, 5) to heat the house adequately; not being able to afford to buy: 6) a washing machine, 7) a colour television, 8) a telephone or 9) a car. As far as home theft is concerned, 12% of people say they have suffered a theft. The data on renewable energies show a percentage of coverage of renewable sources higher than 50%. Finally, only 28% of Italians state that they have carried out cultural participation activities at least once in 12 months.

Table 3 (see Appendix) shows the descriptive statistics by region. Life satisfaction is highest in regions such as Bolzano (64.01%), Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol (59.89%) and Trento (55.96%). For these regions, which represent the best practices at the national level, there are also high levels of average income per capita (values above 20,000 Euro). For other regions, such as Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy, a high value linked to average income per capita (respectively 21,738 Euro and 21,702 Euro) is matched by life satisfaction values close to the average (44.11% for Emilia-Romagna and 46.05% for Lombardy). This descriptive statistic suggests some regions have a positive relationship between income and quality of life that does not seem to exist in other regions that are considered among the most productive Italian regions. As far as satisfaction with mobility services is concerned, the maximum value recorded refers to Bolzano (46.29%)

while the minimum value is recorded in Campania (8.12%), for which the lowest value relative to the quality of life is also recorded (28.82%). Also, with regard to the other indicators that should presumably have a positive impact on life satisfaction (leisure satisfaction, family relations, and expenditure on cultural heritage), statistics show a large gap among regions in Italy.

Correspondingly, with regard to the variables that presumably have a negative impact on life satisfaction (deep material deprivation and home theft); there is inequality among regions, with Bolzano recording the lowest average value of material deprivation (3.33%) and Sicily the highest value (22.36%). Home theft, on the contrary, does not seem to be influenced by the macro area (North, Centre, and South), given that the region most affected is Emilia-Romagna (with a value of 22.38%) while the least affected is Basilicata (with a value of 4.60%). Conversely, job satisfaction is quite generalized across the regions considered (average values above 7). With regard to cultural participation, Trentino and Bolzano record the highest average value (42%) and Puglia and Sardinia record the lowest (17%).

Furthermore, the differences noted in the average values observed for each variable, considering the macro-areas (North, Centre, and South), are shown in Table 4 (see Appendix).

4. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH - IDENTIFICATION OF THE INWI (INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING INDEX) MODEL

The first step of our methodology was to identify an econometric model to investigate the link between well-being and a set of other variables. The dependent variable is life satisfaction while the independent variables include the variables extracted from the ISTAT database (average income per capita, expenditure on cultural heritage, leisure time satisfaction, family relationships, mobility satisfaction, deep material deprivation, home theft, job satisfaction, renewable sources, social inclusion and cultural participation).

The empirical analysis developed consists of 7 different specifications of the model for life satisfaction. From the first model to the fifth model, the entire sample is considered. First, using stepwise regression⁷, we have identified five models. Model 1 takes into account the unique relationship between life satisfaction and average income per capita. In Model 2, we take into account the variables that identify the temporal dimension of well-being (leisure time satisfaction, family relationships, and mobility satisfaction) as well as the proxies related to cultural dimension (cultural participation and expenditure on cultural heritage). In addition, in Model 3 we considered the two variables used as a proxy for states of physical safety and feeling of danger (deep material deprivation and home theft). Model 4 considered job satisfaction and in Model 5, we identified our final model by adding social inclusion and renewable sources.

As the second step of our analysis, we have identified the other two models (Models 6 and 7). These two additional models report the results considering two income classes. With the aim of identifying the two clusters, we split our whole

⁷ A regressive technique that considers one or more variables for each step.

sample based on the average value of income per capita for each region. Model 6 shows the results for regions that have an average income per capita

below the average value, while Model 7 shows the results for regions that have an average income per capita greater than the average value.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Life satisfaction} = & \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Average income per capita} + \beta_2 \text{Expenditure on Cultural Heritage} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{Leisure time satisfaction} + \beta_4 \text{Family relationship} + \beta_5 \text{Mobility satisfaction} \\ & + \beta_6 \text{Deep Material deprivation} + \beta_7 \text{Home Theft} + \beta_8 \text{Job satisfaction} \\ & + \beta_9 \text{Renewable sources} + \beta_{10} \text{Social Inclusion} + \beta_{11} \text{Cultural Participation} + \varepsilon \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In Model 1, we analyzed the relationship between average income per capita and life satisfaction. The average income per capita variable is positive and significant. In Models 2, 3, 4, and 5, this variable loses its significance because of the relationships after taking other determinants into account. Model 1 defines the relationship between per capita spending power and life satisfaction. In this model, an increase in spending power is associated with a better perception of the quality of life. In Model 2, we considered also the effect of variables relating to the relationship factor and the time factor. Adding these variables, spending power loses its statistical significance. Loss of significance of the spending capacity shows how people give more importance to personal and relational factors than the marginal effect (Easterlin, 1974) of wealth on life satisfaction, thus *H1* is confirmed.

Leisure time satisfaction does not show any impact on well-being. Very often, a greater availability of free time does not affect the quality of life, especially when there are problems related to the organization of time mainly concerning the definition of activities outside work.

To analyze the effect of other variables considered we built other models with a larger number of variables. Taking into consideration all the models proposed, we identify Model 4 as the most efficient from a statistical point of view (a good level of adjusted R-squared and a more limited number of variables compared to Model 5) rather than from the perspective of the international literature highlighted in the previous paragraph.

In the final model (Model 4), results show a stable and positive impact on well-being associated with family relationships (coefficient equal to 0.3), mobility satisfaction (coefficient equal to 0.2), and job satisfaction (coefficient equal to 10.7). Therefore, determinants related to the personal, relational, and temporal aspects play a key role in increasing the perception of life satisfaction, this result confirms *H2*.

As suggested by Waldinger (n.d.), happiness is directly related to good relationships that would lead to psychophysical well-being and longer life expectancy, happiness, and health. In addition, increased mobility and better access (lower costs and greater usability) to certain experiences and places, guaranteed by the increasing attention to mobility services due to globalization and technology, have a positive impact on the perception of personal well-being (Ratti & Claudel, 2017). Furthermore, a reduction in the number of working hours, the type of work, a better working environment, a short commute from home to work, and the interest in the work carried out, guarantee an increase in life satisfaction, in contrast to a more traditional view that links greater happiness to an increase of salary.

On the other hand, our empirical evidence highlights the negative impact of deep material deprivation and home theft. Our well-being is strongly connected to a private sphere and the perception of personal safety. On the contrary, the perception of lack of safety undermines our privacy and identity (Gehl, Tintori, & Borghi, 2012) with direct negative consequences on our perception of well-being, thus *H3* is confirmed (see Table 5 in Appendix).

In addition, we developed two models (Model 6 and Model 7) that take into account all variables clustering by average income per capita (as reported in Table 6, see Appendix).

Mobility satisfaction and job satisfaction have a positive and statistically significant impact on life satisfaction in both Model 6 and Model 7.

In Model 6, average income per capita has a negative but negligible impact on life satisfaction (coefficient equal to -0.002), and the family relationship has a positive impact; in Model 7, average income per capita has a positive but negligible impact (coefficient equal to +0.002) and family relationship loses its significance. This could mean that people whose income is lower than the average income bestow more importance to personal aspects than to the marginal effect of wealth.

Deep material deprivation has a negative and significant impact on life satisfaction in both Model 6 and Model 7 since the lack of resources related to the living standards of the society produces negative consequences on the perception of well-being regardless of income level.

Home theft has a negative and significant impact on life satisfaction only in Model 7. This means that for people whose income is higher than the average, the perception of being an object of hypothetical thefts produces a stronger effect on life satisfaction in comparison with people whose income is lower than the average.

These results confirm *H4*: different variables induce a different effect on well-being according to the income class.

6. CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Model 4 has been identified as the best model in terms of goodness of fit among those proposed.

Results of the econometric models we performed confirm the hypotheses we formulated with regard to spending power, time and relationships, perceived insecurity, and incidence of income classes.

The marginal effect of income on life satisfaction (Easterlin, 1974) is proved by the loss of statistical significance that this relationship suffers by passing from the simple model (Model 1) to a model with additional regressors (Model 4). Model 4 did not show any significant impact on life satisfaction associated with the increase in average income (*H1*).

Our results seem to suggest that once basic material needs are met and an average income is reached, happiness and life satisfaction does not directly depend on income. The relationship between man and object, one-to-one, has depleted and the physical space of “private property” has reduced⁸. Today’s services’ attention is focused on increasing individual well-being; they are more aimed at constant customization with daily updates of data on profiling personal tastes and lifestyles⁹, rather than gaining profit tout court.

Furthermore, Model 4 showed a positive impact associated with job satisfaction. This positive relationship is driven more by the reduction in the number of working hours, type of work done, quality of time spent at work, working environment, home-work commute, and interest in work. Changing in economic environment, companies’ needs, and the consequent larger demand for specialization, leads to greater dedication of attention and time and, as mentioned, the hyper-identity pushes the individual to become an “active part” of the working mechanism. This implicit “new demand” of the worker is a very important personal motivation factor that falls within the individual personal sphere of perception of one’s own “quality of work”. Relationship, mobility, and “consideration of one’s work” are today fundamental within complex social contexts. Companies that want to further motivate their resources, therefore, should act on drivers that are not linked to salary.

The experiential/intangible components have a greater impact (both negative and positive) on perceived well-being. Specifically, Model 4 pointed out that mobility satisfaction and relational time have a positive impact on life satisfaction.

Mobility satisfaction can be related to time factor different meanings. In fact, the time factor is certainly subjective and can be divided into some subcategories. There is interior time, free time, and relational time. Three “times” are totally different from one another. In a future in which we will work less and perhaps better, those who know how to reinvent their daily lives, finding a good balance between the development of knowledge and interrelationships, will become more competitive (Crocì, 2013; De Masi, 2002; Felice, 2017; Fusaro, 2010; Lipovetsky, 2013; Morin, 2012; Carvelli & Sapelli, 2018). The most recent empirical studies (Bourdieu, 2009; Calinescu, 2007; De Masi, 2002; Morin, 2012; Rifkin, 2010; Sennett, 2012; Waldinger, n.d.) say that earthly happiness is directly linked to good relationships (H2) and these, qualitative and not quantitative, would lead to psychophysical well-being and a higher life expectancy.

In addition, the negative impact related to home theft and material deprivation, reported in Model 4, suggested that the perception of insecurity and uncertainty instead reduces our perception of well-being (H3). This reduction is higher in regions with superior levels of home theft and where the personal perception of material deprivation is greater.

As mentioned in the earlier conclusions, everything that concerns services supporting the individual or the family nucleus has an emotional value of very strong well-being. Bowlby (1969) as cited in Holmes (2017), with his theory of attachment and secure basis, proves that everything we are given to contribute to an idea of the future of physical security, freedom and organized leisure also fits into that “anthropological” direction of the human being that, despite progress and technology, remains indelibly in each of us.

In the world of access, where advertising and marketing portray a “carefree” life, there exists and is expanding a segment of the population where poverty, but above all, a feeling of exclusion, compromises any hint of well-being. The lack of “admission” to a sphere of services due to the insufficiency of a minimum wage burdens the sense of unease and distrust for the future, with a malaise that leads to introversion and relational disorders.

Both the expenditure on the cultural heritage variable and the cultural participation variable has no impact on life satisfaction.

Starting from the assumptions of different authors (Matarasso, 1997; Grossi et al., 2012; DeMarrais, 2013; Madden, 2005) who, despite a difficult possibility of economic measurement, share the strong contribution and social impact that art and culture have on daily well-being, we tried to highlight how much the word culture tout court is directly connected to general well-being or contributes to impact positively together with the new drivers identified. Culture from an anthropological point of view, as defined Tylor (1871), constitutes “a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and any other capacity and habit acquired by man as a member of society”. In this context, the thought of liquid modernity and hyper-identity is placed where culture becomes the means to continuously instill new needs and desires, following overwhelming and constant demand for change.

In conclusion, in a system of complex modernity, the variables of well-being have certainly changed compared to a few decades ago; human happiness can never ignore those anthropological factors (fear and love) that make it “homo sapiens sapiens”. However, although the economic incentive will still have an important role to play, it can be said that the needs of the individual will increasingly expand towards a direction of demand for services, experiences, and relationships, which can respond to a progressively more central perception of ourselves, compared to the world surrounding us.

Our study that analyzed, at the macro level, the possible impacts on individual wellbeing could be tailored to specific contexts, e.g. the company context, through the implementation of customized surveys and the processing of the data resulting from such surveys. Therefore, this method would be more appropriate in order to investigate different contexts more specifically, taking into consideration only the variables (collected at the micro-level) present in that particular framework of analysis.

Another possible limitation is the lack of an estimate of the impact resulting from exogenous factors, such as climate change events or pandemic episodes (e.g., the Covid-19 epidemic). The effects on the whole scenario would have an impact on all the above-mentioned variables, distorting their weights.

⁸ In large cities, the average living space has decreased by 30%; moreover, digitization has streamlined the physical space needed for books and music. See also Crosses E., ADT, The Thinning of Materials and Invisible Growth, pp. 103-106.

⁹ For example, car sharing gives you a bonus of up to 5 Euros if you refuel, in mobile phones if you respond to questionnaires of preferences of choice, you are given gigas.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Variable description

Variable	Variable ID	Definition	Expected sign	References
Dependent variable				
Life satisfaction	Y	Percentage of people aged 14 and over who have expressed a life satisfaction score between 8 and 10.		
Independent variable				
Average income per capita	X_1	Amount of the disposable income of consumer households to the total number of residents (in Euro).	+	ISTAT
Expenditure on cultural heritage	X_2	Current municipal public expenditure on cultural heritage management.	+	ISTAT
Leisure time satisfaction	X_3	Percentage of people aged 14 and over who claim to be very or fairly satisfied with their leisure time.	+	ISTAT
Family relationship	X_4	Percentage of people aged 14 and over who are very satisfied with family relationships.	+	ISTAT
Mobility satisfaction	X_5	Percentage of users who rated 8 or more for all types of transport they habitually use (several times a week).	+	ISTAT
Deep material deprivation	X_6	Percentage of people living in households with at least 4 of the 9 problems ¹⁰ considered.	-	ISTAT
Home theft	X_7	Number of home thefts out of total households per 1,000.	-	ISTAT
Job satisfaction	X_8	Average satisfaction with the following aspects of the work performed (scale from 0 to 10): gain, number of hours worked, type of hours worked, working relationships, job stability, distance between home and work, interest in the work.	+	ISTAT
Social inclusion	X_9	People 14 years + who have been involved in at least one participation activity in the last 12 months.	+	ISTAT
Renewables sources	X_{10}	Electricity consumption covered by renewable sources.	+	ISTAT
Cultural participation	X_{11}	Persons aged 16 years and over who have carried out 3 or more cultural activities ¹¹ in the previous 12 months.	+	ISTAT

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Unit of measure	Variables	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
%	Life satisfaction	264	44	9	20	66
Eur/per capita	Average income per capita	264	17804	3548	11600	24623
Eur/per capita	Expenditure on cultural heritage	264	11	7	0	30
%	Leisure time satisfaction	264	66	6	54	83
%	Family relationship	264	36	7	21	51
%	Mobility satisfaction	264	21	11	4	54
%	Material deprivation	264	82	6	1	36
%	Home theft	264	12	5	2	32
n ¹	Job satisfaction	264	7	0	7	8
%	Renewable sources	264	52	66	2	323
%	Social inclusion	264	27	7	13	50
%	Cultural participation	262	28	11	0	48

¹⁰ The problems considered are: 1) not being able to incur unexpected expenses of 800 Euros; 2) not being able to afford an annual week's holiday away from home; 3) having arrears for mortgage, rent, bills or other debts, such as 4) not being able to afford an adequate meal every two days, i.e. with meat or fish protein (or vegetarian equivalent); 5) not being able to heat the house adequately; not being able to afford: 6) a washing machine; 7) a colour television; 8) a telephone; 9) a car.

¹¹ They have gone to the cinema at least four times; at least once to the theatre, museums and/or exhibitions, archaeological sites, monuments, classical music concerts, opera, other music concerts; they have read a daily newspaper at least three times a week; they have read at least four books.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics by region

Unit of measure	Variable											
	%	Eur/per capita	Eur/per capita	%	%	%	%	%	n'	%	%	%
Region	Life satisfaction	Average income per capita	Expenditure on cultural heritage	Leisure time satisfaction	Family relationship	Mobility satisfaction	Deep material deprivation	Home theft	Job satisfaction	Renewable sources	Social inclusion	Cultural participation
Abruzzo	40	15736	4	64	32	20	7	13	7	36	24	23
Basilicata	38	12929	4	62	28	21	14	5	7	41	24	19
Bolzano	64	22917	21	80	48	46	3	7	8	181	45	42
Calabria	40	12225	3	62	29	16	15	8	7	52	18	18
Campania	29	12783	3	58	24	8	17	8	7	16	17	18
Emilia-Romagna	44	21738	17	68	41	21	5	22	7	12	29	31
Friuli Venezia Giulia	45	19674	20	66	42	30	5	11	7	22	31	34
Lazio	36	19238	20	64	30	9	6	11	7	22	25	32
Liguria	43	20865	16	70	37	13	6	14	7	6	24	28
Lombardia	46	21702	14	68	41	17	5	18	7	19	27	32
Marche	40	17829	8	67	33	21	7	15	7	16	26	26
Molise	41	14262	5	66	29	25	8	9	7	57	21	19
Piemonte	44	20055	10	66	38	16	5	16	7	30	27	30
Puglia	37	13031	3	58	26	17	18	14	7	26	20	17
Sardegna	41	14321	13	60	33	16	11	8	7	21	26	27
Sicilia	37	12753	6	57	31	11	22	11	7	14	18	20
Toscana	41	19481	13	67	39	13	5	16	7	33	27	29
Trentino-Alto Adige/Sudtirolo	60	21845	25	75	46	42	3	8	8	141	41	42
Trento	56	20813	27	70	44	35	3	9	8	105	38	35
Umbria	41	17898	11	67	38	19	5	18	8	32	26	26
Valle d'Aosta	52	20493	0	69	35	34	6	10	8	266	30	31
Veneto	44	19103	0	65	39	19	4	15	8	266	31	30

Table 4. Descriptive statistics by area

Unit of Measure	Variables	Area		
		North	Centre	South
%	Life satisfaction	50	40	38
Eur/per capita	Average income per capita	20920	18612	13505
Eur/per capita	Expenditure on cultural heritage	16	8	5
%	Leisure time satisfaction	70	66	61
%	Family relationship	41	35	29
%	Mobility satisfaction	27	16	17
%	Deep material deprivation	4	6	14
%	Home theft	13	15	9
n	Job satisfaction	8	7	7
%	Renewable sources	76	30	28
%	Social inclusion	32	26	21
%	Cultural participation	33	25	19

Table 5. Empirical results

	Model 1 coeff./std. error)	Model 2 coeff./std. error)	Model 3 coeff./std. error)	Model 4 coeff./std. error)	Model 5 coeff./std. error)
Average income per capita	0.002*** (0.000)	0.000*	0.000*	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Mobility satisfaction		0.436*** (-0.040)	0.292*** (-0.040)	0.214*** (-0.040)	0.187*** (-0.050)
Cultural participation		-0.028 (-0.040)	0.003 (-0.030)	-0.008 (-0.030)	0.000 (0.000)
Leisure time satisfaction		-0.076 (-0.100)	-0.046 (-0.080)	-0.067 (-0.080)	-0.082 (-0.080)
Family relationship		0.405*** (-0.100)	0.468*** (-0.090)	0.338*** (-0.080)	0.314*** (-0.090)
Expenditure on cultural heritage		0.045 (-0.070)	-0.066 (-0.060)	-0.059 (-0.060)	-0.077 (-0.070)
Deep material deprivation			-0.301*** (-0.060)	-0.223*** (-0.060)	-0.229** (-0.070)
Home theft			-0.512*** (-0.060)	-0.413*** (-0.060)	-0.378*** (-0.070)
Job satisfaction				10.669*** (-2.000)	8.616*** (-2.350)
Social inclusion					0.181 (-0.100)
Renewable sources					0.002 (-0.010)
Constant	14.953*** (-2.230)	17.705*** (-5.000)	25.135*** (-4.500)	-45.186** (-13.880)	-31.257 (-16.910)
R-squared	0.394	0.681	0.784	0.805	0.806
N	264	262	262	262	262

Note: * coefficient and (std. error) are reported in the table. Level of confidence *** 0.001, ** 0.01, * 0.05.

Table 6. Empirical results analyzed by two groups of average income per capita

	Model 6 coeff./std. error)	Model 7 coeff./std. error)
	Average income per capita < the average	Average income per capita > the average
Average income per capita	-0.002** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)
Expenditure on cultural heritage	-0.026 (-0.170)	-0.152** (-0.060)
Leisure time satisfaction	-0.395* (-0.190)	0.175* (-0.080)
Family relationship	0.591*** (-0.140)	-0.115 (-0.080)
Mobility satisfaction	0.357*** (-0.090)	0.103* (-0.040)
Deep material deprivation	-0.503*** (-0.100)	-0.513*** (-0.140)
Home theft	0.051 (-0.160)	-0.264*** (-0.060)
Job satisfaction	9.975* (-4.310)	14.848*** (-2.230)
Renewables sources	-0.026 (-0.030)	-0.009 (-0.010)
Social inclusion	-0.039 (-0.190)	0.265** (-0.090)
Cultural participation	0.050 (-0.060)	-0.043 (-0.020)
Constant	1.429 (-29.140)	-108.326*** (-16.710)
R-squared	0.613	0.901
N of observations	104	158

Note: * coefficient and (std. error) are reported in the table. Level of confidence *** 0.001, ** 0.01, * 0.05.