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Financial distress and happiness of employees in times of economic crisis

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Abstract

Using data for 28 European countries for the period 2008 to 2012, we examine whether

employee satisfaction and unemployment are related. We find evidence that unemployment is negatively related to employee satisfaction in the life cycle. This relationship is stronger for those employees who are unemployed for a longer period of time. Our results suggest that their financial well-being is lower.

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Notes

¹ The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) classification is a geocode standard to subdivide the economic territory of the European Union. NUTS-2 regions are basic regions for application of regional policies and normally have a population of 800 000 to 3 million.

² The dummy controls for 205 European regions for which coefficients were found to be significant.

³ Type of occupation distinguishes between blue-collar versus white-collar labour and low-skilled versus high-skilled occupations according to 'Eurostat's Adult Education Survey.

⁴ Unfortunately, there were no recent GDP per capita and inflation data available at the regional level.

⁵ A challenge here is that unhappiness and financial distress often go hand in hand and may, in fact, aggravate each other. Moreover, there is a possibility of reverse causality, with increasing unhappiness exacerbating financial distress. One solution to this problem would be to instrument financial distress, but finding credible instruments is difficult. Instead, we recognize this problem and caution that our results should be interpreted as conditional associations rather than reflecting causal relationships.

⁶ The negative and significant correlation for GDP per capita in the regression for employed persons may be explained by the fact that higher GDP per capita is associated with higher employment rates.

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