

## **Do parenthood and partnership protect quality of life in the old age?**

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Social networks in general, and parenthood and partnership specifically, are seen as resources which may improve quality of life (QOL). Especially parenthood is seen an investment which pays off in the old age. Past research studied the differences in old-age quality of life among parenthood and partnership groups, but did not address the question whether parenthood and partnership cushion (slow down) the decline of QOL associated with old age.

This study fills this gap by investigating four questions. First, how does QOL change with age among people with various parenthood and marital histories? Second, do background characteristics (such as family of origin and education) explain these differences? Third, do parenthood and marital histories correlate with QOL in late mid-life? Finally, do these differences exacerbate or attenuate in the old age? To measure QOL we focus on life satisfaction, health, and satisfaction with relationships.

We use the data of the Swiss Household Panel (17 waves, 1999-2016) and hybrid regression models, which model separately the within-person change and between-person differences.

Our results show that continuously married parents in late mid-life declare highest life satisfaction and satisfaction with relationships, and most positive trajectories of life satisfaction. The most disadvantaged groups, controlling for background characteristics, are parents who experienced a dissolution, never-married parents, and childless persons who were married at some point in their lives. These results are not consistent with treating parenthood and partnership as resources whose effects accumulate and one may substitute for the lack of the other. Instead, the discrepancies between partnership and parenthood status seem to be problematic for older-age QOL.