

Civic Participation as a Promoter of Active Ageing in Europe

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Abstract : The main objective of this research is to acknowledge whether civic participation affects the well-being of the elderly, thus being a key activity of active aging. It is also of interest to recognize any differences among genders, generational cohorts or country of residence. If a positive relationship is found between civic participation and well-being, the actions that promote this participation will benefit the quality of life of senior citizens. Otherwise, independent action must be taken in the improvement of social and human capital. The sample consists of approximately 50.000 individuals from the European Social Survey (2002-2016). Only individuals born before 1965 in 15 European countries were considered. The sample was distributed according to gender, year of birth, country, level of studies and ESS wave to form pseudo-panel data cohorts, leaving a total of 1.318 observations. The data were analyzed through a Cross-Lagged Model using Fixed-Effects. A bidirectional association is observed between the civic participation and well-being variables. However, participating in the past seems to have a higher impact on today's health, happiness and life satisfaction than the other way around. Furthermore, 26% of the respondents expressed to be satisfied with their life, 27% to be happy and 57% to have good health. On the other hand, 49% have participated civically in the last year, being the most common activities: signing petitions, boycotting products and volunteer work in non-political organizations. A slight trend of BabyBoomers and men towards greater participation can be observed, as well as a higher impact of this participation on their well-being. In addition, international differences exhibit a stronger relation for Nordic, East European and Mediterranean countries. The given results support the hypothesis that civic participation is a promoter of well-being for the elderly. This paper positively highlights the activity of involving in political and non-political organizations, as well as wearing badges. At any rate, almost all forms of civic participation show a positive relationship with well-being and should therefore be promoted, although differences between countries must be taken into consideration.

Keywords : active aging, civic participation, Europe, well-being

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