Reading Published Research  (RPR)

1. Read the paper

Laaksonen, S. (2016). A Research Note: Happiness by Age is More Complex than U-Shaped. Journal of Happiness Studies. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9830-1>

2.  Fill the table below.  When giving answers **include the page numbers.**

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|  | Answer |
| What is/are the authors’ main research question(s)? | What is the relation between age and level of happiness? Is U-shaped model relevant? (p. 472) What shape does this connection have? |
| What is the importance of the study (rationale)? | The aim of the study to ‘examine the age-happiness relationship more widely than has  been conventionally performed’ (p.480). U-shaped variation of happiness and age has been criticized.  No complete consensus exists on the relationship between age and happiness (p. 473)  It is a question - whether to use controls in such studies (p. 474) |
| What is the novelty of the study? What gap it fills and what contradictions solves. | Authors focus on ‘comparing age happiness with different models using four different patterns of personal characteristics’ (p.472)  The ESS gives new opportunities to examine this relationship (p. 472) |
| What are the main hypotheses (expectations)? | The main hypothesis of the study is “Wellbeing is U-shaped in age” by Blanchflower & Oswald (2004, 2008, 2009a) – (p. 472) |
| Describe the **data** (survey) which was used? | Waves 4, 5 and 6 of ESS (European Social Survey) - a longitudinal survey of respondents from European countries. (p. 472)  30 countries, 28 of which are analysed individually (p. 475)  155500 respondents (p. 477) |
| What was done with missing data? | Missing data for each variable of research is very small. DV was ‘answered well’ missings are less than 1% (p.476). Nonresponse for age and gender is even smaller. These nonresponses are removed.  Other control variables were used as categorical with categories for missing data.  Missing data for objective income was higher and was recorded as refusals 11%, do not know 7%, missing for other reasons or unknown reasons 5% (p.477) |
| What **concepts (variables)** were being measured? | DV – happiness, IV – age, (p. 472) control variables - gender, objective income, education, subjective health. (p. 475) |
| What questions (including answers) were used to measure these concepts? | "Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?" (p. 472). The scale is ordered from 0 (extremely unhappy) to 10 (extremely happy).  Age scale starts from 15 years as a minimum age of the population in ESS (p.476) |
| Which composite (additive) indexes (if any) were used to measure main concepts?  **This is when several questions are combined in one measure** | - |
| What transformations (if any) were done with main variables by authors?  **How scales (answers) were recoded for data analysis.** | Age was squared and cubed for the models of analysis. (p. 475) |
| What methods of data analysis were used in the study? | Weighted multivariate linear regressions (p. 472, 477)  Weighted ordinary least square linear regression (475) |
| What does the analysis tell us about major trends in the data? | Happiness level behaves variously with different predictors in different countries. |
| What are the authors’ conclusions on the main research question? | «The narrowest model, without remarkable control variables, does not find any U-shape, but when adding one rich control, i.e., objective income, a U-shape curve appears. This curve continues to appear when adding the two other controls, but its form changes at the same time» (p. 480)      " ...the U-shape is not as simple as some research suggests, and thus the minimum happiness is not necessarily at approximately 40–50 years old. Minimum happiness can occur earlier or much later, depending on the model used, and the country concerned. The U-shape is clearly found in approximately one half of the 28 countries. A special feature is that the U-shape phenomenon holds better for males than for females." (p. 481) |
| What studies (if any) mentioned in the paper have similar results? | Clark and Oswald (1994, 655) - found U-shape in the UK with the minimal age mid-thirties (p. 473)  Gerdtham and Johannesson (2001) - found U-shape in Sweden (p. 473)  Blanchflower and Oswald (2001, 2004) - found U-shape in the UK with minimal age around 40 (p. 473)  Alesina et al. (2004) found significant U-shape in 12 European countries, with other variables included apart from age (p. 473)  van Praag et al.(2003), Hayo and Seifert (2003) find U-shape with varying minimal ages (p. 473)  Blanchflower and Oswald (2009a, b) found U-shape in a few countries without controls (p. 474) |
| What studies (if any) mentioned in the paper demonstrated different results? | Blanchflower and Oswald (2008) - found U-shape in all their 60 countries (p. 473)  Pedersen and Dall Schmidt (2009) did not find U-shape of happiness across the life cycle controlled for other variables (p. 473)  Frijters and Beatton (2012) found that U-shape disappears with controls (p. 474) |
| What contribution to the theory has been done? | The research results another approach to research of happiness. ‘the U-shape is not as simple as some research suggests… Minimum happiness can occur earlier or much later, depending on the model used, and the country  concerned’ (p.481). |