Determinants of Freedom to make life choices

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Abstract

This paper explores the determinants of Freedom to make life choices among world economies fitting a multiple regression model. The results indicated healthy life expectancy; generosity and corruption were significant in determinants of Freedom to make life choices while GDP percapita was not significant.

Keywords: Freedom, happiness JEL Classification Code: I3 131

Introduction

There is definitive concord among academia (Amanina&Veenhoven 2017; Haller &Hadler 2004) across the world that Freedom and happiness are concomitant. Sen (1999) described development as freedom. Happiness was given much emphasis in developmental literature since the publication of first World Happiness Report by United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network in 2012. Freedom to make life choices is defined as the right to choose what you do with your life. Happiness and freedom of life choices has gained unprecedented contemporary relevance with the outset of the Covid 19 pandemic worldwide and its consequent socio-economic and political overtones. In this backdrop we seek to examine the determinants of Freedom to make life choices among world economies.

Data

Data was collected from five domains of quality of life as used in calculating Human Happiness Index available in the World Happiness Report (2020) for 153 countries. The definition of variables was followed as per the report. Corruption score reported in the data set was reversed by subtracting the score from unity so as to indicate high score for high corruption perception.

Results and Discussion

To examine the effects of income and non-income factors on the freedom to make life choices, a multiple regression model with the following econometric specification was administered.

Freedom to make life choices$_i$= α +β$_0$ GDP percapita$_i$ + β$_1$ Healthy life expectancy$_i$ + β$_2$Generosity$_i$ + β$_3$Corruption$_i$ + υ$_i$

The proposed model was found to be statistically significant ($F(0.9,2.03) = 18.12, p<.001$)).

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.573	.329	.311	.117178

Table 2: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.996	4	.249	18.129	.000
	Residual	2.032	148	.014		
	Total	3.028	152			

Table 3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.481	.106		4.525	.000*
	GDP percapita	.060	.049	.157	1.222	.224
	Healthy life expectancy	.143	.071	.257	1.998	.048*
	Generosity	.325	.101	.231	3.206	.002*
	Corruption	-.265	.096	-.212	-2.766	.006*

Source: World Happiness Report (2020)

Note: * Statistically Significant

Healthy life expectancy ($p=.048$), Generosity ($p=.002$) and Corruption ($p=.006$) were found to be statistically significant determinants of Freedom to make life choices while GDP percapita ($p=.224$) turned out to be insignificant. The results are in congruence with our proposition that more qualitative and subjective factors of wellbeing exert remarkable influence on freedom than growth numbers. Freedom to make life choices increased by 0.14, with unit increase in healthy life expectancy while a unit increase in generosity raised freedom by 0.325. Unsurprisingly, corruption was inversely related with freedom with freedom falling by 0.2 with unit increase in corruption perception.

Summing Up

Institutions; local and national should invest more in health and build communities with mutual trust and harmony. Arresting the level of corruption will be crucial in enhancing human freedoms especially in the developing world. To quote Sen (1999), "Freedoms are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means".

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