

Bereavement Effects and Early Life Circumstances

Preliminary and Incomplete

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Abstract

Recent literature in economics emphasizes the detrimental impact of bereavement and grief on health, the familial situation, and labor market outcomes. Due to these negative effects on human capital, it is crucial for economists to analyze the factors that influence resilience. This paper analyzes the role of war-related exposure to combat actions, air raids and father's absence early in life for mental health effects of bereavement in late life. We study in particular the impact on life satisfaction, mental health, and sleep satisfaction. We find more detrimental bereavement effects for individuals who have experienced these early life circumstances. Our results underline the importance of the early life environment to develop the ability to cope with grief later in life. This “indirect” effect of adverse conditions in utero or childhood once more emphasizes the importance of policy interventions protecting children and helping them to deal with traumatic events. Moreover, such policies could reduce health care costs and productivity loss related to bereavement later in life.

Keywords: Bereavement, grief, early life, mental health, wellbeing

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