Associations of Working-Life Economic Inactivity With Cognitive Function in Middle and Older Age – Outline of the Research Agenda

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Working-Life Economic Inactivity Spells: Example Life History Calendar

… using SHARELIFE work histories to identify periods of economic inactivity

+ Homemaker
+ Training
Cognitive Reserve & Human Capital as Underlying Mechanisms

- Economic inactivity spells may hinder building up cognitive reserve during working life, but may also provide time to engage in stimulating, cognitively demanding non-work-related activities → Training

- Differentiating types of economic inactivity may help in disentangling effects of economic inactivity on cognitive function in later life
Assumed Associations

Early Life Factors
(Age 10)
Childhood SES
School performance
Education

Late Life Factors
(Age 50 - 74)
Late Life SES
Health

Economic Inactivity
during Working Life
(Age 25 - 65)
Occurrence and duration
of inactivity spells

Cognitive Function in
Later Life
(Age 50 - 74)
Data of SHARE and SHARELIFE

- 18,419 respondents entering SHARE in wave 1 or wave 2, age 50-74 years
- Early and late life factors
- Economic inactivity periods longer than 6 months (age 25-65)
- Cognitive function assessed with averaged z-scores of...
  - Verbal fluency
  - Immediate recall
  - Delayed recall
  - Numeracy
  - Orientation

→ Indicator of (relative) global cognitive impairment (10% lowest scores)
Methods

- Logistic regressions with cognitive impairment indicator
- Applying longitudinal weights
- Model 1 (base model) with country dummies, age, gender
- Model 2: base + early life factors
- Model 3: base + early + late life factors
Preliminary Results & Further Analyses

- The different types of economic inactivity spells are differentially associated with risk of cognitive impairment.
- The associations are attenuated but still significant after including early life confounders.
- Sensitivity analyses confirm results.
- Mixed effects models with cognitive function as outcome, with 18,419 respondents, of whom 9,880 undergo repeated testing.
Discussion

• Main activity during economic inactivity self-rated, different from causes of economic inactivity
• Findings confined to 50-74 year-olds

Selection effects
• Cognitive function in early life
• Individual factors (health, social network): Economic inactivity as indicator of “privileged” life situation?
• Policy-related mechanisms
Thank you!

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