



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

THREE ESSAYS ON THE MEASUREMENT OF CHILD WELL-BEING

Tese apresentada para obtenção do grau de doutor em Economia

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the measurement of child well-being through summary composite indexes. We address two main questions raised in literature: how can be children better involved in the process of measurement? What aggregation methods should be employed when calculating such composite indexes? In order to answer these questions, this work is structured as follows.

In Essay 1 we review some of the relevant literature regarding the measurement of child well-being through summary composite indexes, namely, the Index of Child and Youth Well-Being in the United States, the Child Well-being Index for the European Union, the Microdata Child Well-Being Index developed also for the United States, and the Deprivation Index that was developed for the child population of a specific area (Lisbon) of Portugal. The contributions and limitations of these indexes are identified, together with some needs for future research.

In Essay 2 we build up from some of the recommendations made in Essay 1 and propose a new (microdata based) composite child well-being index that takes the children's own perspectives into account. The theoretical basis for the choice of dimensions and individual indicators is presented and the implementation of the dimensions and aggregation methods to be used in the index are justified and explained.

Essay 3 is an empirical testing of the index proposed in Essay 2 using a sample of Portuguese children from the Northern region of the country. In order to have a yardstick for comparison, we start by reviewing the main determinants of child well-being identified in literature. The methodological aspects of the implementation of the index are presented, together with the description of the child sample, the main hypothesis to be tested and the econometric model specification. The results of the estimation are presented and critically assessed by comparison with other methods of index calculation. This essay concludes with some policy implications drawn from those results.

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