

Chapter #18

RESILIENCE, MIGRATION EXPERIENCE AND EMIGRATION SELF-EFFICACY AS FACTORS RELATED TO EMIGRATION INTENTIONS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SLOVAKIA

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ABSTRACT

In Slovakia, there has been an increase in the number of students who aim to move abroad. The main objective of this study was to explore whether factors such as emigration self-efficacy, evaluation of migration experience, frequency of migration experience and resilience are related to the emigration intentions of Slovak university students. We also explored mediational effect of emigration self-efficacy in the relationship between resilience and emigration intentions. The research sample consisted of 474 university students from Slovakia ($M=22.4$, $SD=2.13$) from which 76.8% were women, all participating in the Student Life Cohort Study (SLiCE 2016). We found that all factors have a positive unique effect on emigration intentions. Gender was not significant in relation to the emigration intentions. Later, we found that resilience positively predicts emigration intentions both directly and indirectly through emigration self-efficacy, which is a significant mediator of this relationship. These results contribute to a better understanding of the role of migration and personality factors in explaining emigration behaviour among young people in Slovakia.

Keywords: emigration intentions, emigration self-efficacy, migration experience, resilience, university students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration has been widely studied in recent years although it has still not been fully explored and understood. It is an issue of relatively high complexity with structural factors interacting with psychological characteristics, social embedding and life course events. According to Lee (1966) the main cause for migration is a combination of push factors, like high prices, a low living standard, poor economic opportunities, political repression, and psychological dissatisfaction, and pull factors, which are attractive to people in other regions, like a demand for labour, political freedom, safety, and psychological well-being. In addition, migration is not a stable state and is a process which takes place over time (Kley, 2009). With the development of information technology, transport and international connections, the world is becoming more connected than ever before. This globalization means a natural rise in migratory behaviour, especially in European Union countries with “open borders”. In Slovakia, there has been an increase in the number of students who aim to move abroad. The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic has indicated that students with secondary education (54%), followed by university students (22%) are the most numerous groups of Slovak emigrants in terms of education (Káčerová & Horváthová,

2014). Bahna (2009) found that young Slovak people aged 18-24 had expressed a willingness to leave the country permanently (36%) or only for a certain time (53%). Men generally showed an increased willingness to travel abroad. According to the economic activity of the respondents, the overwhelming majority of students (up to 93%) expressed their willingness to leave to seek work abroad, while 47% of the students expressed their willingness to leave permanently. In addition, the emigration intentions of students were increased by more frequent and more positive experiences with living abroad. Economic reasons are also known to be dominant in relation to migration and especially among younger generations. According to Aidis, Krupickaitė, & Blinstrubaitė (2005), it is partly because students are more willing to accept lower wages and work in the service sector. The importance of studying migration behaviour can therefore be seen, especially among students who are already confronted with the possibilities of migration at secondary school. According to Kley (2009), completing school as a life-course event is the most important predictor in considering leaving the home city. This could be explained by people's need to plan their future and forthcoming situations after reaching a certain point in their life.

While examining migration behaviour, the fact that actual migration may be experienced differently than originally expected often comes up. In other words, changes in migration intentions can occur. This could be explained by the fact that pre-migration intentions do not always follow the real course of migration due to many obstacles and new opportunities which may occur during the migration process. This is where self-efficacy could play a significant role. According to the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997), the construct of perceived self efficacy is the belief that one can perform novel or difficult tasks and attain the desired outcomes. In the academic field, self-efficacy is explained as the belief that one is able to successfully execute tasks in academic domains by one's own means and it is a consistent predictor of academic success (Bandura, 2002). Although the concept of self-efficacy is complex and domain specific, it could be applied to migratory behaviour as well. It could be said that students with a high level of self-efficacy can trust their own capabilities to overcome obstacles and master different types of demands during the migration process. Resilience is another concept that has been widely applied and found to predict the mental health of young people. It refers to the rapid return to baseline functioning after exposure to trauma. Therefore, one cannot be resilient if there is no stressor. However, self-efficacy can be present if the stressor has not yet happened or will not occur at all (Schwarzer & Warner, 2012). In the context of migration, resilience could be perceived as the ability to recover from difficulties, as it involves positive adaptation to the stressors and challenges encountered in a new environment through persistent coping (Castro & Murray, 2010). On the other hand, it was found that those who plan to leave their home country were found to be less resilient and more willing to take risks than those who did not plan to leave or were undecided about leaving (Kulanová & Orosová, 2018). Moreover, migrants could be perceived as open and self-reliant individuals. Canache, Hayes, Mondak, & Wals (2013) has confirmed the influence of personality characteristics in the process of migration. They found that openness to experience as well as extraversion were positively related to emigration intentions. Gajdošová (2017) found that higher self-efficacy and the need for change were significant for both genders in predicting the emigration plans of Slovak university students. In addition, people without migration experience have been found to be less willing to migrate again, compared to those with migration experience (Kupiszewski, 1996).

2. OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study was to explore whether factors such as emigration self-efficacy, evaluation of the migration experience and frequency of the migration experience significantly contribute to explaining the emigration intentions among young people under 30 in Slovakia. Based on the theoretical background, it was hypothesized that higher emigration self-efficacy, more positive migration experience and more frequent migration experience would all have a positive and unique effect on emigration intentions. The moderation effect of gender was also tested in the relationship between the independent variables and emigration intentions. Later, it was hypothesized that the factor resilience would positively affect emigration intentions and that this relationship would be mediated by emigration self-efficacy. Therefore, emigration self-efficacy was considered as a potential intervening variable of this relationship.

3. RESEARCH SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

The research sample consisted of 474 Slovak university students, participating in the Student Life Cohort Study (SLiCE 2016), from which 76.8% were women. The mean age for these participants was 22.44 (SD=2.13). SLiCE study is an international longitudinal study focused on health-related behaviour and migration/emigration intentions of university students. In this study, the results from the first wave of data collection are presented. Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous and respondents were informed in advance. New software (SurveyMonkey) was used to construct the questionnaire as well as for the data collection. The statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics 21 was used to analyze the data.

4. MEASURES

In the study, emigration intentions and the factors related to emigration intentions were measured by the following variables:

- Emigration intentions were measured by a 5-item scale (Chan-Hoong & Soon, 2011) which required respondents to rate the frequency with which they thought about working or living in another country for the following reasons: (1) overseas education, (2) better job prospects, (3) setting up a business, (4) to work and live in another country for an extended period of time, and (5) emigrating to another country to live there permanently. Each of these five items were scored on a 5-item Likert scale from 1 - never to 5 - all the time. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.86. A higher overall score denotes a greater desire to migrate.
- Emigration self-efficacy was measured in relation to migration behaviour and three items were used: "If I wanted, I could easily leave abroad", "I am convinced that I would manage the process of leaving abroad" and "I am convinced that I would manage my stay abroad." Respondents rated their answers on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 - completely disagree to 5 - completely agree. A higher overall score indicates higher self-efficacy.
- Emigration experience, perceived as one's previous experience with living abroad, was measured with these two questions:

- The first question regarded the frequency of living abroad: “How many times have you left your country to live abroad?” rated from 1 – I have never been abroad, 2 – I have never lived abroad, 3 – once, 4 – twice, 5 – three times or more.
- The second question: “How would you now assess your experience with living abroad? “regards the positive, neutral or negative experience with emigration, rated from 1 – very bad, to 5 – very good.
- Resilience is the capacity to quickly recover from difficulties and serves as an umbrella term for various resources used to adapt to changes and cope with taxing situations. The study used the 10-item Connor & Davidson General Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) (2003). A Likert type additive scale with five response options (0= never; 4 = almost always) was used with the highest scores (score of all items) indicating the highest level of resilience The scale is rated based on how the respondent has felt over the past month, with higher scores reflecting greater resilience.

In the first step, linear regression with all independent variables (gender, emigration self-efficacy, evaluation of migration experience and frequency of migration experience) except factor resilience was used in relation to emigration intentions. In the second step, resilience was added to the model and linear regression analysis was used again. Later, Sobel test was used to confirm the significance of the mediational effect of emigration self-efficacy in the relationship between resilience and emigration intentions of students from Slovakia.

5. RESULTS

The results show certain significant gender differences among young people in Slovakia (under 30). Males scored higher in self-efficacy and higher in frequency of their migration experience, compared to females. Further details can be found in Table 1.

Table 1.
The descriptive characteristics in all the measured variables according to gender.

Variable	Men	Women	Theoretical range	T-test value
Emigration intentions	M=13.52 (SD= 4.92)	M=12.87 (SD=5.2)	5 - 25	-1.16
Emigration self-efficacy	M=12.49 (SD= 2.24)	M=11.41 (SD=2.68)	3 - 15	-3.83***
Evaluation of migration experience	M=3.31 (SD= 2.22)	M=3.39 (SD=2.28)	1 - 5	0.317
Frequency of migration experience	M=2.1 (SD=1.15)	M=1.8 (SD=1.1)	1 – 5	-2.082*
Resilience	M=22.7 (SD=2.99)	M=22.68 (SD=3.16)	10 – 40	-0.063

*M – Mean; SD – Standard deviation; *p <0.05, ***p <0.001*

Resilience, Migration Experience and Emigration Self-Efficacy as Factors Related to Emigration Intentions among University Students in Slovakia

After running first linear regression (without resilience), our model explained 26.1% of the variance in emigration intentions. Emigration self-efficacy made the largest unique contribution in explaining emigration intentions, followed by evaluation of migration experience and frequency of migration experience. Gender was not significant in explaining emigration intentions, so we didn't explore the moderation effect of gender in the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (emigration intentions). These findings indicate that higher emigration self-efficacy, more positive migration experience and more frequent migration experience, all have a positive and unique effect on emigration intentions among university students in Slovakia. The results are presented in Table 2.

Following the findings, we added resilience to our model. This model only slightly increased the variance in explaining emigration intentions (26.2%). However, resilience was not significant in predicting emigration intentions of university students. More details are presented in Table 2.

Finally, after exploring emigration self-efficacy as a potential intervening variable in the relationship between resilience and emigration intentions, Sobel test confirmed that emigration self-efficacy had a significant mediational effect in the relationship between resilience and emigration intentions of university students in Slovakia ($z=4.56$, $p\alpha<0.001$). Therefore, we found that resilience positively predicts emigration intentions of university students both directly and indirectly through emigration self-efficacy.

Table 2.
The results of regression analysis in relation to emigration intentions of young people in Slovakia.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	0.511	0.261	0.265	4.43	41.43	<0.001
2	0.512	0.262	0.254	4.43	33.28	<0.001

Model	Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	Gender	-0.255	0.495	-0.021	-0.515	0.607
	Frequency of migration experience	0.576	0.259	0.121	2.219	0.027
	Evaluation of migration experience	0.312	0.126	0.138	2.476	0.014
	Emigration self-efficacy	0.731	0.086	0.373	8.529	<0.001
2	Gender	-0.234	0.496	-0.019	-0.473	0.637
	Frequency of migration experience	0.568	0.26	0.119	2.19	0.029
	Evaluation of migration experience	0.309	0.126	0.137	2.449	0.015
	Emigration self-efficacy	0.712	0.089	0.364	8.044	<0.001
	Resilience	0.06	0.068	0.036	0.87	0.384

6. DISCUSSION

Many theories of migration have pointed to economic and demographic factors in attempting to answer what is behind people's intentions to migrate to another country (e.g. Massey et al., 1998). This question arises because migration to another country is often seen as a significant loss of highly talented and skilled people who migrate in search of better career opportunities, better working conditions and a higher salary (Giannoccolo, 2009). Similar research has been conducted in Slovakia and found that job opportunities, the possibility of improving language skills and the opportunity to travel are the most important reasons for university students who are considering leaving (Benka, 2017). However, these factors alone do not explain why some people who live in very similar environmental and socioeconomic conditions want to migrate to another country whereas others do not.

In order to understand the phenomenon of migration, various psychological factors and their relation to emigration intentions were examined. It was found that there are no differences between men and women in their intentions to emigrate. On the other hand, it was shown that men scored higher in self-efficacy and higher in frequency of their migration experience, compared to females. In his meta-analysis of 187 studies, Huang (2012) also found significant gender differences in self-efficacy, with a small difference favouring men. This is in line with Bahna (2009) who stated that men are generally more prone to migration. On the other hand, it has also been shown that UK female graduates are generally more migratory than male graduates (Faggian, Sheppard, & Mccann, 2006). The current study confirmed that university students with higher emigration self-efficacy, more positive migration experience and more frequent migration experience have greater intentions to leave Slovakia. This is in line with Kley (2009), who found that the migration experience could be influenced by a bad migration experience as well as by other factors such as the level of income, breaking up with a partner or finding another one. On the other hand, Speare, Goldstein, & Frey (1975) found that the previous migration experience did not affect considering but only planning migration. This was interpreted as the effect of a migrant's learned skills in dealing with uncertainty and the necessity of making new friends and adapting to their new environment. The main reason could be that people with migration experience are more confident and self-efficient because they have already experienced migration, and therefore are more prepared and more likely to migrate again. According to Diseth, Danielsen, and Samdal (2012), self-efficacy could be viewed as a protective factor because it enables individuals to master various demands with confidence, feel motivated by physiological arousal, and judge positive events as caused by effort and negative events as due primarily to external circumstances. It is also important to mention that emigration intentions are generally good predictors of future emigration behaviour. According to Van Dalen and Henkens (2012), 34% of native-born Dutch residents who had stated an intention to emigrate actually emigrated within the 5-year follow-up period.

The second objective of this study was to explore emigration self-efficacy as a possible mediator of the relationship between resilience and the emigration intentions of students. This was confirmed and it was found that resilience positively affects emigration intentions directly as well as indirectly through emigration self-efficacy. In a study looking at forced migration and refugees (Lusk, Terrezas, Caro, Chaparro, & Puga Antúnez, 2019), migrants showed higher scores in resilience and quality of life despite their high levels of post-traumatic stress. While forced migration is clearly different from voluntary migration, it may be possible to apply these results to voluntary migration as well, especially during the adaptation phase of migration. The effect of acculturation has been the subject of

examination in similar studies. In a study of young migrants, Luna (2013) found that more assimilated individuals exhibited increased levels of resilience. Even voluntary migration requires migrants to believe in their ability to successfully manage the migration process and those with higher levels of resilience should have an easier time in coping with the discomfort and anxiety during this process. It can be agreed that migration is an experience full of uncertainty and novelty, mostly because migrants are exploring new locations and cultures, meeting new people and building new relationships. It is important to highlight that this alone is perceived as a positive phenomenon, but only in the case of people's future return as a well-educated workforce. This case certainly applies to Slovakia. Like other European countries, Slovakia also faces globalization and exodus of young and well-educated people to countries with better career opportunities and more developed economies. Therefore, Slovakia, as well as other countries, try to prevent this loss of well-educated students, which could be perceived as a negative phenomenon in the case they choose not to return to their home country.

The biggest limitation of this study concerns the measurement of the factors evaluating migration experience and frequency of migration experience, which were assessed by only single item measures. In the future, the focus should be on a more complex examination of the relationship between migration experience and emigration intentions and include additional psychological factors important for students' intentions to emigrate. In addition, this study only focused on Slovak university students, so there is potential to study these psychological factors internationally in order to provide a deeper understanding of migration behaviour outside Slovakia. Based on our own research (Hajduch, Orosová, Kulanová, Hal, & Lukács, 2018), it has already been found that students in Belgium and Slovakia who want to stay in their country of origin (stayers) are more satisfied in life than leavers. The highest percentage of undecided students from the explored countries was found in Belgium (56.5%). These results could be an indication of other important factors related to emigration intentions not only in Slovakia, but also internationally. In the future, it could be helpful to focus on exploring the factors related to emigration self-efficacy. This factor's relatively confirmed significance in the migration process could be an indicator that there are other important psychological characteristics behind self-efficacy during the migration process as well as in a daily life. In order to avoid the psychologization of migration as mostly a social and political phenomenon, it is also important to address another issue regarding this study by focusing on migration from a psychological perspective. It is understood that migration is a complex phenomenon led by mostly social and economic reasons. On the other hand, the focus of the current study is to look at migration from a psychological perspective, as there is already sufficient research highlighting the importance of political and social reasons for migration.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has addressed psychological factors such as emigration self-efficacy, evaluation of the migration experience and frequency of the migration experience as important factors related to emigration intentions among university students in Slovakia. It has been found that students who want to leave their home country report a higher level of emigration self-efficacy, a more positive migration experience and more frequent migration experience. It has also been found that resilience positively affects the emigration intentions of university students directly as well as indirectly through emigration self-efficacy. Indeed, this was found to be a significant mediator of this relationship. Although studies have

mostly highlighted the economic reasons for migration, they cannot provide the full answer to why some individuals in similar economic conditions choose to stay and some choose to leave their home country. Therefore, it is believed that exploring migration from an eclectic perspective may be beneficial for a better understanding of migration behaviour among the younger generation of students in Slovakia and outside Slovakia as well.

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Resilience, Migration Experience and Emigration Self-Efficacy as Factors Related to Emigration Intentions among University Students in Slovakia

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