

Chapter #9

GENDER, SOCIOECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF EMIGRATION INTENTIONS AMONG SLOVAK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to explore the associations between gender, socioeconomic factors, psychological factors and emigration intentions among Slovak university students as well as testing for the moderating effects of gender on the relationships between psychological factors and emigration intentions. The data were collected online from 375 students (75.5% females; M=22.9; SD=3.0). Students were asked to report their gender, their perception of Slovakia's economic future, perception of their financial situation, home/family satisfaction, desire to change their living environment and the importance of religion in their life. Multiple binary logistic regression models were used for data analyses. A lower level of home/family satisfaction and a higher level of desire to change their living environment were more likely to be reported by undecided students and students with emigration intentions (leavers) compared to students without emigration intentions (stayers). A lower level of the importance of religion was more likely to be reported only by students with emigration intentions (leavers) compared to students without emigration intentions (stayers). A moderating effect of gender on the relationships between the importance of religion and emigration intentions among Slovak university students was found. The results contribute to a better understanding of the psychological and socioeconomic predictors of emigration intentions.

Keywords: emigration intentions, desire to change, home/family satisfaction, religion, university students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main research aim of this study was to identify the socioeconomic and psychological factors which are associated with the emigration intentions of university students. The main contribution of this study is the identification of factors which operate in the pre-departure stage of the emigration process among university students; a group with an important intellectual and psychosocial capability.

Firstly, the intentions to emigrate have generally been shown to be good predictors of future emigration (Van Dalen & Henkens, 2008). Gödri and Feleky (2014) argue that despite the inability to predict migration behaviour completely, studies of migration intentions and migration potential can provide valuable information about the motivations and characteristics of potential migrants as well as worthwhile data about their situation prior to migration. Other studies have claimed so as well (e.g. Kley, 2009).

Social, cultural, economic and political factors alone are not sufficient to fully account for emigration intentions and migrating behaviour (Seibokaite, Endriulaitiene, & Marksaityte, 2009). Groenewold, Bruijn and Bilsborrow (2006) have noted that these approaches rarely take into account decision-making but refer to behaviour that reveals individual preferences (gains and losses). However, they do not study the internal processes lying behind this behaviour and pay little attention to the psychological dimensions of migration. On the contrary, for example, the theory of migrant personality focuses on an individual's reactions to push and pull factors which are assumed to be the indicators of underlying migrant personality (Frieze, Hansen, & Boneva, 2006).

The Migration change model consists of four stages of the migration process: precontemplation (the individual has not given any serious consideration to moving abroad; this period often involves developing professional qualifications and skills), contemplation (an active examination of the possibilities of moving out of the country of origin), action (making a decision), acculturation (psychological adjustment and sociocultural adaptation) (Tabor & Milfont, 2011). Intrapersonal factors and social network factors were found to be an important part of understanding the precontemplation stage of the Migration Change Model of voluntary migration (Tabor & Milfont, 2011). The rootedness, i.e. the attachment to home or to a certain region can be an important predictor of emigration behaviour, in terms of staying at home or leaving home (McAndrew, 1998), i. e. it may cause a general unwillingness to move (migrate) irrespective of the circumstances.

One of the important research questions is why some people decide to stay while others leave albeit in the same adverse political or economic conditions (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). Various factors which could differentiate between those students with and those without emigration intentions have been considered such as work-orientation, achievement and power motivation, affiliation motivation, family centrality (Boneva & Frieze, 2001, Boneva, et al., 1998, Boneva, et al., 1997), openness to change, sensation seeking, neophilia, risk taking propensity, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, persistence (Tabor, Milfont, & Ward, 2015a, Li, Olson, & Frieze, 2013, Paulauskaitė, Šeibokaitė, & Endriulaitienė, 2010, Seibokaite, Endriulaitiene, & Marksaityte, 2009, Jokela, 2009, Camperio Ciani, Capiluppi, Veronese, & Sartori, 2007, Canache, Hayes, Mondak, & Wals, 2013) and attachment styles (Li, Frieze, & Cheong, 2014, Polek, Van Oudenhoven, & Berge, 2011). While religiosity has also been addressed, the existing research on the relationship between religiosity and emigration intentions has been scarce (Hoffman, Marsiglia, & Ayers, 2015). External and internal religiosity which has been studied in this context has found contradicting results and particularly so with respect to external religiosity. Interestingly, Myers (2000) has supported the importance of the location-specific religious capital effect on emigration intentions. On the other hand, further investigation of the effect of internal religiosity on emigration intentions may contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanism of this relationship. The importance of examining the impact of religion and religious identity on migratory intentions has also been proposed by Strielkowski, Bilan and Demkiv (2016).

A further important research question addressed in the context of emigration research is aimed at individual differences. This includes gender differences and especially the moderating effect of gender in the relationship between personality characteristics and emigration intentions. Previous research has shown that gender may be an important moderator in a number of relationships. In particular, it has been shown to moderate the relationship between emotional stability and intentions to migrate (Tabor, Milfont, & Ward, 2015a, Tabor, 2014), the relationship between sensation seeking and intention to migrate (Tabor, 2014) and the relationship between life satisfaction and migration preferences

(Mara & Landesmann, 2013). It has been found that personality traits have more predictive value than the emigration context for women. Therefore, the research of intrapersonal characteristics of both genders and their associations with emigration intentions are important for expanding the existing knowledge.

Finally, it is important to take into account the initial step in the decision process of migration which may be crucial for the final choice of whether or not to leave one's home country. Therefore, the investigation of this initial stage in the migration continuum (Tabor, Milfont, & Ward, 2015b) among highly educated young adults is an important source of information in socioeconomic and political decisions.

2. DESIGN

A cross-sectional design was used.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to explore the associations between gender, socioeconomic factors, psychological factors and emigration intentions among Slovak university students. Furthermore, it was to test the moderating effects of gender in the relationships between psychological factors and emigration intentions.

4. METHODS

4.1. Participants and recruitment

All universities in Slovakia were invited to join the research project. A link to the survey website was provided to each participating institution. 51.4% of the universities, 18 universities from the total of 35, were interested in collaborating with the research group and advertised the letter invitation and the survey website link on their official web sites and/or through the Academic Information Systems, and/or through official Facebook sites of the universities. A total of 436 Slovak students accepted the invitation on a voluntary basis. The questionnaires were self-completed by 375 of them (a response rate of 86%), 75.5% females; mean age=22.9; SD=3.0.

4.2. Measures

Students were asked regarding gender, their perception of Slovakia's economic future (EF), perception of their financial situation (FS), their rootedness (home/family satisfaction (HFS), desire to change their living environment (D), the importance of religion in their life (IR) as well as emigration intentions (EI).

Slovakia's economic future: Students were asked to evaluate the following statement on a 4-point scale from very optimistic to very pessimistic: „What do you think about the development of Slovakia's economy over the next 10 years in context of your professional career and perspective of starting your own family?“

Perception of financial situation: Students were asked to evaluate the following statement on a 7-point scale from much better to much worse: “How would you rate your financial situation in comparison to other university students?“

The Rootedness scale: Rootedness was measured by the Rootedness Scale which is a short 10-item measure consisting of two subscales (McAndrew, 1998). The first subscale is called the Desire for Change and consists of 6 items addressing different aspects

contributing to the desire to change one’s living environment (e.g. not seeing the future for oneself where one lives now, not being happy with staying in the same place for the rest of one’s life, having strong social ties, preference of a specific natural environment). The second subscale is called the Home/Family Satisfaction and consists of 4 items capturing how much one is attached to his/her place as a home (e.g. childhood memories, long-lasting friendships or tight family ties). Both subscales were answered on a 5-point scale ranging from completely disagree to completely agree.

The importance of religion (faith) in one’s life: Students were asked to evaluate the following statement on a 7-point scale from fully disagree to fully agree: How much do you agree with the following statement: “My faith is important for my life?”

Emigration intentions: Students were asked to evaluate the statement „Do you plan to leave Slovakia after you finish university? Please select one from the possible answers: (1) No, I am not planning to leave, (2) I do not know, I have not thought about it, (3) I do not know, I have not decided yet, (4) I am planning to go abroad for six months, (5) I am planning to go abroad for six to twelve months, (6) I am planning to leave for more than a year, (7) I am planning to leave for more than five years, (8) I am planning to leave permanently“.

4.3 Statistical analyses

Multiple binary logistic regression models were used for the data analyses. Emigration intentions were included in the models as dependent variables. The question regarding emigration intentions (Table 1) was used to create the dependent variable with three categories – those who were not planning to leave if answered (1), i.e. stayers (n=88, 23.5%), those who were considering the possibility of leaving Slovakia after they finish university, but they have not decided yet if answered (3), i.e. undecided (n=139, 37.1%) and those who were planning to leave if answered from 6 to 8, i.e. leavers (n=87, 23.2%). These categories were used in the two separate binary logistic regressions to contrast the differences between the categories – Stayers vs Undecided and Stayers vs Leavers.

Table 1.
Descriptive characteristics of the explored variables.

		Females	Males	total
Emigration intentions: “Do you plan to leave Slovakia after you finish university?” Please select one from the possible answers:				
1	Stayers No, I am not planning to leave	72	16	88
		81.80%	18.20%	100.00%
2	I do not know, I have not thought about it	14	4	18
		77.80%	22.20%	100.00%
3	Undecided I do not know, I have not decided yet	106	33	139
		76.30%	23.70%	100.00%

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4	I am planning to go abroad for six months	19 82.60%	4 17.40%	23 100.00%
5	I am planning to go abroad for six to twelve months	15 75.00%	5 25.00%	20 100.00%
6	I am planning to leave for more than a year	26 65.00%	14 35.00%	40 100.00%
7	Leavers I am planning to leave for more than five years	14 60.90%	9 39.10%	23 100.00%
8	I am planning to leave permanently	17 70.80%	7 29.20%	24 100.00%
Total		283 75.50%	92 24.50%	375 100.00%

Independent variables:	FS	EF	IR	HFS	D
Stayers	Mean (SD) 3.87 (1.15)	2.64 (0.66)	3.68 (1.36)	16.52 (2.30)	17.33 (3.65)
Undecided	Mean (SD) 3.75 (1.15)	2.74 (0.64)	3.37 (1.33)	15.48 (2.89)	19.35 (3.55)
Leavers	Mean (SD) 4.03 (1.16)	3.00 (0.75)	2.59 (1.48)	14.75 (2.58)	22.34 (3.47)
Total	Mean (SD) 3.86 (1.15)	2.78 (0.69)	3.24 (1.44)	15.57 (2.72)	19.61 (4.02)

FS=Financial situation, EF=Economic future, IR=Importance of religion, HFS=Home/family satisfaction, D=Desire to change one's living environment

The first model adjusted for gender and socioeconomic factors (Slovakia's economic future, Perception of financial situation), the second model adjusted for psychological variables (importance of religion, home/family satisfaction, desire to change one's living environment), and the third and the final model adjusted for the interaction of gender and psychological independent variables (importance of religion, home/family satisfaction, desire to change one's living environment).

5. RESULTS

37.1% of students (76.3% women) reported that they had considered the possibility of leaving Slovakia after finishing university but had not decided yet. The 1st model adjusted for gender and socioeconomic factors (Slovakia's economic future, Perception of financial situation) and explained only 2.3% of the variance in emigration intentions (Stayers vs Undecided). It showed that gender and socioeconomic factors did not make a statistically significant contribution to the model (Table 1). The 2nd model for psychological variables

(importance of religion, home/family satisfaction, desire to change one's living environment) explained 16% of the variance in emigration intentions among Stayers vs Undecided; home/family satisfaction, desire to change one's living environment made statistically significant contributions to the model (Table 2). A lower level of home/family satisfaction and a higher level of the desire to change one's living environment were more likely to be reported by undecided students compared to students without emigration intentions (Stayers). (Table 2). A moderating effect of gender in the relationship between psychological factors and emigration intentions (Stayers vs Undecided) was not found.

Table 2.
Factors of emigration intentions among Slovak university students (Stayers vs Undecided).

	Model 1		Model 2			
	OR	95% C.I. for EXP(B)		OR	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
Gender ¹	1.420	0.724	2.787	1.450	0.709	2.966
Economic future	1.404	0.903	2.184	1.161	0.725	1.860
Financial situation	0.861	0.672	1.104	0.837	0.642	1.091
IR				0.840	0.676	1.044
HFS				0.874*	0.781	0.979
D				1.168***	1.076	1.267
R ²	0.023			0.161		

¹women as reference category

IR=importance of religion, HFS= home/family satisfaction, D=desire to change one's living environment, *p<0.05, ***p<0.001

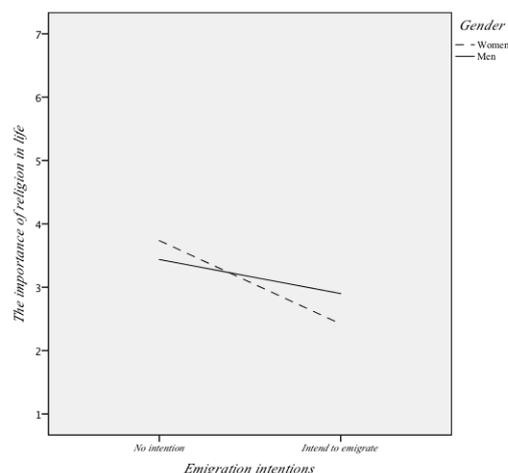
Nearly a quarter (23.2%) of surveyed Slovak university students reported having emigration intentions (44.2% women). The 1st model adjusted for gender and socioeconomic factors (Slovakia's economic future, Perception of financial situation) and explained only 12.1% of the variance in emigration intentions (Stayers vs Leavers). It showed that gender and Slovakia's economic future made a statistically significant contribution to the model. This result indicated that men were more likely to report emigration intentions than women and a higher level of negative evaluation of Slovakia's economic future was associated with emigration intentions (Table 3). The 2nd model for psychological variables (importance of religion, home/family satisfaction, desire to change one's living environment) explained 61% of the variance in emigration intentions; gender, importance of religion, home/family satisfaction, and desire to change one's living environment made statistically significant contributions to the model. A lower level of the importance of religion, as well as home/family satisfaction, and a higher level of desire to change one's living environment were more likely reported by students with emigration intentions (Leavers) compared to students without emigration intentions (Stayers) (Table 3). The final 3rd model adjusted for the interaction of gender and psychological independent variables and explained 63% of the variance in emigration intentions; importance of religion, home/family satisfaction, desire to change one's living environment and only one interaction of gender and the importance of religion made a statistically significant contribution to the model (Table 3, Figure 1). Females with emigration intentions (Leavers) reported lower levels of the importance of religion although females without emigration intentions (Stayers) reported higher levels of importance of religion when compared to males.

Table 3.
Factors of emigration intentions among Slovak university students (Stayers vs Leavers).

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	OR	95% C.I. for EXP(B)		OR	95% C.I. for EXP(B)		OR	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
Gender ¹	2.318*	1.113	4.829	4.811**	1.690	13.694	0.338	0.033	3.502
Economic future	2.048**	1.302	3.22	1.491	0.815	2.726	1.629	0.867	3.061
Financial situation	1.055	0.795	1.401	0.882	0.595	1.308	0.885	0.598	1.311
IR				0.592**	0.436	0.803	0.481***	0.332	0.697
HFS				0.779*	0.639	0.950	0.759**	0.617	0.993
D				1.488***	1.302	1.699	1.523***	1.318	1.759
² Gender x IR							2.244*	1.047	4.410
R ²	0.12			0.61			0.63		

¹ women as reference category, ² only significant interaction was included
IR=importance of religion, HFS= home/family satisfaction, D=desire to change one's living environment, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Figure 1.
Interaction of gender and the importance of religion in life on emigration intention (Stayers vs Leavers).



6. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Further research should focus on the psychological factors which may play a role in triggering emigration intentions and emigration itself. Moreover, further research is necessary in order to understand the process of how emigration intentions are formed on the level of an individual's decision making process. Studies which employ a longitudinal perspective with the implementation of The Migration Change model (Tabor, Milfont,

& Ward, 2015b) are especially needed for understanding the psychosocial mechanisms operating on the continuum of the overall emigration process. Qualitative analyses of emigration intentions in future psychological research could also bring about a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

7. CONCLUSION/ DISCUSSION

Why do some students decide to leave their home country after they finish university? Why do some students plan to emigrate while so many other young adults plan to stay? This study has provided further validation for the role of intraindividual and social network factors in relation to emigration. It has been found that a lower level of the importance of religion, a lower level of home/family satisfaction and a higher level of desire to change one's living environment were associated with emigration intentions among Slovak university students. The moderating effects of gender in the relationships between the importance of religion and emigration intentions among Slovak university students has also been found.

These results are consistent with the findings of previous studies which have confirmed the associations between emigration intentions and family centrality, openness to change, sensation seeking, neophilia and risk-taking propensity (Urbonas, Venclovaitė, Urbonienė, & Kubilienė 2017, Tabor, Milfont, & Ward, 2015a, Gouda, et al., 2015, Li, Olson, & Frieze, 2013, Paulauskaitė, Šeibokaitė, & Endriulaitienė, 2010). The findings of this study further support the importance examining intrapersonal and familial factors of the pre-departure period as important for understanding the context of the migration experience as also reported by Tabor, Milfont, and Ward (2015b).

The second important topic addressed in this study, to some extent, has been religiosity. It is important to say that there has only been very limited research which has focused on the relationship between religiosity and emigration intentions (Hoffman, Marsiglia, & Ayers, 2015). Previous research, which has mainly addressed extrinsic religiosity in relation to migration, has led to contradictory findings. The investigation of intrinsic religiosity on emigration intentions could contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanism of this relationship (Hoffm, Marsiglia, & Ayers., 2015). This study did not distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity although the personal value of religiosity was found to be among the personality factors associated with intentions to emigrate. This association among Slovak university students was moderated by gender. It is also important to address the limitations of this study. Most importantly, the investigation was conducted with a relatively small sample relying on self-reported data collected online.

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ADDITIONAL READING

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KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Emigration intention: an act of volition which constructs the future implementation of social behavior in other social and cultural reality.

Rootedness: an affective interpretation of place attachment.

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