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Life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values and self-efficacy related to emigration intentions for a long-term stay abroad of university students in five European countries

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Abstract
Life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values and self-efficacy related to emigration intentions for a long-term stay abroad of university students in five European countries.
Aim: To explore the associations between emigration intentions of university students form five European countries in relation to several intrapersonal and emigration self-efficacy. The second aim is to explore the mediating role of self-efficacy in relation to internalized cultural values and emigration intentions.
Sample and procedure: The sample consisted of 1223 students (females N=812, 66.4%, males N=411, 33.6%. M=21.95, SD=3.62) from five European countries. The data collection was completed via an online questionnaire (University of Antwerp, Belgium, Sofia University, Bulgaria, University of Miskolc, Hungary, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Lithuania, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic). The local ethics committee in every country approved the study
Statistical analysis: Statistical analysis was performed in SPSS 21. Differences in intrapersonal were analysed by ANOVA with a Scheffe Post hoc test. Binary logistic regression with the method enter controlling for country and age was used as a method of analysis. Mediational analyses were explored by using Hayes PROCESS tool.
Findings: The regression model explained between 29-38 percent of the variance. Those students with higher self–efficacy also with higher horizontal individualism were more likely to have emigration intentions compared to those with lower self-efficacy and HI, and those with lower satisfaction and vertical collectivism were more likely to have long-term

emigration intentions compared to those with higher satisfaction and VC. Self-efficacy was found to mediate the relationship between horizontal dimensions of internalized cultural values and emigration intentions.

Keywords: emigration intentions, university students, internalized cultural values, life satisfaction, self-efficacy

Migration is a complex phenomenon which has been used as an umbrella term for many different phenomena. It comprises both voluntary as well as forced migration of people of different age, education and background. Migration which deserves a specific interest of experts with various professional backgrounds (sociologists, politicians, economists, psychologists) is the migration of the young and highly educated generation. This is a specific group which significantly contributes to the level of quality of life in any country. This study will narrow its focus on the migration intentions among the young and highly educated generation in Europe. The main focus will be centred on life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values and self-efficacy which have been linked to emigration intentions in previous empirical studies or theory (Fouarge, Özer, & Seegers, 2018; Ivlevs & Veliziotis, 2018; Knudsen, 2019; Lee & Young, 2018). However, their role in the given context has not proved consistent. As a result, the level of the individual contribution of these factors and mechanisms in which they are related to emigration intentions of young and educated people needs further exploration.

Intrapersonal factors and emigration intentions

One of the important perspectives on emigration understands it mainly as a reaction to pertaining unsatisfactory circumstances or a more general dissatisfaction with life in one´s country (Silventionen et al., 2008). A direct negative relationship has been found between emigration and life satisfaction as well as satisfaction within individual life domains (mental health or health related, social, ecological, economic, political or cultural) with the social domain representing social relationships being the most significant. For example, Clark and Lisowski (2017) found a negative association between the extent of social networks, family environment, strong ties with family members (children, partner, parents) and emigration intentions. While other authors suggest that satisfaction is directly linked with weaker emigration intentions. Ivlevs and Veliziotis (2018) based on a large survey gathering data from 35 European and Central Asian countries identified a U-shaped association between life satisfaction and emigration intentions. According to their findings, the least satisfied and the most satisfied are those who are likely to have emigration intentions regardless of the economic and political situation of their country. Their findings suggest that emigration based on dissatisfaction may not be linked to an increase in happiness.

Contrary, despite the fact that the country where one is moving is less developed individuals may, e.g. benefit from a higher social status due to their expertise. The World Happiness Report in relation to migration emphasizes the complexity of happiness and life satisfaction in relation to migration. This report concludes that it largely depends on happiness levels in the original country and goal country and its changes over time. Additional factors such as the general level of acceptance of emigrants in the goal countries in comparison with the original are also significant.

Another important concept relevant for studying emigration is the concept of individualism and collectivism which reflects cultural and social aspects. According to this concept the individualistically oriented countries put more emphasis on personality development, self-realization and personal freedom. On the other hand, collectivistically oriented countries value more common social values and communal or societal interests. However, the traditional division of the world on the East and the West has become more fluid due to the migration flows and merging of cultures (Yi, 2018). Individuals living in a country preferring individualistic or collectivistic values do not necessarily share these values on the individual level. Individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1984) as opposing dimensions have been due to their multidimensionality extended containing horizontal and vertical dimensions. For example, intrapersonal characteristics on the horizontal dimension represent cooperation on individual level and vertical line represents a preference of hierarchical structure and self-determination (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The horizontal and vertical levels of individualism and collectivism can be attributed with certain characteristics and motives. For example, horizontal individualism can be characterized by uniqueness and self-reliance while vertical individualism by a strong focus on achievement, power and status. Horizontal collectivism can be characterized by cooperativeness, helping other people and confidence while vertical collectivism can be characterized by dutifulness and a strong in-group obligation. In the context of emigration intentions, this concept is useful particularly in making the distinction between the intrapersonal line which may be important for decision-making process about leaving and cultural aspect which may be more relevant for the actual choice of the destination country. Recent studies (Arpaci, Baloghu, & Kesici, 2018; Knudsen, 2019), underline the relevance of this concept showing that positive associations exist between emigration intentions with the dimensions of individualism and negative with collectivism, but further research is needed.

Self-efficacy as a belief about one´s ability to have his/her life under control, coping with challenges in life and as a self-regulation mechanism determines the quality and quantity of effort manifested in behaviour. Self-efficacy is based on the socio-cognitive theory which defines it within the interaction between the behaviour of a person, environment and self as an internal factor. It comprises

volitional, motivational and behavioural components which are related to both the actual as well as future behaviour. People with high self-efficacy tend to approach new and difficult tasks as challenges. Self-efficacy can be conceptualized as situation specific or in terms of a more general potential of an individual (Bandura, 1986; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The significance of specific emigration self-efficacy has been shown in various phases of migration process (Hoppe & Fujishiro, 2015). The Kley´s three-phase model focusing on different motivational stages of migration showed that self-efficacy was most strongly related to the pre-actional phase where intentions are formed but also to the stages of gathering information about the target country and the actional phase when concrete steps are carried out. Similarly, Hao et al. (2016), Weerasinghe and Kumar, (2014) found predictive value of self-efficacy in relation to workplace abroad. They found that for those with a lower level of self-efficacy other variables were more significant such as financial benefits while in those with higher emigration self-efficacy the main predictors where their aspirations. Lee and Young (2018) provided further evidence that self-efficacy is one of the factors which significantly contributes to understanding of both migration intentions and migration plans. Furthermore, Van Dalen and Henkens (2012) pointed out that self-efficacy is important in relation to emigration intentions and a key factor in actual migration process. Self-efficacy has been particularly studied within the process of behaviour change where its relevance is well documented in the processes regarding stopping, terminating or persistence of specific behaviours. However, this has not been extensively explored in the area of intentions of moving abroad among university students.

Overall, life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values and self-efficacy are the key variables which will be explored in relation to emigration intentions due to their unclear relationship. Furthermore, the mediation function of self-efficacy will be addressed.

Aim of the study

The main aim of the present study was to explore the associations between emigration intentions of university students from five European countries and address several factors (life satisfaction, dimensions of internalized cultural values of vertical collectivism, horizontal collectivism, vertical individualism, horizontal individualism and emigration self–efficacy). A further aim was to explore the universality of the mediator self – efficacy in the relationship between dimensions of internalized cultural values and emigration intentions.

Sample and settings

Our sample consisted of 1223 students (females N=812, 66.4%, males N=411, 33.6%, Mean age=21.95, SD=3.62) from five European counties. 214 students were

from Belgium (M=21.83, SD=3,31), 412 students from Bulgaria (M=21.82, SD=3.83), 121 students from Hungary (M=24.34, SD=5.51), 162 students from Lithuania (M=20.0, SD=2.10), 314 students were from Slovakia (M=22.3, SD=2.49). The data collection was completed via an online questionnaire in cooperation with the partners (University of Antwerp, Belgium, Sofia University, Bulgaria, University of Miskolc, Hungary, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Lithuania, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovak Republic). An electronic link of the questionnaire was advertised on official websites of participating universities and institutions of individual partners and promoted in various ways among students within each university or institution. The questionnaire was available for completion during the second semester 2016/2017. The local ethics committee in every country approved the study.

Methods

Emigration intentions were explored by the question: "Are you planning to leave your country after completing university?" with possible answers: (1) No, I am not planning to leave; (2) I don´t know, I have not thought about it; (3) I don´t know, I have not decided; (4) Yes, I am planning to leave for a period up to 6 months; (5) Yes, I am planning to leave for a period from 6 to 12 months; (6) Yes, I am planning to leave for a period longer than a year; (7) Yes, I am planning to leave for a period longer than 5 years; (8) Yes, I am planning to leave permanently. For the purposes of binary logistic regression, the answers were dichotomized into two categories: 0 - not planning to leave (answer 1), 1- planning to leave for a year or longer (answers 6, 7, 8).

Life satisfaction was measured by the SWLS - Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). In this measure, respondents evaluate five items on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree. Internal consistency in the sample was 0.855.

The shortened version of the C-I scale (Individualism/Collectivism Scale) (Triandis, Gelfand, 1998, Singelis et al., 1995) was used and consisted of horizontal (H) and vertical (V) individualism (I) and collectivism (C) and each subscale consisted of 4 items. Respondents answered all items on a 9-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 9 (always). Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in AMOS to verify the factor structure of the measurement for Slovak students (Bacikova-Sleskova, 2018). This version with three items in each subscale was used for every country. Reliability was calculated for all subscales; for horizontal individualism reliability $\alpha = 0.533$; for vertical individualism $\alpha = 0.685$; for horizontal collectivism $\alpha = 0.569$; for vertical collectivism $\alpha = 0.728$.

Self-efficacy was measured by items: „I believe that I can manage the process of leaving", „I believe that I can manage living abroad", „If I wanted, I could easily leave abroad ". Respondents answered these items on a 5-point scale from 1-

completely disagree to 5-completely agree. For the purposes of this study these items were combined into a single score. Cronbach´s α was 0.773.

Statistical analyses

Statistical analyses were performed in SPSS 21. The exploration of differences in intrapersonal variables in the five countries was carried out by ANOVA followed by the Scheffe Post hoc test. Binary logistic regression with the enter method controlling for country and gender was used. Mediation analysis was performed according to the recommendations of Baron, Kenny (1986). The significance of mediation effect was analyzed by bootstrapping (1000 resamples) 95% BC CI. Mediational analyses were explored using the Hayes Process tool in SPSS.

Results
Descriptive analyses

Descriptive statistics regarding emigration intentions of university students from five countries with a detailed distribution of responses to the emigration question are shown in Table 1. This overview shows that in the total sample 317 students (25.9%) was not planning to emigrate and 451 (36.9%) students were not decided. For the purposes of further analysis (binary logistic regression) the answers were dichotomized into two groups consisting of 563 students: 0- not planning to leave (answer 1), 1- planning to leave for longer than a year, longer than five years or permanently (i.e. answers 6, 7, 8). A total of 317 (69.7% women, 30.3% men) students were in the group 0 and the second group consisted of 246 students (63.8% women, 36.2% men). There were no statistically significant differences between men and women. Emigration intentions to leave for the period of one year or longer (answers 6,7,8) were reported by 20.1% of all 1223 students from five countries. The highest percentage was reported by the students from Hungary (28.9%), followed by Lithuanian students (25.3%), Slovakia (20.45%), Bulgaria (19.2%), the lowest by students from Belgium (12.6%). Statistically significant differences between countries for independent variables are shown in Table 2. In only one factor, life satisfaction STF, we did not find statistically significant differences between countries.

Horizontal individualism was the highest among Hungarian students and lowest among Belgian students. Regarding the vertical individualism Bulgarian students showed the highest score and lowest was found for Belgian students. This particular factor showed the strongest differences between countries (power and status seeking). Horizontal collectivism was highest among Lithuanian students and lowest among Bulgarian students and vertical collectivism was highest among Lithuanian students and lowest among Belgian students. The highest score of emigration self-efficacy was reported by Lithuanian students the lowest by Belgian students.

Emigration intentions:	
Are you planning to leave your country after you finish your university study?	
Total sample	1223(100.0%)
1. 0 - Not planning to emigrate	317 (25.9%)
2. I don´t know, I have not thought about it	84 (6.9%)
3. I don´t know, I have not decided	451 (36.9%)
4. Yes, I am planning to leave for a period up to 6 months	49(4.0%)
5. Yes, I am planning to leave for a period from 6 to 12 months	76(6.2%)
6. Yes, I am planning to leave for a period longer than a year	112(9.2%)
7. Yes, I am planning to leave for a period longer than 5 years	36(2.9%)
8. Yes, I am planning to leave permanently	98 (8.4%)

Tab. 1: Descriptive characteristics of emigration intentions

Dichotomized emigration intentions:		
	0 not planning to leave	1 planning to leave for the period of one year or longer
Total sample	317 (25.9%)	246 (43.7 %)
Belgium	51 (23.8%)	27 (12.6%)
Bulgaria	141(34.2%)	79 (19.2%)
Hungary	35 (28.9%)	35 (28.9%)
Lithuania	15 (9.3%)	41 (25.3%)
Slovakia	75 (23.9%)	64 (20.4%)

Tab. 2: Descriptive characteristics and ANOVA of the explored variables for the five countries

	country	N	Mean	SD	F	Post hoc test
STF	BE	76	16.61	4.50	0.61	
	BG	220	15.91	5.20		
	HU	70	15.72	4.63		
	LT	56	16.41	4.69		
	SK	139	16.44	4.34		
HI	BE	78	19.53	3.50	3.84**	BE –HU*
	BG	220	20.51	5.42		HU -LI*
	HU	70	22.17	3.63		
	LT	56	19.54	4.45		
	SK	139	20.55	4.11		

VI	BE	78	13.80	5.33	38.23***	SK –BE*
	BG	220	20.80	5.31		SK–BU***
	HU	70	17.07	5.24		BE–BU***
	LT	56	16.48	3.89		BE –HU**
	SK	139	16.11	4.51		BE –LI*
						BU–U***
						BU -LI***
HC	BE	78	18.85	3.69	21.12***	SK –BE*
	BG	220	17.77	5.11		SK–BU***
	HU	70	20.70	4.80		BE –LI***
	LT	56	22.79	3.47		BU–U***
	SK	139	20.81	3.60		BU -LI***
VC	BE	78	14.73	5.32	17.78***	SK –BE***
	BG	220	19.79	5.69		BE–BU***
	HU	70	18.34	5.69		BE –HU**
	LT	56	21.84	4.76		BE –LI ***
	SK	139	19.62	5.12		HU -LI*
SEF	BE	78	6.64	2.41	8.62***	SK –BE**
	BG	220	7.15	2.23		SK -BU*
	HU	70	7.23	2.21		BE -LI***
	LT	56	8.41	1.82		BU –LI*
	SK	139	8.01	2.22		

Regression analyses

To study the hypothesis about the associations between long-term emigration intentions of university students from five European countries and several intrapersonal factors, binary logistic regression (Table 3) with the enter method for the emigration intentions with the independent variables: life satisfaction (SWL), horizontal individualism (HI), horizontal collectivism (HC), vertical individualism (VI), vertical collectivism (VC) dimensions and emigration self – efficacy (SEF) controlling for the countries and gender has been conducted (Table 3). The regression model explained between 29-38 percent of the variance. Those students with higher self–efficacy (OR 1.44; 95% CI 1.33-1.56) also with higher HI (OR 1.05; 95% CI 1.00-1.11) were more likely to have emigration intentions compared to those with lower self-efficacy and HI, and those with lower satisfaction (OR 0.85; 95% CI 0.80-0.89) and vertical collectivism VC (OR 0.95; 95% CI 0.91-0.998) were more likely to have long-term emigration intentions compared to those with higher satisfaction and vertical collectivism.

				95% C.I. for EXP(B	
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
SWL	.169	.000	.845	.804	.887
HI	.052	.049	1.054	1.000	1.110
VI	.005	.802	.995	.954	1.037
HC	.041	.097	1.042	.993	1.095
VC	.048	.026	.953	.914	.994
SEF	.362	.000	1.436	1.324	1.557

Tab. 3: Binary logistic regression on emigration intentions
Note: R2 = 0.285 (Cox & Schnell), R2 = 0.383 (Nagelkerke), Chi-square = 188,554 (df=8, p<0.001), analysis was controlled for country and gender

Mediational analyses

Based on the existing contradictory findings regarding the relationship between emigration intentions and internalized cultural values a mediational role of self-efficacy has been hypothesized in this relationship. The results of this mediation analysis with a dichotomized emigration intentions variable and controlling for gender and country is presented in Figure 1.
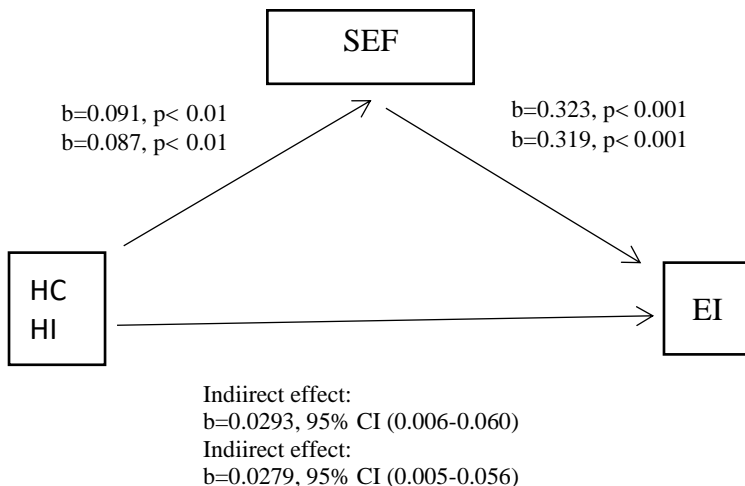

Fig. 1: Self–efficacy (SEF) as a moderator between internalized cultural values (HC, HI) and emigration intentions (EI) controlling for gender and country

The results of the mediation analyses confirm the hypothesis that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between HC and long-term emigration intentions and

also between HI and long-term emigration intentions. As can be seen in Figure 1, HC and also HI have positive associations with emigration self-efficacy and self – efficacy has also significant positive associations with emigration. HC and HI have nonsignificant direct effect on emigration intentions. The mediating role of emigration self-efficacy in the relationship between HC and also HI and emigration intentions was found to be significant. Mediation analyzes were conducted while controlling for gender and country.

Discussion

The first aim of the present study was to explore the associations between long-term emigration intentions of university students from five European countries and several factors (life satisfaction, vertical collectivism, horizontal collectivism, vertical individualism, horizontal individualism, emigration self-efficacy).

Descriptive data for emigration intentions for university students of five countries provided and overview of emigration intentions of students form the five selected countries. An intention to leave for a period longer than a year, five years or permanently was reported by 20.1% of students in the five studied countries. This corresponds with the European trend of students leaving abroad after finishing their university study (van Mol & de Valk, 2016; Wilken & Dalbert, 2017; Williams et al., 2017). The highest percentage was reported by students from Hungary (28.9%), Lithuania (25.3%), the lowest by student from Belgium (12.6%). Interestingly, this reflects the order of the countries with respect to reported happiness of young people (Glatzer, 2019).

Logistic regression controlled for country and gender confirmed that students with higher self–efficacy and horizontal individualism were more likely to have emigration intentions compared to those with lower self-efficacy and horizontal individualism and those with lower satisfaction and vertical collectivism were more likely to have long-term emigration intentions compared to those with higher satisfaction and vertical collectivism. The regression model explained 28.5% -38.3% of variance.

The results regarding the importance of life satisfaction as a factor which is negatively related to the intention to migrate abroad was confirmed. These results are in line with the extensive research conducted by Diener et al. (2017) and Steel, Dunlavy, Harding et al. (2017) with a special attention to affluence history of migration, education and gender of emigrants. The authors have found support for the finding that lower migration intentions, aspirations, desires and emigration plans were associated with high level of life satisfaction. This was present regardless of the level of affluence of countries, diversity of the continents, states and regions and cultural differences between countries. Similar findings were

obtained in Latin America by Graham and Markowitz (2011), Chindarkar (2014) and in central and Eastern Europe by Otrachshenko and Popova (2014).

A further aim was to address the cultural aspects and explore associations between horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism and emigration intentions of university students. Vertical collectivism was associated with long-term emigration intentions negatively and horizontal individualism was associated with long-term emigration intentions positively. Vertical collectivism is associated with a strong group identity. Individuals high in vertical collectivism are often willing to give up their own personal goals in the interest of the goals of a group which may be often reflected in strong ties with the family background. This was shown in the association between home satisfaction which was negatively associated with emigration intentions. Furthermore, the findings based on the Push-Pull model inspired by migration theory have shown that the pull factors of independence, autonomy, taking advantage of opportunities, government support, attitudes and self-reliance pose a significant influence of the future and career plans of young people (Ojiaku, Nkamnebe, & Nwaizugbo, 2018). Empirical support for the importance of the individualistic orientation has been provided by a number of studies which clearly shows positive associations of migration intentions with individualism and negative associations with collectivism (Arpaci, Baloghu, & Kesici, 2018; Krassner et al., 2017; Bačíková, 2017).

This research study provides further support for the findings of other authors regarding the dominant role of self-efficacy in the migration process (Hao et al. 2016; Van Dalen & Henkens, 2012). In particular, it is related to intentions directly as has been reported previously (Weerasinghe & Kumar, 2014) and this has been further supported by the finding that migrants show higher levels of self-efficacy in comparison with normal population.

Another aim of this study was to analyze the mediating role or self-efficacy in the relationship between dimensions of internalized cultural values and emigration intentions. Results of the mediation analyses confirmed the significance of emigration self-efficacy in the role of a mediator in this relationship but only for horizontal dimensions. Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between HC and long-term emigration intentions and also between HI and long-term emigration. On a horizontal dimension, individuals tend to emphasize equality, cooperation (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) no matter whether they incline to individualistic or collectivistic values. On the other hand, self-sufficiency, self-confidence and independence are also factors as a part of the horizontal dimensions that help move towards emigration intentions and self-efficiency as a mediator supports them. This probably is important factor in the decision process about emigration intentions. Mediation role of self-efficacy was confirmed

between employee´s psychological empowerment and proactive behaviors Huang et al. (2017), between intrapersonal factors and self-control (Zhang et al., 2019). Finally, self-efficacy is considered to be one of the main resources for coping with stress with respect to various types of behavior (Golestan, Hamsan, & Abdullah, 2015). Specifically, regarding migration self-efficacy, it has been found to be an important source of coping with stress resulting from moving to a different country. The importance of emigration self-efficacy for emigration intentions has been reported by Gajdošová and Orosová (2019), Lee and Young (2018).

Mediation analysis in this study were carried out with controlling for gender, country so self-efficacy has proved be a universal factor (direct and also non direct) in our study.

An important limitation of this study is the sample. Particularly, university students are a specific group of young people and the findings cannot be generalized on the whole population. Participation in the research might have been influenced by actually having emigration intentions and so online data collection might have been more attractive for this part of the population posing thus selection bias. Variables used in the analysis measured intentions to leave permanently and not the actual behavior and even though intentions might have a considerable predictive value regarding actual migration this remains a considerable shortcoming (Tjaden, Auer, & Laczko, 2019). The model used in this study focused exclusively on intrapersonal variables and other variables such as economic factors could have increased the predictive value of the model. This study used a cross-sectional design and further research could apply a longitudinal design and focus more on the process of changes in the intentions of an individual during the studies and analyzed the factors which influence this process.

Conclusions

The selected intrapersonal factors life satisfaction, internalized cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism, emigration self-efficacy, and internal mechanisms addressed via mediation role offer further explanations of emigration intentions of emigration of university students. The importance of self-efficacy and horizontal individualism has been shown in regard to emigration intentions. Life satisfaction and vertical collectivism are related to emigration intentions negatively. A key role of self-efficacy has been shown in relation to long-term emigration. The understanding of the direct role of self-efficacy and its mediating role between horizontal dimensions of internalized cultural values and emigration intentions shed light on its previously reported ambivalent role in relation to long-term emigration intentions. This study also contributes to the literature by its international design incorporating countries from the former communist block (Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Lithuania) and one of country with

a higher satisfaction of citizens (Belgium) from the point of view emigration of highly educated young population. This study has confirmed the complexity of migration and showed the relevance of factors such as life satisfaction, cultural values, self-efficacy and has contributed to the knowledge of their mechanisms.

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