

Optimistic Expectations and Satisfaction with Life as Antecedents of Emigration Attitudes among Bulgarian Millennials and Zoomers

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Abstract : The purpose of this paper is to examine the predictive power of optimistic expectations and satisfaction with life in the country of origin and residence - Bulgaria, over the attitudes towards emigration among young Bulgarians with regard to their generational belonging and differences (i.e. Generation Y or Millennials, born between 1981-1995/6, and Generation Z or Zoomers, born between 1996/7-2012). Although the correlation between satisfaction with life and migration (attitudes) has been studied in some countries, it has neither been examined to date in Bulgaria - a sending rather than receiving Eastern European country, nor scrutinized in the light of generational differences. Within a national survey (N=1200), representative of young Bulgarians aged 18-35 years - Zoomers aged 18-25 years (N=444) and Millennials aged 26-35 years (N=756), carried out in September-October 2021, optimistic expectations and satisfaction with life in Bulgaria were respectively measured by a 5-item and 4-item scales. The scales were designed to measure optimistic expectations and satisfaction with life in the country, as both general constructs and in terms of specific areas of life (education, profession, career, and income). The findings suggest that the higher satisfaction with life in Bulgaria is associated with more optimistic expectations about one's further professional, financial, and career growth in the country and reasonably, with more negative attitudes towards emigration of young Bulgarians. Although no significant differences were found between Millennials and Zoomers in their optimistic expectations and satisfaction with life in Bulgaria, Millennials are still significantly less likely to emigrate than Zoomers. Positively, the population of young Bulgarians demonstrates higher than average satisfaction with life and optimism for their prospects in the country combined with neutral to negative overall attitudes towards emigration. These findings have some important interdisciplinary psychological and demographic theoretical, applied, and policy implications. The survey is carried out under Project КП-06-H35/4 "Psychological determinants of young people's attitudes to emigration and life planning in the context of demographic challenges in Bulgaria," funded by the NSF - MES, Bulgaria.

Keywords : optimistic expectations, life satisfaction, emigration attitudes, young bulgerians

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