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Subjective well-being of sojourners and its determinants: evidence from Mexico

Abstract

This study aims to examine the predictors of the psychological adjustment of sojourners in Mexico, focusing on acculturation, individualistic and collectivistic values, contact and social interactions, language proficiency, and sociodemographic characteristics. The adjustment was operationalised as subjective well-being, measured as satisfaction and ill-being. The study focuses on international students, expats and retirees ($N = 363$, 66.7% women) having lived in Mexico between six months and 10 years ($M = 3.38$; $SD = 2.67$). The results of linear regression analyses show that age is the best predictor of the level of adjustment. The study sheds light on the predictors of sojourners' well-being in the specific and often overlooked context of migration to a collectivist country, i.e. Mexico.

Keywords: adjustment, well-being, acculturation, sojourners, Mexico

Introduction

With around 11 million citizens living abroad in 2020, Mexico is undoubtedly an emigration country (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021), while the over 1 million immigrants made up only 0.8% of the total population of the country (United Nations, 2019). Interestingly, at the same time, Mexico was considered a tempting destination for sojourners, for example being ranked as the first most attractive destination for expats (InterNations, 2022). Over the past decades, there has been an increase in the number of foreigners (Organisation of America States, 2017), with the largest minority of people coming from South America, Central America and the Caribbean, followed by North America and Europe (Rodriguez Chavez & Cobo, 2012). Since 2011, residence for foreigners in Mexico has been regulated by the *La Ley de Migración* (Migration Act) (Canales & Rojas, 2018), with restrictive temporary and permanent residence regulations for those applying for a work permit, and a relatively long and costly process. As a result, sojourners in Mexico most often represent a high-status migrant group (Golińska, 2022; Golińska & Kwiatkowska, 2024), and tend to have better job opportunities and living conditions than many Mexicans, especially in the case of immigrants from the US (Meza-González & Orraca-Romano, 2022).

Considerable research has been devoted to understanding the acculturation of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, who tend to be permanently settled in the host country (Schwartz et al., 2020). Sojourners, in turn, are people who decide to relocate to another country to achieve particular objectives and then return to their place of origin (Safdar & Berno, 2016). The three most significant and largest sojourner types are expatriates, international students and tourists, and despite some differences between these groups, their intercultural experiences are assumed to be time-bound, finite and voluntary (Safdar & Berno, 2016). Retirees can also be regarded as sojourners (Gustafson, 2001), since their migration is volitional, short-term, and for a specific time. Whereas the primary goal of immigrants and refugees is to improve their and their families' lives, sojourners mostly want to study, work or play, although in practice most of them will pursue a mix of these migration goals (Ward et al., 2001). As sojourners have particular migration goals and can count on institutional support prior to and/or upon

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arrival to the destination country, when compared to other groups, their adjustment to a new country may be influenced by other variables.

Acculturation and adjustment

Acculturation refers to migrating individuals' adoption of host-cultural practices, values, identifications and attitudes, and maintenance of those that were inherent in their countries of origin (Schwartz et al., 2020). The Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM) (Navas et al., 2005) includes two dimensions: culture adoption and culture maintenance, in two acculturation planes: the real and the ideal. The first one refers to strategies applied, while the other one focuses on the preferences. In addition, the RAEM distinguishes eight acculturation domains, which can be grouped into public and private areas (López-Rodríguez et al., 2014; Navas Luque & Rojas Tejada, 2010).

According to Berry (2005), the long-term goal of acculturation is to achieve psychological and sociocultural adaptation, and it may affect a wide variety of outcomes, including mental health (see also Ward, 2001). The psychological adaptation refers to well-being and life satisfaction. Bak-Klimek and colleagues (2015) indicate that most of the scientific literature focuses on migrants' mental health and mental illness, while relatively little attention has been paid to the positive aspects of this process. While acculturation is most often studied in the context of stress and health problems, data shows that in many cases minorities have better mental health than the dominant culture society (Rudmin, 2009). However, the mechanisms behind the impact of acculturation on individual well-being are not fully explained (Buckingham & Suarez-Pedraza, 2019). In the following sections, we discuss some individual-level factors that can influence the subjective well-being (SWB) of sojourners.

Since the structure of SWB measures can be conceptualised as having a different number of facets (Pavot, 2018), we operationalised SWB as a positive attitude towards life, self-esteem, low levels of depressive mood, joy in life (satisfaction) and low frequency of experienced problems and somatic complaints (ill-being) (Grob, 1995). Although initially well-being and ill-being have been seen as opposite ends of a bipolar continuum, studies demonstrated that they are independent, and the absence of ill-being does not guarantee possessing high well-being (Ryff et al., 2006). Thus, measuring both provides a more fine-grained assessment.

Individualistic and collectivistic values

Cultural distance is one of the key variables in the process of adaptation of sojourners: the larger the differences between heritage and host culture, the more difficult the adaptation (e.g. Ward et al., 2001), which may be the case of the encounter between individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Kwiatkowska, 2019). In individualistic cultures, people perceive themselves as having a relatively separate identity, while in collectivist cultures the individual's identity relies heavily on belonging to a group. In individualistic cultures, it is the individual, their rights and needs that come first, while in collectivistic cultures, relationships with others (such as family or co-workers) are prioritised. Both individualistic and collectivistic values are present in each culture, yet their distribution varies. Therefore, we decided to measure the individualistic and collectivistic values on the individual level, rather than use country-level data.

Differences regarding individualism and collectivism can act as certain barriers to the acculturation process, especially if the functioning of individuals depends on cooperation and mutual understanding, as in the case of students and expats. For them, achieving the goals associated with the decision to migrate (e.g. graduation or career goals) is virtually impossible without effective communication.

Contact with the host society

Interactions between people from different social groups (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) can have beneficial effects on adaptation, depending on intergroup prejudice, its frequency and quality (Navas Luque & Rojas Tejada, 2010). Positive and/or frequent contact with the outgroup members should imply a desire of immigrants to participate in the host society and thus adopt their culture. In contrast, lack of contact and/or contact of a negative nature should be related to a low level of host culture adoption.

Age and gender

A variety of demographic factors have been examined in relation to acculturation and adjustment. Cheung and colleagues (2011) confirmed the sensitive period of acculturation hypothesis, according to which the younger the individuals at the time of immigration, the more rapidly they identify with the dominant culture. In addition, the longer the younger immigrants stayed in Canada, the stronger the identification with the new culture, while such results were not observed for older participants. However, acculturation research has often been limited to youth and adults, while when older migrants are considered, they are often combined with other adult migrants (Szabo, 2023).

Regarding gender, women tend to more often be isolated from the host culture than men, mainly due to lower employment opportunities and language skills needed for deeper immersion in the new culture, although some studies have failed to prove this relation or reported poorer adjustment in men (Ward et al., 2001). A meta-analysis by Yoon et al. (2013) showed a stronger positive correlation between the maintenance of the heritage culture and mental health for women when compared to men, although most of the studies analysed were conducted in the US and did not consider the cultural context as a variable.

The present study

The main aim of this study was to explore whether acculturation strategies and preferences in different areas of life (public vs. private), as well as individualistic and collectivistic values, contact with Mexicans and co-nationals, language proficiency, and sociodemographic variables were predictors of sojourners' adjustment.

The acculturation process is sensitive to the conditions in which it occurs. Patterns of acculturation and their outcomes are affected, among other factors, by the expectations and attitudes of the host society toward immigrants from different ethnic groups, with different socioeconomic status and diverse migration purposes (Schwartz et al., 2010), and they unfold in the ecological context at the family, institutional (workplace, education institutions) and societal level (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Analyses involving various cultural groups in different countries allow us to better understand the process and create more precise theories. However, the research in social sciences, including management and quality sciences, is marked by an over-representation of the WEIRD countries (Western Educated Industrialised Rich Democratic), predominantly individualistic. In this study, Mexico was chosen as an example of a collectivist country, addressing the research gap in this respect.

Method

Participants

The participants were 363 sojourners (123 men and 240 women), aged 18-79 ($M = 38.90$; $SD = 17.31$), with a length of stay in Mexico between 6 months and 10 years ($M = 3.38$; $SD = 2.67$), and who declared a voluntary purpose of residence and settled immigration status. The respondents were from North America ($n = 138$), Europe ($n = 99$), Latin America ($n = 94$) and Asia ($n = 32$).

Procedure

The participants are a hard-to-reach group, which is why we used convenience and snowball sampling, recruiting respondents among the Facebook groups of expats in Mexico, international students, and via private contacts of sojourners. The respondents filled out an online survey in the language of their choice: English or Spanish. Unless they had been available in two languages from the start, all the questionnaires used in the study were translated using forward and backward translation.

Instruments

Subjective well-being

Subjective well-being was measured by the Berne Questionnaire on Subjective Well-Being, Adult form (BSW/A) (Grob, 1995), which consists of six scales measuring well-being in different domains: Positive Attitude toward Life (PA), Problems (PR), Somatic Complaints (SC), Self-Esteem (SE), Depressive Mood (DM) and Joy in Life (JL). We calculated two indicators: Satisfaction, based on the PA, SE, DM and JL subscales, and Ill-being, based on the PR and SC subscales, with the participants responding on a 5-point scale. We added two items regarding concerns about the political situation and security threat in Mexico. In total, the tool provided 39 items. Indicators were calculated based on the average of the responses to each item making up the scale. For the Satisfaction scale, $\alpha = 0.85$, while for Ill-being, $\alpha = 0.87$.

Acculturation

Participants' acculturation strategies and preferences were measured by the RAEM scale (Navas et al., 2005; Navas Luque & Rojas Tejada, 2010) adapted to the context of Mexico. Respondents answered two questions regarding the real plane (to what degree they maintain customs from their country of origin; to what degree they adopt the customs of Mexico) and two related to the ideal plane (to what degree would they like to maintain the customs of their country of origin; to what degree they would like to adopt customs of Mexico). For each question, they answered 6 or 8 items (domains) on a 5-point Likert scale: political and government system, social welfare system[1], consumer habits and family economy

Table 1

Factor Structure of the Dyadic Adjustment for the RAEM Scale

Scale	Chi sqr	DF	p	CMIN/DF	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	CFI
Real Plane Maintain (RPM)	4.201	7	0.756	0.600	0.000	0.000	0.045	1.000
Real Plane Adopt (RPA)	16.603	7	0.020	2.372	0.062	0.023	0.100	0.983
Ideal Plane Maintain (IPM)	27.123	17	0.056	1.595	0.041	0.000	0.068	0.989
Ideal Plane Adopt (IPA)	42.974	17	0.000	2.528	0.065	0.041	0.089	0.974

Source: authors' own work.

[1] The domains of political and government systems, as well as social welfare systems, are included only for the ideal plane, since immigrants cannot practice the customs of their country of origin, nor reject the political system of the country in which they reside (real plane) (Navas Luque & Rojas Tejada, 2010).

(public areas); social relations, family relationships, religious beliefs, and customs and values (private areas). We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in IBM SPSS Statistics Amos 26 to validate the two-factor solution with a distinction between public and private areas. Goodness-of-Fit statistics are presented in Table 1.

The internal consistency coefficients for the four scales were: RPM in public areas $\alpha = 0.56$, RPA in public areas $\alpha = 0.58$, RPM in private areas $\alpha = 0.63$, RPA in private areas $\alpha = 0.75$, IPM in public areas $\alpha = 0.65$, IPA in public areas $\alpha = 0.71$, IPM in private areas $\alpha = 0.78$, IPA in private areas $\alpha = 0.78$. For the first two subscales, the α coefficients were relatively low, although considering the suggestions of the RAEM's authors regarding the scales relying only on two items, we decided that this level of Cronbach's α a can be approved as sufficient. In addition, according to the standard minimum of Cronbach's α range at the level of 0.60–0.70, the above value may be regarded as sufficient in exploratory research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Individualistic and collectivistic values

We used the Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) scale in the COLINDEX version proposed by Chan (1994) to measure individualistic and collectivist values, with a questionnaire consisting of 13 items representing individualistic (e.g. exciting life, independence; $\alpha = 0.75$) and collectivistic values (e.g. social order, obedience; $\alpha = 0.76$).

Contact variables

The participants were asked to estimate on a 4-point scale (*rarely; once a month; several times a month; several times a week*) how often they meet with people from three groups: from their country, other foreigners, and Mexicans.

The quality of contact variable was measured by the question *How would you rate the contact you have had or are having with Mexicans?* (answers on the 5-point scale) (Navas Luque & Rojas Tejeda, 2010).

The participants rated their proficiency in Spanish in terms of understanding, reading, speaking and writing on a 4-point scale. The coefficient was obtained as the mean of responses to the four items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.97$).

Based on the answers to questions about the country of origin and other countries of residence, a nominal variable was also created *a posteriori* to determine whether foreigners had other cross-cultural experiences before immigrating (*yes, no*).

We also asked about the respondents' length of stay in Mexico, gender and age.

Data analysis

We performed linear regression analyses using the hierarchical-input method. The assumptions of the regression analysis were met for all the cases, with the level of adjustment measured successively as satisfaction and ill-being. In both cases, predictors were entered as sets of variables in six steps: 1) acculturation strategies (real plane); 2) acculturation preferences (ideal plane); 3) individualistic and collectivistic values; 4) contact variables (frequency of contact with compatriots, foreigners and Mexicans, and quality of contact with Mexicans); 5) the length of stay in Mexico, Spanish language proficiency, and previous multicultural experiences; 6) gender and age. The *dummy coding* procedure was applied for non-quantitative variables. All the analyses were performed using SPSS statistical software.

Results

First, we calculated the means, standard deviations and correlations between the variables under study (Table 2).

Predictors of sojourners' satisfaction

Results of regression analysis for Satisfaction as a dependent variable are presented in Table 3. After the variables in the first step were entered, two variables were included in the model as statistically significant: RPA and RPM in private areas, $F\,(4, 340) = 6.69$; $p < 0.001$; explained together 6% of the variance.

In the second step, the RPM-private proved statistically significant $F\,(8, 336) = 5.72$; $p < 0.001$, with the RPM-public also becoming a statistically significant predictor, and the RPA-private ceasing to be one. These variables increased the level of explained variance by approximately 5% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.05$; $p < 0.01$) to a level of 10%.

In the third step, the level of individualistic values proved to be a statistically significant predictor, $F\,(10, 334) = 8.41$; $p < 0.001$, which increased the R^2 to 18% ($\Delta R2 = 0.08$; $p < 0.001$) In step 3, the RPM-public ceased to be a statistically significant predictor (significance at the trend level), while another variable – IPM-public – proved to be a statistically significant predictor.

In step four, two variables were found to be predictors at the level of the statistical trend: frequency of contact with foreigners and quality of contact with Mexicans, $F\,(14, 330) = 6.81$; $p < 0.001$, with the R^2 in satisfaction increasing to 19% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.02$; $p < 0.05$). However, three variables of the RAEM were no longer statistically significant in the model (RPM-public, IPM-public, and IPM-private), while RPM-private became a predictor significant at the level of the statistical trend. Moreover, the collectivist values variable was a statistically significant predictor.

In step five, we introduced variables relating to the foreigners' stay in Mexico, yet none of these proved to be statistically significant predictors $F\,(17, 327) = 5.67$; $p < 0.001$. The model still explained 19% of the variance.

Table 2

Correlations between variables, means and standard deviations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	*M*	*SD*
1. Age	–	0.130*	–0.297***	–0.088	–0.132*	–0.006	–0.318***	–0.423***	0.050	0.071	0.195***	–0.334***	–0.218***	–0.141**	0.046	0.066	–0.058	0.183***	–0.626***	38.9	17.31
2. Length of stay in Mexico	0.130*	–	–0.073	0.005	0.131*	–0.002	0.076	–0.085	–0.089	–0.059	–0.017	–0.017	0.045	–0.087	–0.173**	–0.154**	0.003	0.003	0.162**	3.38	2.67
3. Real maintain public	–0.297***	–0.073	–	0.445***	–0.053	–0.091	0.498***	0.340***	–0.027	–0.124*	0.113*	0.019	0.118*	0.101	0.161**	0.048	0.043	–0.028	0.227***	3.20	0.99
4. Real adopt public	–0.088	0.005	0.445***	–	0.130*	0.116*	0.188***	0.419***	0.141***	0.119*	0.205***	–0.089	0.067	0.205***	0.157**	0.198***	0.152**	0.051	0.108*	2.93	0.99
5. Real maintain private	–0.132*	0.131*	–0.053	0.130*	–	0.550***	–0.094	0.044	0.514***	0.452***	0.136**	–0.035	0.187***	0.095	–0.031	0.106*	0.139**	0.063	0.113*	3.48	0.85
6. Real adopt private	–0.006	–0.002	–0.091	0.116*	0.550***	–	–0.096	0.042	0.439***	0.692***	0.201***	–0.032	0.114*	0.173**	–0.056	0.051	0.118*	0.062	0.045	2.86	0.89
7. Ideal maintain public	–0.318***	0.076	0.498***	0.188***	–0.094	–0.096	–	0.458***	–0.300***	–0.178**	–0.083	0.191***	0.127*	0.116*	–0.057	–0.083	–0.101	–0.183***	0.303***	3.20	0.92
8. Ideal adopt public	–0.423***	–0.085	0.340***	0.419***	0.044	0.042	0.458***	–	–0.020	–0.036	0.018	0.159**	0.194***	0.351***	0.087	–0.017	0.027	–0.127*	0.352***	2.47	0.84
9. Ideal maintain private	0.050	–0.089	–0.027	0.141**	0.514***	0.439***	–0.300***	–0.020	–	0.573***	0.229***	–0.169**	0.078	0.058	0.070	0.082	0.116*	0.136**	–0.110*	3.50	0.97
10. Ideal adopt private	0.071	–0.059	–0.124*	0.119*	0.452***	0.692***	–0.178**	–0.036	0.573***	–	0.241***	–0.147**	0.110*	0.162**	0.040	0.141**	0.127*	0.113*	–0.092	2.99	0.91
11. Satisfaction	0.195***	–0.017	0.113*	0.205***	0.136**	0.201***	–0,083	0,018	0.229***	0.241***	–	–0.438***	0.262***	0.203***	0.134*	0.175**	0.144**	0.218***	–0.010	3.77	2.06
12. Ill–being	0–.334***	–0,017	0,019	–0.089	–0.035	–0.032	0.191***	0.159**	–0.169**	–0.147**	–0.438***	–	0.062	0.106*	–0.059	–0.017	–0.077	–0.186***	0.218***	2.06	0.58
13. Values Ind	–0.218***	0,045	0.118*	0.067	0.187***	0.114*	0.127*	0.194***	0.078	0.110*	0.262***	0.062	–	0.390***	0.013	0.017	0.147**	0.074	0.257***	4.04	0.53
14. Values Col	–0.141**	–0,087	0,101	0.205***	0.095	0.173**	0.116*	0.351***	0.058	0.162**	0.203***	0.106*	0.390***	–	0.068	0.037	0.040	–0.077	0.194***	3.88	0.67
15. Frequency of contacts with co–nationals	0.046	–0.173**	0.161**	0.157**	–0.031	–0.056	–0.057	0.087	0.070	0.04	0.134*	–0.059	0.013	0.068	–	0.360***	0.158**	0.064	–0.147**	2.57	1.19
16. Frequency of contacts with foreigners	0.066	–0.154**	0.048	0.198***	0.106*	0.051	–0.083	–0.017	0.082	0.141**	0.175**	–0.017	0.017	0.037	0.360***	–	0.288***	0.104*	–0.189***	2.75	1.06
17. Frequency of contacts with Mexicans	–0.058	0,003	0.043	0.152**	0.139**	0.118*	–0.101	0.027	0.116*	0.127*	0.144**	–0.077	0.147**	0.04	0.158**	0.288***	–	0.206***	0.004	3.55	0.69
18. Quality of contact with Mexicans	0.183***	0.003	–0.028	0.051	0.063	0.062	–0.183***	–0.127*	0.136**	0.113*	0.218***	–0.186***	0.074	–0.077	0.064	0.104*	0.206***	–	–0.069	4.40	0.88
19. Spanish proficiency	–0.626***	0.162**	0.227***	0.108*	0.113*	0.045	0.303***	0.352***	–0.110*	–0.092	–0.01	0.218***	0.257***	0.194***	–0.147**	–0.189***	0.004	–0.069	–	2.83	1.10

Note. M – mean; *SD* – standard deviation; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{**}p < 0.001$.

Source: authors' own work.

Table 3

Regression analysis for the dependent variable Satisfaction

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
Constant	3.10		3.16		2.25		1.88		1.84		1.14	
RPM – public	0.03	0.05	0.07	0.14*	0.06	0.11t	0.05	0.10	0.05	0.11t	0.08	0.16**
RPA – public	0.02	0.04	0.00	0.00	–0.02	–0.05	–0.03	–0.06	–0.04	–0.07	–0.01	–0.02
RPM – private	0.08	0.14*	0.07	0.13*	0.08	0.15*	0.06	0.11t	0.05	0.10	0.03	0.05
RPA – private	0.09	0.17**	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.01	0.02
IPM – public			–0.07	–0.13t	–0.07	–0.14*	–0.05	–0.10	–0.06	–0,11t	–0.06	–0.11t
IPM – public			0.02	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.05
IPM – private			–0.01	–0.02	–0.05	–0.10	–0.04	–0.09	–0.04	–0.07	0.00	0.01
IPA – private			0.10	0.20*	0.08	0.16*	0.07	0.13	0.07	0.13	0.08	0.14
Values Ind					0.22	0.25***	0.20	0.23***	0.20	0.22***	0.21	0.24***
Values Col					0.08	0.11t	0.08	0.12*	0.09	0.12*	0.07	0.10t
Frequency of contacts with co–nationals							0.01	0.03	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.02
Frequency of contact with foreigners							0.04	0.09t	0.04	0.10t	0.05	0.11*
Frequency of contact with Mexicans							0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.05
Quality of contact with Mexicans							0.05	0.10t	0.05	0.10t	0.03	0.05
Length of stay									0.01	0.06	0.00	–0.02
Proficiency in Spanish									0.00	–0.01	0.09	0.20**
Cross–cultural experiences									0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
Gender (0 = W; 1= M)											–0.02	–0.02
Age											0.01	0.38***
R sqr Adj	0.06		0.10		0.18		0.19		0.19		0.25	
F (df)	6.69 (4,340)***		5.72 (8,336)***		8.41 (10,334)***		6.81 (14,330)***		5.67 (17,327)***		7.11 (19,325)***	
R sqr change	0.07***		0.05**		0.08***		0.02*		0.00		0.07***	

Note. t < 0.10; *$p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

Source: authors' own work.

Lastly, we included demographic variables in the model; only the age of the participants proved to be a statistically significant predictor, F (19,325) = 7.11; $p < 0.001$. In model 6, the variables RPM-public and frequency of contact with foreigners, as well as Spanish language skills, again proved to be statistically significant predictors. The R^2 in satisfaction increased to 25% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.07$; $p < 0.001$). It is worth noting that the collectivist values variable again became a predictor significant only at the level of the statistical trend, while the quality of contact with Mexicans ceased to be a statistically significant predictor altogether.

The strongest predictors of satisfaction among the variables entered in the final model were the age of the participants and the level of individualistic values. Conclusively, it can be assumed that the level of satisfaction increased with an increase in the maintenance of the culture of origin in the public spheres of life in the real plane, as well as with individualistic values, frequency of contact with foreigners, knowledge of the Spanish language, and age. Moreover, at the level of the statistical trend, the level of satisfaction went up with the increase in collectivist values, while it went down with an increase in maintaining the culture of origin in public spheres of life in the ideal plane.

Predictors of sojourners' ill-being

We then performed a regression analysis for ill-being as a dependent variable (Table 4), with the first model with acculturation strategy variables turning out not statistically significant, $F(4, 340) = 0.67$; $p > 0.05$. In the second step, three variables were found to be statistically significant predictors of acculturation preference: IPM-public, IPM private, and IPA- private, along with the RPM-private $F(8, 336) = 4.19$; $p < 0.00$; explaining 7% of the variance, $\Delta R^2 = 0.08$; $p < 0.001$).

Subsequently, neither individualistic nor collectivistic values (step three) were statistically significant predictors of ill-being $F(10, 334) = 3.63$; $p < 0.001$.

In model 4, only the quality of contact with Mexicans proved to be a significant predictor at the level of statistical tendency, $F(14, 330) = 2.95$; $p < 0.001$. The model continued to explain 7% of the variance in ill-being.

In the fifth step, Spanish language skills proved to be a statistically significant predictor, $F(17, 327) = 3.03$; $p < 0.001$. Moreover, IPM-public was again found to be statistically significant, however only at the trend level.

Table 4

Regression analysis for the dependent variable Ill-being

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
Constant	2.27		2.08		1.89		2.22		2.24		2.95	
RPM – public	0.03	0.05	–0.04	–0.06	–0.04	–0.06	–0.03	–0.05	–0.04	–0.07	–0.06	–0.11
RPA – public	–0.01	–0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.01	–0.02	–0.03
RPM – private	–0.07	–0.11^{t}	–0.09	–0.14*	–0.10	–0.14*	–0.09	–0.14*	–0.08	–0.12^{t}	–0.06	–0.08
RPA – private	–0.01	–0.01	0.07	0.11	0.07	0.10	0.06	0.10	0.05	0.09	0.07	0.11
IPM – public			0.09	0.14*	0.09	0.14*	0.07	0.12	0.08	0. 12^{t}	0.07	0.11
IPM – public			–0.05	–0.07	–0.04	–0.06	–0.04	–0.06	–0.03	–0.05	–0.02	–0.03
IPM – private			0.09	0.14*	0.07	0.11^{t}	0.07	0.11^{t}	0,04	0.06	0.00	–0.01
IPA – private			–0.11	–0.17*	–0.11	–0.18*	–0.11	–0.17*	–0.10	–0.15^{t}	–0.10	–0.16*
Values Ind					–0.01	–0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Values Col					0.08	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.09
Frequency of contact with co–nationals							–0.02	–0.04	–0.02	–0.05	–0.02	–0.03
Frequency of contact with foreigners							0.03	0.06	0.05	0.09	0.04	007
Frequency of contact with Mexicans							–0.03	–0.04	–0.04	–0.05	–0.06	–0.07
Quality of contact with Mexicans							–0.06	–0.10^{t}	–0.06	–0.09^{t}	–0.04	–0.06
Length of stay									–0.01	–0.04	0.00	0.02
Proficiency in Spanish									0.08	0.15*	–0.01	–0.01
Cross–cultural experiences									–0.10	–0.08	–0.09	–0.08
Gender (0 = W; 1= M)											–0.06	–0.05
Age											–0.01	–0.31***
R sqr Adj	0.00		0.07		0.07		0.07		0.09		0.14	
F (df)	0.97 (4,340)		4.19 (8,336)***		3.63 (10,334)***		2.95 (14,330)***		3.03 (17,327)***		3.83 (19,325)***	
R sqr change	0.01		0.08***		0.01		0.01		0.03*		0.05***	

Note. $^{t} < 0.10$; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$.

Source: authors' own work.

In addition, the RPM-private and IPA-private variables went from being statistically significant predictors to being predictors at the level of the statistical trend, while the IPM-private variable became a statistically insignificant predictor altogether. These changes increased the R^2 to 9% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.03$; $p < 0.05$).

In the last step, only the age of the participants, $F(19, 325) = 3.83$; $p < 0.001$ turned out to be a statistically significant predictor. It is worth noting that again the IPM-private variable became the statistically significant predictor, while the other variables of RAEM and quality of contact with Mexicans ceased to be statistically significant predictors. The R^2 in ill-being increased to a level of 14% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.05$; $p < 0.001$).

The age of the foreigners proved to be the strongest predictor among the variables entered into the final model. Ultimately, it can be assumed that the level of ill-being decreased with age, as well as with the increase in the adoption of Mexican culture in private spheres of life in the ideal plane.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to identify the factors that would explain the level of psychological adjustment of sojourners living in Mexico. The age of the participants was found to be the strongest predictor of their satisfaction and ill-being, with satisfaction levels increasing, and ill-being decreasing with age. Individualistic values, the proficiency level of the Spanish language, and the frequency of contact with other foreigners also proved to be important factors, and the satisfaction level increased together with the increase in the levels of these variables. Meanwhile, variables relating to the acculturation process itself were not significant predictors of adjustment, with two exceptions. The level of life satisfaction was positively determined by the maintenance of one's culture of origin in the public spheres of life in the real plane, whereas the level of ill-being decreased with the increase of the level of culture adoption in the private spheres of life in the ideal plane.

As far as younger people are concerned, the motivation behind their migration may play a key role, as they are mainly international fee-paying students, and their decision to leave their home country is primarily related to pursuing degree at a foreign university. Hence, for this group, academic performance is an important element in demonstrating their adaptation (Ward et al., 2001). It is also worth mentioning the relatively high financial costs of studying abroad. For the families of many students, allowing their children to pursue their education in Mexico is an expense that puts a significant strain on the family budget. Moreover, in Latin America (where most of the youngest participants come from), the decision regarding the choice of the study programme and the university itself is most often a family decision or one made only by the parents, and not individually by the future student. It also happens that relocation involves he whole family, e.g. when one of the parents takes a job abroad.

The factors described may add pressure affecting the level of students' well-being, and it is therefore presumed that students who wish to embrace the culture of Mexico may be interested in the new country and its culture. Perhaps they see the decision to move as their own and want to take full advantage of this time, not only in the immediate university-related area. For this reason, among the youngest participants with lower levels of ill-being, a higher level of preferred adoption of Mexican culture was recorded.

For middle-aged people, work-related challenges may have a similar effect to academic ones in the case of students. However, among expats, the decision to take up employment abroad tends to be more of an individual choice. Spiess and Wittman (1999) point out that sometimes decisions to deploy employees abroad are based on market indicators rather than an individual's career development strategy, which would also explain why the highest levels of adaptation were observed among the oldest participants. Firstly, the latter are rather seeking relaxation in Mexico as opposed to academic or professional challenges, and secondly, the decision to emigrate is usually their own. Finally, emotional experience seems to improve with age (Carstensen et al., 2000). As people get older, they are more likely to report highly positive emotional experiences to endure longer, and highly negative emotional experiences to fade more quickly. Age, however, was unrelated to the frequency of positive emotional experiences, and as a variable should be looked at more closely in further studies to better understand its predicting strength for the sojourner's adjustment.

An interesting result is that concerning the decrease of the ill-being level with age, and we cannot exclude the fact that the standard of living (cheaper accommodation and medical services) (Vázquez-Flores et al., 2024), but also the health of retirees is improving in Mexico. According to Expats Insider (InterNations, 2022), Mexico ranks second worldwide regarding the general cost of living, and fourth when it comes to housing costs, which, presumably, enables the participants to improve their standard of living compared to that in their own country. Quality of life and health may be factors of particular importance to retirees, as these are often closely linked to the choice of Mexico as an emigration destination. Sojourners are therefore able to make 'before and after departure' comparisons, and thus their reported levels of ill-being are the lowest among the groups in this study. After all, life satisfaction is the result of individual judgment, in which one compares given circumstances with what is considered to be a certain standard (Diener et al., 1999). Nevertheless, for this purpose further research, including qualitative methods, should be carried out to better understand the motivation of this specific and often overlooked group.

Finally, ill-being refers to declared somatic complaints (e.g. being ill and unable to work, having a very bad headache). Health conditions can be taken as an indicator of adjustment (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013) assuming that ailments occur due to ineffective adaptation, although in the case of students, sleeping

problems may be due to the academic load (e.g. 'all-night studying'). Similarly, headaches or stomach aches may be a reaction to stress closely related to university life (demanding study assignments, exams) and not necessarily to acculturation problems. Furnham and Bochner (1986) point out that international students face many challenges upon their arrival in a new country, only some of which are directly related to emigration. In addition, they must cope with the same problems as local students.

Interestingly, in this study, the acculturation variables did not turn out to be significant predictors of sojourners' satisfaction, and only the maintenance of the heritage culture in the private areas of life turned out to be a significant predictor of lower ill-being of the respondents. There is a possibility that acculturation processes may not play a key role in the adaptation of sojourners, because in general, they plan to return to their countries of origin in the nearest future (e.g. Safdar & Berno, 2016).

There are several noteworthy limitations of this research. Firstly, the group was heterogeneous in terms of the participants' nationality, although a recent meta-analysis of dispositional predictors of expatriate adjustment (Han et al., 2022) reveals that studies examining this group often focus on individuals originating from different countries. In the context of the adjustment index itself, it is also worth considering the introduction of alternative tools for measuring well-being, including those consisting of fewer items. The study would also benefit from the use of indicators of socio-cultural adjustment.

Finally, the sample covered sojourners, who are a very particular type of migrants, and in the case of Mexico are regarded as a high-status group. It can be assumed that different results would have been obtained if the participants had been immigrants or refugees, who in Mexico are a much more numerous group than sojourners. For that reason, it is important to consider the cultural context and be mindful when generalising the study findings.

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