

Achievements and Expectations

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"It just gives me a good feeling (...) I learn how to deal with the problems myself. And that's what you need in life."

(Germany, age 21)



"Here I have been able to be free. I have lived an independent life. This is what matters, I think. I have my own responsibilities and all that kind of things (...) People have to find out their strengths and decide what to do." (Finland, age 21, arrival age 15)

However the correlation migration/adulthood can also be experienced as a source of frustration, as it entails the burden of having to make decisions, a decrease in family's support, an overall change in social relations, and even loneliness:

"I'm and adult now and nobody will do anything for me." (Czech Republic, age 22, arrival age 17)
"You can understand how life is. Loneliness (...) I always like to be with people and with friends. I don't want to be lonely." (Finland, age 18, arrival age 14)

Introduction

The well-being of young migrant men is multi-facet and multi-dimensional and it results from a combination of objective and subjective factors. Education achievements are typically regarded as indicators of the integration of migrants' children. Our focus on well-being, however, entails considering more subjective factors. In this sense, the expectations of the migrant and the migrant's family in respect to the migration experience play a key role in determining to what extent the young migrant men's achievements are truly experienced as such.

Whether the outcomes of migration are perceived by the young migrant men as "success" or "failure" is crucial to the young migrant men's well-being and can decide the quality of his present life as well as his future plans. The distance between (initial) expectations and (perceived) achievements is strictly related to happiness – current satisfaction of own life as well as the migration trajectory. The "achievements vs expectations" distance can thus be regarded as a key indicator of the well-being of young migrant men. How to measure such distance is a question for further debate.

Results

Achievements depend a lot on the expectations that young migrant men had at the time of migrating and may vary greatly depending on a number of variables - age, motivation for migrating and age of arrival among the major ones. For most of the young migrant men who migrated as teenagers the migration experience comes to coincide with the transition to **adulthood**. Such transition is perceived by many of the young men as an achievement itself – entailing a growth in autonomy, self-confidence and "strength":

"To be able to do things by myself. That I would not be dependent on anyone." (Finland, age 19, arrival age 15)



Other young migrant men have a very optimistic outlook on their current life and are aware they can rely on their own **coping skills** to overcome hardships. Friends, language, education, work, money and safety are among the main achievements they report. These young men view themselves as strong individuals that are not discouraged by hardships and are aware that this helps them achieve what they pursue. They regard their present life with optimism and some openly speak of **happiness**. The majority of these young men have migrated either as young children or at an older age:

"I try to do the best in anything I do, that helps me. Things I have accomplished, just helps me to look forward." (UK, age 17, arrival age 3)

"I am not someone who stands around and waits for things to happen, I take my life into my own hands." (Italy, age 24, arrival age 6)



"I am a strong person (...) If something bad happens to me I try to learn from it as much as I can and improve my situation, when something good happens I try to reflect, how did I achieve this..." (UK, age 26, arrival age 25)

Family's expectations can play a major role in qualifying the young migrant men's achievements and overall satisfaction and this is particularly true when the young migrant men is the eldest child or an only child. Nevertheless, when evaluating their current life, many young men do so by **confronting with friends** at home. Such comparison comes to represent a source of frustration for those young migrant men who experience their migration trajectory as a failure:

"They say to me: you have been in Italy for 5 years, what you have learnt? Nothing!" (Italy, arrival age 22)

"I have had many interesting experiences here, I have been to many places, I experienced much, much more than my friends at home" (Czech Republic)



References

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