"A laugh a day keeps the failure away": How do self-enhancing humor and community embeddedness promote subjective career success of dual-earner migrant couples?

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Introduction

Career success of dual-earner migrant couples (DEMCs) is particularly challenging compared to that of domestic ones. After relocation, at least one of the partners - especially women - often suffer career interruptions, demotion in occupational status or eventual career relinquishment. Solutions for their struggles, however, are lacking due to insufficient evidence about the resources for their subjective career success (i.e. perceived satisfaction with one’s career achievements).

In this light, we aim to explore the role of self-enhancing humor (SEH)\(^1\) and host country community embeddedness (CE)\(^2\) in subjective career success of both partners in a dyadic way.

Gender-sensitive Components

- **Obstacles to DEMCs’ career success**, e.g. exceeding home demands (e.g. childrearing), and lack of support (e.g. nearby family, parental benefits), typically burden women more than men due to remained traditional gender roles in present time.
- **Women’s careers** become even more arduous in the migration context.\(^4\)

![Graph showing differences in probability of working in unskilled labor among women in four European countries](image)

### Self-enhancing humor

- **Being amused by absurdities in life**
- **Coping mechanism with stress and difficulties**
- **Improving physical and mental health, persistence, resilience, and ability to regulate unpleasant emotions and stressors**
- **likely to aid each partner’s immersion in the host society and energize them to pursue careers despite major obstacles in work and private life**
- **indirectly facilitate each partner’s subjective career success through deepening CE**

### Community embeddedness

- **Connectedness with local community and host society**
- **Essential social resources (e.g. friends’ help in handling administrative tasks, language, and childrearing)**
- **more time and energy to developing careers**

- **Positive and playful interactions with humorous partners allow individuals to automatically mimic their partner’s hilarious facial expressions and feel the same amusement feelings (i.e. emotional contagion). Hence a partner’s SEH potentially benefits the other partner’s CE and subjective career success, in the same way it impacts each individual, regardless who possesses this trait.**
- **The crossover effects of humor on career success possibly are stronger for women than men**, because women are more likely to ‘catch’ their partner’s emotions (i.e. they are more susceptible to emotional contagion).\(^3\)

Results

- **SEH promoted each DEMC partner’s subjective career success through facilitating their CE.**
- A partner’s SEH positively influenced the other partner’s CE and subjective career success.
- **Men’s humor** fostered CE of their female partner, which in turn **increased the women’s subjective career success.**

Methods

- **Data**: longitudinal, 2 waves, 1 year time-lag
- **Sample**: 109 cohabiting heterosexual DEMCs in 14 European countries
- **Analysis**: Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) with SEM

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1. Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 765355
2. Connectedness with local community and host society
3. Essential social resources (e.g. friends’ help in handling administrative tasks, language, and childrearing)
4. However, being women is also advantageous thanks to emotional contagion susceptibility: playful and amusing partners benefitted migrants’ career success, especially women.

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![Graph showing the impact of humor and career success](image)

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**Note:** Statistical significance levels are indicated using asterisks: \(* p < 0.05\), \(** p < 0.01\), \(*** p < 0.001\). Estimates of partner’s mediation effects are marked in italics in brackets.