

# Intergenerational relations between older parents and their adult children: Effects on subjective well-being

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**Abstract.** In the near future, many western nations will be confronted with specific challenges regarding ageing populations and their physical and psychological well-being. Ageing parents might experience a greater need for intergenerational support and solidarity, especially in the context of migration. The acculturation process may, however, entail an increased intergenerational gap possibly leading to conflicts and ambivalences between parents and adult children. This might in turn diminish their well-being. Here, a cross-cultural comparison is envisaged between Luxemburgish and Portuguese triads of adult children and their older parents living in Luxembourg (*N* = 120). Participants will report on their mutual relationship quality and subjective well-being by using a standardized questionnaire. Similarities and differences in mutual expectations of family members as well as the effects of an intergenerational gap in ideas about intergenerational solidarity on relationship quality and on subjective well-being (SWB) will be examined. Results will be discussed regarding the relevance of intergenerational family relations for subjective well-being in the light of migration and ageing.

## Theoretical and research background

- Western countries are more and more confronted with the specific challenges regarding an ageing population, and physical as well as psychological well-being of older people are major concerns. Also, immigrants of the first generation are currently coming closer to older age in many western European countries leading to specific requirements and needs.
- Due to the specific acculturation background, immigrant families might feel an increased need for intergenerational support and solidarity. This might be even more true for older migrants (first generation) who might experience this need even more compared to their adult children (second generation) who grew up or were born in the “new” country. This acculturation gap between the first and the second generation, might lead to different intergenerational expectations and thois may cause intergenerational strain and generate a diminished well-being of the family members (Albert, Ferring & Michels, 2013; Sam & Berry, 2010).
- Subjective well-being (*SWB*) has become a very popular concept in the last few decades, residing in the singular experience of each individual (Diener, 1984). Life satisfaction refers to the cognitive component of SWB, comprising an individual’s own appraisal and evaluation of their satisfaction with their life (Ferring & Boll, 2013; Diener & al, 1999).
- In a multicultural society such as Luxembourg with currently 44.5% foreigners, these various issues regarding the well-being of elder migrants become more and more primary concerns for the whole population (Statec, 2011).

## Objectives

We aim to analyze:

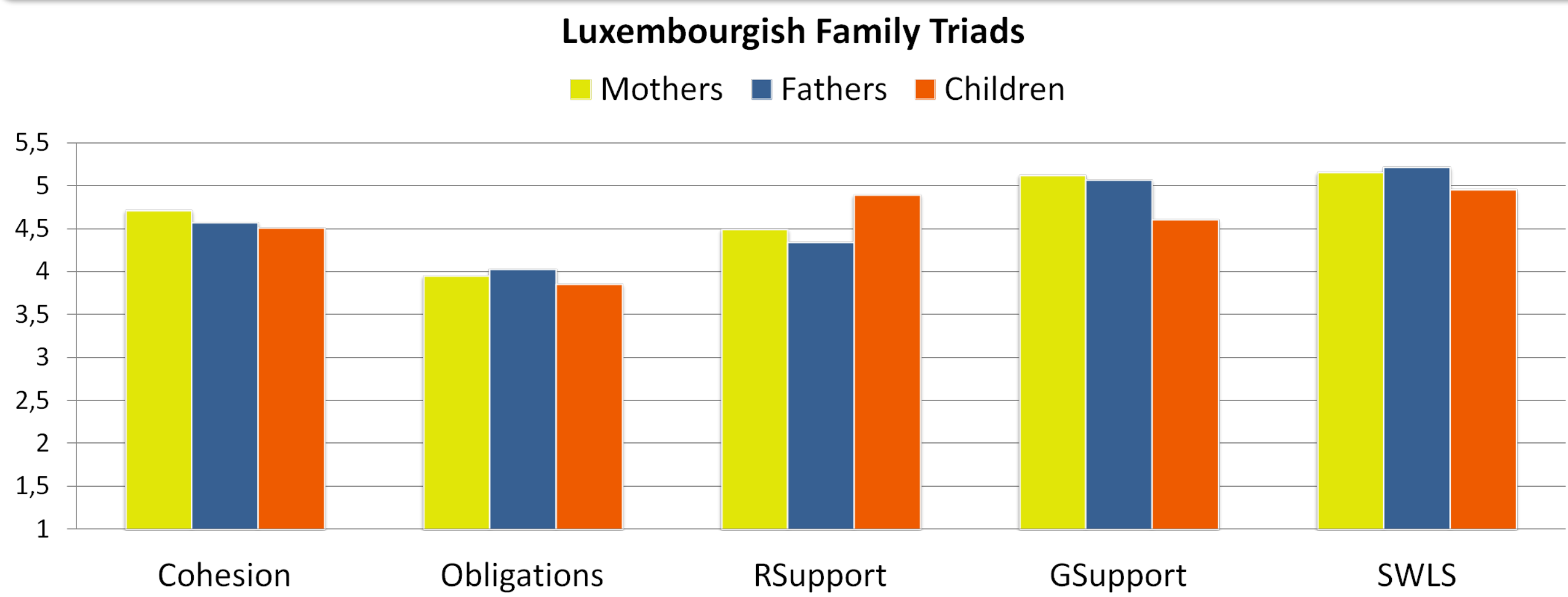
- the similarities and differences in family values and mutual expectations (such as received and given intergenerational support; the family cohesion & felt obligations) between older parents and their adult children, in non-migrant families compared to migrant families living in Luxembourg
- the effects of those processes and characteristics on the SWB of all implicated family members (mother, father & adult child)
- similarities and differences in SWB between members of migrant and non-migrant families

## Instruments

Participants filled out a standardized questionnaire available in German, Portuguese and French. The different versions of the final questionnaire were translated and cross-checked by a team of multilingual psychologists. All Reliabilities for the scales and the different subsamples were satisfying, ranging between .66 <  $\alpha$  < .93 (except Cohesion scale for PT-Mothers  $\rightarrow \alpha = .45$ ).

- SWLS (Diener & al., 1984, 5items e.g. “The conditions of my life are excellent”; 7-point Likert scale from 1 = “do not agree at all” to 7 = “fully agree”)
- Obligations toward family (see e.g., Merz & al., 2009; 6 Items, e.g. “I feel obliged to behave in line with our family rules”; 6-point Likert scale from 1 = “do not agree at all” to 6 = “fully agree”)
- Given and received intergenerational support (see also Albert & al., 2013; Schulz & Schwarzer, 2003; 12 items each, e.g. “My mother/father/child handles many things for me that I cannot do on my own; “I handle many things for my parents/my child”; 6-point Likert scale from 1 = “do not agree at all” to 6 = “fully agree”)
- Family Cohesion (see e.g. Manzi & al., 2006; 4 Items, e.g. “We always help and support one another”; 6-point Likert scale from 1 = “do not agree at all” to 6 = “fully agree”)

## Results



	Nationality		Position		Nationality x Position	
	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$
Family Cohesion	.16	.003	.29	.005	.46	.007
Family Obligations	8.28**	.12	1.78	.03	.39	.006
Received IG Support	6.90**	.11	6.05**	.09	.94	.02
Given IG Support	5.86**	.09	9.79**	.14	1.20	.02
Subjective Well-Being	.60	.01	2.15	.04	5.30**	.08

Luxembourgish Families – Correlations between SWLS and family values/mutual expectations			
	Mothers	Father	Child
Family Cohesion	.37*	.46**	.46**
Family Obligations	.00	.00	.16
Received IG Support	.08	.08	.13
Given IG Support	.03	.03	.39*

Portuguese Families – Correlations between SWLS and family values/mutual expectations			
	Mothers	Father	Child
Family Cohesion	.34	.44*	.44 *
Family Obligations	-.09	-.09	.00
Received IG Support	-.10	-.10	.50*
Given IG Support	.001	.00	.37 ( <i>p</i> =.054)

## Sample

The current study is part of the project “Intergenerational Relations in the Light of Migration and Ageing - IRMA” funded by the Fonds National de la Recherche Luxembourg (PI: Dr. Isabelle Albert). A sample of *N* = 120 Luxembourghish (LUX) and Portuguese (PT) family triads living in Luxembourg will be interviewed (mothers and fathers as well as one of their adult children, born resp. grown up in Luxembourg; cfr table 1).

We focus here on the Portuguese immigrant population, as it is the largest immigrant community in Luxembourg (Statec, 2011) with about 16% of inhabitants with Portuguese nationality.

Table 1. Sampling plan of the main study.

	Portuguese Families		Luxembourgish Families	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
G1	50-60	20	20	20
	61-70	20	20	20
	71-80	20	20	20
G2	±30-50	60	60	

Note. The full sample will comprise *N* = 360 participants.

The preliminary sample includes *n* = 34 LUX and *n* = 30 PT family triads (mother/father/adult child).

LUX Families	Age	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Mother	55.85	6.81
Father	59.03	7.39
Childrens	26.76	8.09

PT Families	Age		Years living in Lux	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Mother	54.57	6.59	30.64	7.64
Father	57.0	7.03	30.12	8.16
Children	26.52	8.02		

Over 60% of the Portuguese adult children were born in Luxembourg, the remainder had come to Luxembourg at an average age of *M* = 5.5 years (*SD* = 4.95). Data collection is still going on.

## Conclusions

- No differences were found between LUX and PT families regarding family cohesion. However, regarding family obligations and mutual intergenerational (IG) support PT family members rated them slightly higher than LUX participants.
- Parents and adult children did not differ as regards to family cohesion and obligations but parents communicate a higher provided support to / lower received support from their adult children than the other way around.
- PT children also reported to receive as much support from their parents as they give support to them. LUX children though reported the opposite, they admit receiving more support than they give (see also Albert & al., 2013).
- LUX parents rated their SWLS higher compared to PT parents. However, regarding the adult children, the PT children evaluated their SWLS higher than the LUX children. A pertinent difference between PT parents’ and children’s SWLS averages can be observed.
- Family cohesion appears to be relevant for the SWLS of both, LUX and PT family members, except for PT mothers, who despite of no significant correlation, show though a same pattern as the other participants (see also Manzi & al., 2006).
- Given IG support to parents appears to be pertinent for the SWLS of LUX children, whereas PT children’s results indicate a significant relation between their SWLS and the Received IG support from their parents.

Further analyses regarding IG relations and SWB in light of migration and ageing will be done to supplement the results reported here.

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