Life Satisfaction and Perceived Health: How Individual Characteristics and Policies Influence Immigrants' Well-Being in Italy.

Elena Ambrosetti (Sapienza University of Rome) and *Angela Paparusso* (Institute of Research on Population and Social Policies, IRPPS-CNR)

Introduction

International migration represents one of the major challenges for European countries nowadays. In such context, Italy has assumed an important role due to its strategic position on the Mediterranean region, to the rapid transformation from an emigration to an immigration country that the country has witnessed during the last four decades and lastly to the specific model of immigration that it shares with other southern European countries. In fact, from the theoretical point of view, Italy belongs to the so-called southern European model of immigration, together with Greece, Portugal and Spain (King et al., 2000; Arango and Finotelli, 2009). These countries are characterized by a relatively recent immigration history: mainly emigration countries until the mid-1970s, they started to receive mass immigration in the 1990s (Freeman, 1995). Some common features, as far as the management of migration inflows is concerned, characterize the countries embedded in this model. In particular, one can observe a lack of selective immigration policies, a large underground economy attracting undocumented immigrants, a strong segmentation of the labour market and the use of ex-post instruments to provide a legal status to immigrants, such as regularizations, quota systems and flow decrees.

During the last decades, Italy has resulted particularly attractive to immigrants, because entering the country and working has been particularly easy even without a permit of stay for work reasons. Irregular work constitutes an important "pull factor" at least at first stage of immigration, later on most immigrants manage to regularize and to enter the formal economy in need of additional labour willing to take low-skilled jobs (OECD, 2005). The foreign resident population in Italy rose from 737,793 in 1996 to 2,419,483 in 2006 and 5,047,028 in 2017 and it represents around 8.3 percent of the total population. This number rises to around 6 million, considering non-resident regular and irregular migrants (ISMU, 2017).

The increased number of international migrants residing in Italy has led to a growing number of studies on this topic. Researchers have focused their attention on immigrants settling, immigrants' integration and the rise of the second generations, the demographic behavior of immigrants, immigration policies, the recent surge of refugees and undocumented immigrants, attitudes towards migrants, etc. However, to our best knowledge, till today there is a lack of quantitative studies addressing immigrants' well-being. Therefore, this study has two main aims: 1) to assess the determinants of well-being among immigrants residing in Italy; 2) to assess the effect of immigration policies on the well-being of immigrants in the context of the Southern European model of immigration. We believe that human well-being is shaped both by individual and societal characteristics. Individuals have a certain number of goals in their life leading to achieve subjective well-being by different means i.e. activities such as social relationships, resources such as income and endowments such as health, education, home or employment (Ormel et al. 1999). Both activities and endowments are influenced by the institutional context. This approach is particularly appropriated to study the well-being of immigrants because their access to different resources is largely influenced by the social and institutional context where they live (Heizmann and Böhnke, 2018). According to this framework, individual factors are not the only determinants of immigrants' well-being, policy factors, first of all immigrant rights, are also very relevant in determining immigrants' life-satisfaction.

Theoretical background

Research on immigrants' well-being is part of a larger research strand focusing on the determinants of human well-being. While the determinants of happiness have been largely studied by economists, psychologists and sociologists, the importance to study immigrants' well-being is still not fully recognized by migration scholars. As stressed by Wright (2011), there are still few researches investigating "explicitly the specific needs that migrants themselves identify as important for 'living well' and how these are formed and transformed by the migration process" (ibidem: 1471). Furthermore, several studies have addressed immigrants' integration into the labour market without considering them as social actors able to construct their own well-being.

Building from the studies of Sen on well-being, capabilities and human development (Sen, 1985), de Haas (2009) has studied the interconnection between human mobility and well-being, arguing that an increase in human mobility may resort into the acquisition of new capabilities in turn affecting collective social, political and economic freedoms. Knowing how people feel about and evaluate their lives through indicators such as self-reported happiness and/or life satisfaction is broadly used in social sciences nowadays. Authors of the World Migration Report of IOM of 2013 stressed that "there is a need for further inquiry into the factors that contribute to subjective well-being" (p. 38) in order to assess the outcomes of migration for immigrant well-being (Hendriks & Bartram 2018). Among these factors, there is perceived health. As well acknowledged, health influences the migrant selection process, which singles out younger and healthier individuals for emigration. This selection results in the so-called "immigrant health paradox". A similar, but opposite process of selection occurs in the destination country: migrants who have contracted a chronic disease in the destination country may decide to return home. This decision affects their migration and integration experience abroad.

To date, two main research strands have been developed by migration scholars in the field of immigrants' well-being. The first one addressed the immigrants' well-being in comparison with the population of the destination country (natives); the second one compared the levels of well-being of immigrants to that of the population of the country of origin. The different perspectives adopted by such researches depend on the aim that followed while studying immigrants' well-being. In the first case, we may want to study differences between immigrants and natives. Previous studies comparing immigrants with natives have showed that migration does not imply an improvement in life satisfaction for immigrants because of discrimination (Safi, 2010). Such studies have showed that income plays only a little role in increasing their life satisfaction, while perceived discrimination and adaptation have a focal role. In the second, we may be interested in understanding if migration improved the well-being of people in comparison with their situation in the country of origin (Bartram, 2012). Previous research comparing immigrants with stayers has shown contrasting results: in some cases, immigrants are happier with their life than stayers, in other the contrary is true. One may hypothesize that the country of origin has also an impact in differentiating immigrants and stayers. Taking another perspective (a third one), we may want to explore all the outcomes of migration, both the positive and the negative one. In this case asking immigrants about an assessment of their migration and/or life experience is the most appropriate way to take into account theirs point of view (Hendriks & Bartram 2018).

In addition to the individual factors shaping life satisfaction, recent research by Heizmann and Böhnke (2018) has showed that restrictive immigration and integration policies have a negative impact on immigrants' life satisfaction. Their research is inspired by the work of Ormel et al. (1999) postulating that individual well-being aspirations are realized through activities and endowments. Both activities and endowments are influenced by the institutional context.

Data, methods and variables

Data. The data stem from the survey on "Social Condition and Integration of Foreign Citizens" (Condizione e Integrazione Sociale dei Cittadini Stranieri), carried out by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) in 2011-2012. The survey collected information on a total sample of 25,326 individuals, including first- and second-generation immigrants. However, the dataset is reduced to 15,767 individuals who are foreign citizens, that is, foreign-born with the citizenship of a foreign country, with a regular status, aged 14 years and over. The survey deals with the following topics: employment; civic and political participation; family reunion; long-term residence and citizenship; health; social networks; ties with the country of origin.

Dependent variables. We selected two indicators of subjective well-being: self-reported life satisfaction and perceived health. The two items are: "Could you please tell me how much are you satisfied with your life on scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates not satisfied at all and 10 completely satisfied?" and "How is your health in general? Choose a score from 0 to 6, where 0 means very bad, 5 very good and 6 do not know".

Independent variables. Based on the theoretical background and previous findings, we have selected the following variables. As demographic variables, we selected (1) gender (males, females (reference)), (2) age (in years), (3) age squared, (4) marital status (single, legally married and other (reference)), (5) area/country

of origin (EU countries before 2004, EU countries from 2004, Central-Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, Western Africa, Other African countries, Central-Southern Asia, Eastern Asia, other Asian countries, Central-Latin America, other developed countries (reference)), (6) household structure (couple living together in Italy, couple not living together, household with children with all members living together in Italy, household with children with some members living elsewhere, one-person household, household with one Italian parent (reference)) and (7) geographical area of residence (NUT1) (North-West, North-East, Centre, South and islands (reference)). As human capital variables, we selected (8) educational attainment (primary education or lower, lower secondary school, upper secondary school or higher (reference)) and (9) occupational condition (dependent worker, independent worker, unemployed (looking for a job), inactive (reference)). As immigration variables, we selected (10) period of arrival in Italy (after 2008, from 2006 to 2008, from 2003 to 2005, before 2003 (reference)), (11) age at arrival (0-13, 14-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45+ (reference)) and (12) legal status (residence permit for long-term residents, residence permit for work reasons, residence permit for family reasons, other, EU citizen status (reference)). As transnationalism and sense of belonging variables, we selected (13) frequency of return visits (various times during the year, every year, every 2-3 years, less frequently, never (reference)), (14) loneliness (very lonely, quite lonely, little lonely, not lonely (reference)), (15) presence of close friends (yes (reference), no close friends), (16) frequency with which you talk about politics (every day, sometimes a week, once a week, sometimes a month, sometimes a year, never (reference)), (17) reading newspapers at least once a week (yes one or two days a week, yes three or four days a week, yes five or six days, yes every day, no (reference)), (18) future migration intentions (to remain in Italy, to return to the country of origin (reference)). Descriptive statistics of the dependent variables are shown in Table 1.

Method. In order to measure how the considered individual factors shape the two indicators of self-reported well-being, we performed two ordered logistic regression (OLR) models separately. The OLR is an extension of the binary logistic model used when the response variable has ordered categorical values (Brant, 1990). It returns odds ratios, which can be interpreted similarly to those from logistic regressions: "odds ratios larger than 1 indicate an increased chance that an individual with a higher score on the independent variable will be observed in a higher category on the dependent variable. Odds ratios smaller than 1 indicate an increased chance that an individual with a higher score on the independent variable will be observed in a lower category on the dependent variable" (Vaquera & Aranda, 2011). The proportional odds assumption is one of the main assumptions underlying the ordered logistic regression. This means that the relationship between each couple of outcome categories should be the same (Amati et al. 2018). Our data confirms this assumption.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the independent variables, N=15,767, Italy, around 2011-2012.

Independent variables	% or mean and (SD)	Independent variables	% or mean and (SD)
DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES		IMMIGRATION VARIABLES	
Age	38.6	*Period of arrival in Italy*	
Gender (females)	56.2	- After 2008	6.9
Marital status		- From 2006 to 2008	21.6
- Single	32.1	- From 2003 to 2005	20.5
- Legally married	49.1	- Before 2003	51.0
- Other	18.8	*Age at arrival*	
Country/area of origin		- 0-13	8.0
- EU countries before 2004	3.6	- 14-24	33.9
- EU countries from 2004	26.0	- 25-34	32.7
- Central-Eastern Europe	22.6	- 35-44	16.3
- Northern Africa	10.0	- 45+	9.1

- Western Africa	4.0	*Legal status*	
- Other African countries	1.3	- Residence permit for long-term residents	7.8
- Central-Southern Asia	3.5	- Residence permit for work reasons	29.8
- Eastern Asia	3.8	- Residence permit for family reasons	19.7
- Other Asian countries	0.7	- Other	7.9
- Central-Latin America	3.5	- EU citizen status	34.8
- Other developed countries	21.0	TRANSNATIONALISM VARIABLES	
Household structure		*Frequency of the return visits*	
- Couple living together in Italy	10.2	- Various times during the year	11.3
- Couple not living together	1.9	- Every year	39.8
- Household with children with all members living together in Italy	50.3	- Every 2-3 years	26.1
- Household with children with some members living elsewhere	22.1	- Less frequently	11.6
- One-person household	14.5	- Never	11.2
- Household with one Italian parent	1.0	*Loneliness*	
Geographical area of residence (NUT1)		- Very lonely	3.5
- North-West	18.3	- Quite lonely	12.0
- North-East	18.5	- Little lonely	29.1
- Centre	17.4	- Not lonely	55.4
- South and Islands	45.8	*Presence of close friends*	
HUMAN CAPITAL VARIABLES		- Yes	80.2
Educational attainment		- No	19.8
- Primary education or lower	15.2	*Frequency with which you talk about politics*	
- Lower secondary school	48.6	- Every day	6.3
- Upper secondary school or higher	36.2	- Sometimes a week	12.7
Occupational condition		- Once a week	5.4
- Dependent worker	56.8	- Sometimes a month	9.0
- Independent worker	7.5	- Sometimes a year	5.3
- Unemployed (looking for a job)	8.9	- Never	61.3
- Inactive	26.8	*Reading newspapers at least once a week*	
		- Yes one or two days a week	23.8
		- Yes three or four days a week	9.9
		- Yes five or six days	3.5
		- Yes every day	6.5
		- No	56.3
		Future migration intentions	
		- To remain in Italy	71.2
		- To return to the country of origin	28.8

Source: Authors' elaboration of the survey on "Social Condition and Integration of Foreign Citizens", ISTAT

Preliminary results

As far as the descriptive statistics of the most important independent variables, we have that most respondents are legally married, entered Italy before 2003 and have a residence permit for work reasons or the EU citizen status. Their educational attainment is quite high, they are mainly dependent workers, they do not feel lonely in Italy, have close friends and return to their country of origin for visiting friends and relative quite frequently,

albeit they intend to remain in Italy. Therefore, we can argue that our respondents are experiencing a stable and durable settlement process in Italy.

The preliminary results of the two ordered logistic regression models show that the two indicators of self-reported well-being are interconnected. Not only background factors, but also conditions at destination and transnationalism influence immigrants' self-reported well-being. In particular, gender, age, age at arrival, loneliness, the role of friends, and future migration intensions are among the most significant determinants of immigrants' well-being. Detailed results will be ready for PAA conference.

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