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ATTITUDES TOWARDS GLOBALIZATION, LIFE SATISFACTION, AND FEAR OF COVID-19 INFECTION. COMPARISON OF EMERGING AND OLDER ADULTS

Attitudes toward globalization are shaped by people's direct experience with it. The COVID-19 pandemic can arguably be understood as a negative manifestation of globalization. The purpose of this study was to examine whether fear of COVID-19 infection and life satisfaction could be predictors of attitudes toward globalization. The study was cross-sectional in nature and utilized intergroup comparison analysis and hierarchical regression analysis. Emerging adults ($n = 157$) and seniors ($n = 119$) were compared. Higher levels of accepting attitudes toward globalization were observed among the emerging adults, while a fear of contracting COVID-19 was found to be higher among seniors. In both study groups, a fearful attitude towards globalization was positively associated with fear of COVID-19 infection, and life satisfaction was negatively associated with infection. In addition, respondents viewed the COVID-19 pandemic itself as a negative manifestation of globalization.

Keywords: globalization, life satisfaction, COVID-19, emerging adulthood, seniors.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic clearly highlighted the universalizing role of globalization. Less than a week after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic in January 2020, most countries implemented an epidemic state within their territory. The pandemic has since become the most prominent macro-social context shaping the quality of life of people around the world. In Poland, since the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed (March 4, 2020) more than 110,000 people have died from the disease (Ministry of Health of Poland, 2022). The proportion of deaths within the total number of infected is 2%, but detailed data show that the higher the age, the higher the mortality rate (Flisiak, 2021). The average age of a person dying from COVID-19 in Poland is 72.9 years old (Chief Sanitary Inspectorate of Poland, 2021). International organizations and governments have

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taken steps to limit the spread of COVID-19. Perhaps the most visible manifestation of control was the reduction of physical social contact. Among other things, the operation of cultural and educational institutions has been restricted due to the pandemic, and hotels, resorts and food outlets such as restaurants and cafes have been temporarily closed. Studies indicate that social distance is an effective tool in reducing coronavirus transmission (Bielecki et al., 2021), but the question must be raised about the psychological consequences of the restrictions that have been put in place.

The global context of the pandemic and the associated widespread reductions in direct social contact can be interpreted as visible negative effects of globalization. Arguments for this claim are provided by previous data documenting that countries with higher levels of socioeconomic globalization have higher coronavirus mortality rates (Farzanegan et al., 2021). According to the Folk Theory of Social Change (FTSC) (Kashima et al., 2011), attitudes towards globalization are shaped by direct experiences with the manifestations of globalization. Within the presented research, we looked for correlates of two attitudes towards globalization: accepting and fearful (Senejko, Łoś, 2016). An accepting attitude towards globalization manifests itself in openness and confidence towards globalization, exploration and active use of its aspects. A fearful attitude is characterized by sensitivity to the possible dangers of globalization and a lack of confidence in the changes experienced in the modern world. Previous research has confirmed that the pandemic decreased the level of acceptance towards globalization and increased the strength of the negative correlation between fearful attitude towards globalization and life satisfaction (Jasiński, Bąkowska, 2020). However, the problem of determinants of attitudes towards globalization needs further study. To date, studies have provided a basis for a more thorough comparison of the psychological effects of the pandemic in young adults and seniors (Głowacz, Schmits, 2020). The purpose of this research was to explore the correlation between life satisfaction and fear of COVID-19 infection and attitudes towards globalization among emerging adults and seniors.

1.1. Emerging adults: between adolescence and full adulthood

According to the model of experiencing globalization (MEG) (Derbis et al., 2018), by spreading certain cultural values and the way social life is organized, globalization indirectly promotes or threatens an individual's psychological development. In many studies, the psychosocial development of young adults is often considered in the context of globalization (Sawyer et al., 2021). This developmental stage, falling between the ages of 18 and 25, occurs only in societies whose economic development is high enough to endure the demand for immediate full-time work by young people (Arnett, 2002). Time spent in extended education results in the postponement of taking on social roles typical of adults: work, marriage, and parenthood, and emerging adults are more likely (and able) to experiment with the opportunities offered by globalization. It is likely that, in their view, features of globalization such as freedom of movement, intercultural contacts, individualism, and universal access to information, among others, offer numerous new opportunities for development. Based on this, it can be assumed that emerging adults generally have positive experiences with globalization, which they accept. However, previous studies have indicated pandemic-induced higher levels of economic and psychosocial stressors in this group, resulting in higher levels of stress and emotional strain (Shanahan et al., 2020).

1.2. Seniors in the age of globalization

An analysis of demographic processes taking place in Europe indicates that seniors are a growing social group. Late adulthood, according to classical psychological theories of human development (Erikson, 1980; Levinson, 1990) and the definition adopted by the WHO, begins after the age of 60. Among seniors, pandemic-enforced social isolation is positively associated with feelings of loneliness and depressive symptoms (Krendl, Perry, 2021). Perhaps seniors interpret pandemic restrictions as a manifestation of globalization. The consequences of events taking place in remote parts of the world (such as in Wuhan, China) can impose real limitations on the daily lives of seniors across Europe. Significant psychological differences between young adults and seniors have been evidenced by numerous previous studies (Ziolkowski et al., 2015), but these studies have not addressed predictors of attitudes towards globalization. Thus, we posed the question: how does the pandemic context relate to the level of attitudes towards globalization among emerging adults and seniors? Based on the literature analysis, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H1. The level of accepting attitude towards globalization is higher among emerging adults compared to seniors.

H2. The level of fearful attitude towards globalization is lower among emerging adults compared to seniors.

1.3. Fear of infection, life satisfaction, and attitudes towards globalization

According to current research, significant predictors of fear of COVID-19 infection include health anxiety, regular media use, and fear for the health of loved ones (Mertens et al., 2020). In our study, we examined whether the level of fear of COVID-19 infection differed between the study groups. Given the positive association of age with COVID-19 mortality, it is likely that seniors experience higher fear of contracting the disease. This prompted us to make another hypothesis:

H3. The level of fear of COVID-19 infection is lower in emerging adults compared to seniors.

The macro-social context of a pandemic may influence increased stress levels due to ruminations about COVID-19 (Bakker, van Wingerden, 2021). Rumination involves creating a mental representation of a negative event, and this leads to short-term or prolonged stress reactions (Brosschot et al., 2006). The epidemic emergency situation can be understood as a stressor that worsens mental health, which is manifested by, among others, depressive symptoms (Arslan, Yildirim, 2021). Studies have found an association between fear of COVID-19 infection and life satisfaction but have not yet attempted to examine the correlation between fear of COVID-19 infection and attitudes towards globalization (Dymecka, Gerymski, Machnik-Czerwik et al., 2021). To add to the state of knowledge on this topic, we hypothesized:

H4a. In both study groups, fear of COVID-19 infection is negatively associated with accepting attitude towards globalization.

H4b. In both study groups, fear of COVID-19 infection is positively associated with fearful attitude towards globalization.

Satisfaction with life is the result of a cognitive appraisal that compares one's situation with accepted standards. Life satisfaction results from the degree of subjective attainment of these standards (Kjell, Diener, 2021). Understood in this way, life satisfaction has a subjective and global dimension, i.e., it concerns life in general. Previous studies have

mainly focused on the determinants of life satisfaction in the context of COVID-19 (Sayin Kasar , Karaman, 2021). One of the goals of our study was to see if this life satisfaction could be one of the determinants of attitudes towards globalization. Theoretical justification for such inquiries is provided by the FTSC. In this view, globalization is a plane for the formation of subjective psychological well-being. Globalization may be relevant to life satisfaction because it creates conditions for gaining/losing resources, achieving goals, and satisfying human psychosocial needs. If emerging adults and seniors rate the current global context as negatively related to their life satisfaction, according to the theory of Kashima et al. they should exhibit lower levels of acceptance and higher levels of fear of globalization. Previous research, based on the model of experiencing globalization (Derbis et al., 2018), has shown that the level of subjective life satisfaction is one of the outcomes of experiencing globalization and is linked to the attitudes taken towards it. We hypothesized that life satisfaction would be positively related to accepting attitude and negatively related to fearful attitude towards globalization. To test this, we posed the following hypotheses:

H5a. In both study groups, life satisfaction is positively associated with accepting attitude towards globalization.

H5b. In both study groups, life satisfaction is negatively associated with fearful attitude towards globalization.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Participants and procedure

The emerging adult group consisted of college students ($n = 157$, aged $M = 21.69$, $SD = 3.39$). The senior group consisted of $n = 119$, (aged $M = 66.55$, $SD = 6.01$). Seniors were recruited among third-age university students. Individuals participating in the study lived in the following Voivodeships: Lower Silesia, Łódź, Opole, Pomerania, Silesia and Greater Poland. Demographic data are provided in Table 1. Data collection took place between May 2020 and May 2021. The study was a cross-sectional questionnaire survey and study participants were recruited directly by researchers at the study site or at third-age university facilities. Each participant was informed of the purpose of the study and gave informed written consent to participate. The research design was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology at University of Opole.

2.2. Data collection and research tools

A sociodemographic questionnaire of our own design and three psychological questionnaires were used in the study. Respondents also answered questions about their perceived overall assessment of their own health (1-bad health, 10-perfect health) and their perceived degree of dependence on others (1-not at all, 10-very much). The COVID-19 fear of infection scale of our own design was used to measure fear of infection. The scale consists of three questions about the fear of COVID-19 infection of self, family member, or friend. The maximum possible score is 30 points. The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985) was used to measure life satisfaction. The tool consists of five statements rated on a 7-point scale. The possible maximum score is 35 points. Attitudes towards globalization were measured using the World-Me Questionnaire (Senejko, Łoś, 2016). A sample statement from the accepting scale is: "I can just as well live in my home country as in other parts of the world", while a sample statement from the fearful scale is: "It makes me angry that problems in my country are caused by decisions made in other

parts of the world.” Answers were given on a scale of 1-Totally disagree to 4-Totally agree. The maximum score on both scales is 28 points.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the study groups

Variable	Emerging adults $n = 157$		Older adults $n = 119$	
Age	$M = 21.69$	$SD = 3.39$	$M = 66.55$	$SD = 6.01$
Sex (%)	<i>Female</i> = 87.9	<i>Male</i> = 12.1	<i>Female</i> = 79	<i>Male</i> = 21
Place of residence (%)				
Village	33.1		11.8	
Town < 50 k	31.2		25.2	
Town < 100 k	7.6		12.6	
City > 100 k	28.0		50.4	
Marital status (%)				
Single	54.1		5.0	
Informal relationship	43.3		3.4	
Marriage	2.5		54.6	
Divorced	0		15.1	
Widowhood	0		21.8	
Average net income (€ per month)				
> 225	46.5		4.2	
> 330	24.8		12.6	
> 440	12.1		46.2	
> 550	7.6		15.1	
> 660	3.8		12.6	
< 660	5.1		26.1	

Source: own study.

2.3. Strategy of analysis

First, variable distribution analysis, descriptive statistics, and Pearson’s r coefficient were performed on each group separately. Intergroup differences were tested using the Student’s t -test. A hierarchical regression analysis was then performed. The explained variables were attitudes towards globalization. In the regression analysis, predictors were included in the model in steps: 1) life satisfaction, 2) fear of COVID-19 infection. The order of inclusion of the variables in the model is theoretically justified – first the general factor, subjective global life satisfaction score, then the contextual factor, fear of the current threat (COVID-19 infection). Only complete questionnaires were analyzed. Calculations were performed using SPSS 21 software.

3. RESULTS

The emerging adult group had a higher mean overall health score ($M = 7.69$, $SD = 1.76$) than the senior group ($M = 6.9$, $SD = 1.71$). Emerging adults reported higher level of dependence on others ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 5.57$) than seniors ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 3.05$). The mean level of fear of infection was significantly higher among seniors ($M = 21$, $SD = 7.66$) than in emerging adults ($M = 20.24$, $SD = 5.19$). The Pearson's r coefficients between the study variables for the comparison groups are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Inter-correlations of the study variables for emerging adults ($n = 157$) and older adults ($n = 119$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Emerging adults					
1. Overall assessment of own health					
2. Perceived degree of dependence on others	-.14				
3. Fear of the COVID-19 infection	-.14	.29***			
4. Satisfaction with life	.51***	-.07	-.05		
5. Accepting attitude towards globalization	.17*	-.09	-.20*	.07	
6. Fearful attitude towards globalization	-.12	.21**	.29***	-.17*	-.28***
Older adults					
1. Overall assessment of own health					
2. Perceived degree of dependence on others	-.33***				
3. Fear of the COVID-19 infection	-.17	.13			
4. Satisfaction with life	.29***	-.13	.000		
5. Accepting attitude towards globalization	.20*	-.11	-.09	.17	
6. Fearful attitude towards globalization	-.27**	.23*	.33***	-.20*	-.24**

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Source: own study.

An analysis of intergroup comparisons revealed significant differences due to sociodemographic variables only in the senior group. It was observed that the highest level of dependence on others was reported by those with the lowest income ($M = 5.8$, $SD = 4.08$),

and the lowest level of dependence ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.76$) by those with the highest income, Cohen's $d = 0.47$. The highest level of life satisfaction ($M = 23.5$, $SD = 4.17$) was observed in the group of seniors whose income exceeds 550 €/month and the lowest in the group with income below 225 €/month ($M = 18$, $SD = 5.14$), Cohen's $d = 0.46$. The highest level of dependence on others was reported by those who are widowed and not in any relationship ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 3.49$) and the lowest by those who are married ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 2.62$), Cohen's $d = 0.58$. The highest level of subjective life satisfaction was observed among married seniors ($M = 22.56$, $SD = 4.71$), and the lowest among divorced and widowed seniors ($M = 19.39$, $SD = 5.54$), Cohen's $d = 0.61$.

Emerging adults had significantly higher scores on the acceptance of globalization scale ($M = 19.11$, $SD = 4.59$) than seniors ($M = 14.66$, $SD = 4.42$), and the strength of the effect was large (Cohen's $d = 0.97$). The results therefore allow us to accept hypothesis H1. The level of fearful attitude towards globalization in the emerging adult group was significantly higher ($M = 16.99$, $SD = 3.80$) than in the senior group ($M = 15.87$, $SD = 4.42$). Therefore, hypothesis H2 is rejected. Results indicate that COVID-19 infection fear levels are significantly lower in emerging adults ($M = 20.24$, $SD = 5.19$) compared to seniors ($M = 21$, $SD = 7.66$). On this basis, hypothesis H3 is accepted. The results of the analysis of comparisons between emerging adults and seniors are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of t-test for compared groups

Variable	Emerging adults $n = 157$			Older adults $n = 119$			t	d
	M	SD	Cronbach's <i>alfa</i>	M	SD	Cronbach's <i>alfa</i>		
Overall assessment of own health	7.69	1.76	-	6.9	1.71	-	3.71***	4.03
Perceived degree of dependence on others	4.04	2.57	-	3.32	3.05	-	2.11*	.25
Fear of the COVID-19 infection	19.11	6.67	.82	21.00	7.66	.89	-2.14*	2.63
Satisfaction with life	20.24	5.19	.74	21.30	5.22	.84	-1.66	-
Accepting attitude towards globalization	19.11	4.59	.79	14.66	4.55	.77	8.0***	.97
Fearful attitude towards globalization	16.99	3.80	.68	15.87	4.42	.79	2.24*	.35

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Source: own study.

The hierarchical regression analysis indicated that fear of COVID-19 infection was significantly negatively associated with accepting attitude towards globalization only among emerging adults ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = 0.009$). Hypothesis H4a is accepted in part. In both emerging adults ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$) and seniors ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$), fear of COVID-19 infection is positively associated with the level of fearful attitude towards globalization. These data support hypothesis H4b. Higher level of life satisfaction is not a significant

predictor of accepting attitude towards globalization in both study groups, so hypothesis H5a is rejected. On the other hand, life satisfaction is negatively related to the level of fearful attitude towards globalization in both the emerging ($\beta = -0.15, p < 0.001$) and senior groups ($\beta = -0.20, p = 0.019$). On this basis, hypothesis H5b is accepted. Detailed results of the regression analysis are shown on Figure 1.

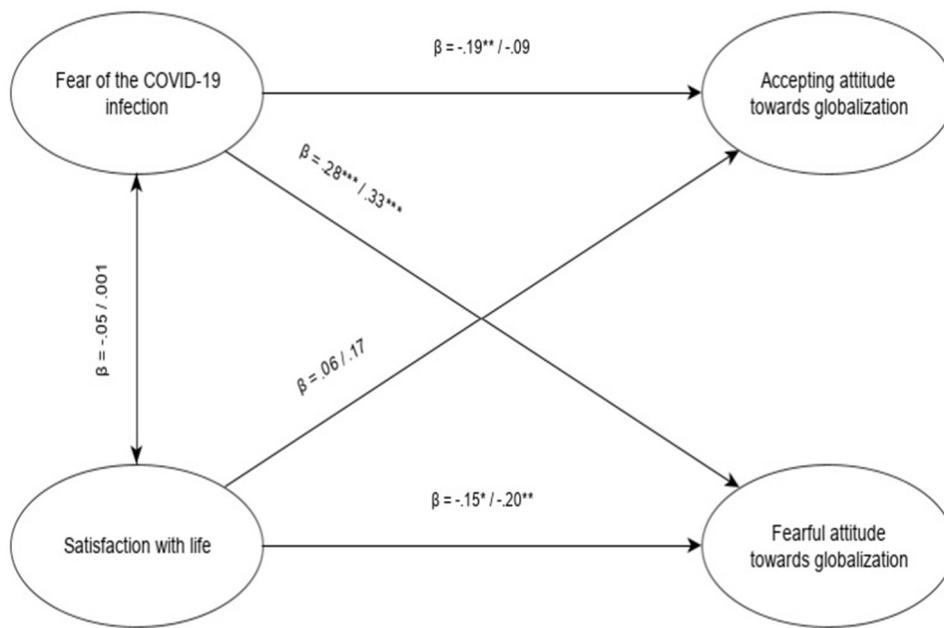


Figure 1. The final model for the study variables

Note. Before slash: emerging adults. After slash: older adults.

β (standardized regression coefficient).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Source: own study.

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the correlation between life satisfaction, fear of COVID-19 infection, and attitudes towards globalization during the pandemic in a group of emerging adults and seniors. The project was carried out using FTSC and MEG. The results obtained mostly confirm the theoretical assumptions of the models tested. Previous research on attitudes towards globalization in the Polish population has been conducted in the field of personality psychology and developmental psychology, excluding seniors and almost exclusively on groups of young adults (Senejko, Łoś, 2016). Our research responds to the growing psychological interest in seniors' perceptions of globalization and the COVID-19 pandemic (Skałacka, Pajestka, 2021).

Our results indicate that emerging adults have significantly higher levels of acceptance towards the manifestations of globalization when compared to seniors. The emerging adults

participating in this study showed less fear related to globalization than seniors. This confirms Arnett's assumption that globalization is evaluated particularly positively by young people – who see in it new, subjectively unlimited opportunities for development. Emerging adults, when compared to seniors, are less concerned about COVID-19 infection. This result seems to confirm seniors' awareness of the higher pandemic risk in their age group. In contrast, the results show no difference between the level of attitudes towards globalization by place of residence (rural-urban), as suggested by previous theories (Arnett, 2002).

The results partially support the assumptions of the FTSC and MEG in terms of the formation of attitudes towards globalization through direct experiences with manifestations of globalization. Only among the emerging adults is fear of COVID-19 infection negatively associated with accepting attitude towards globalization. This may be because the generally positive attitude of young people towards globalization (which is decidedly higher than in seniors) is significantly weakened by the pandemic effect. Accepting attitudes are manifested by active exploration and engaging in new activities that are facilitated by globalization's effects. Due to the obligatory social isolation, the pandemic situation is definitely not conducive to these types of behaviors typical, especially for emerging adults. So far, no research has been conducted comparing the two groups, but the lower acceptance of globalization among seniors may be due to their distance from the positive aspects of globalization. This may be due to the fact that Polish seniors focus mainly on issues of health care and access to cultural goods, offices and services. The results suggest that the vast majority of Polish seniors are more interested in so-called 'everyday matters' than in global exploration (Jasiński, Bąkowska, 2021)). Our findings refine the picture of psychological differences between emerging adults and seniors. Previous data have suggested that the level of fear of COVID-19 infection is independent of age (Bisht et al., 2021; Teater et al., 2021).

In both study groups, fear of COVID-19 infection is positively associated with fearful attitude towards globalization. This result confirms the assumptions of FTSC and MEG on the determinants of negative attitude towards globalization. Both emerging adults and seniors become more concerned about globalization processes after experiencing pandemic situations. This corresponds with previous research showing that an important predictor of attitudes towards globalization is a sense of security (Cameron et al., 2020), which was lowered by the stressful context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Dymecka, Gerymski, Machnik-Czerwik, 2021).

Results from pre-pandemic studies have shown no correlation between attitudes towards globalization and life satisfaction (Jasiński et al., 2019). The results of research conducted during the first wave of the pandemic in Poland indicate that the context of the pandemic, understood as a manifestation of globalization, clearly strengthens the correlation between fearful attitude towards globalization and life satisfaction (Jasiński, Bąkowska, 2020). The data presented here, collected during the second and third waves of COVID-19, indicate that in both emerging adults and seniors the higher the sense of overall quality of life, the lower the intensity of fearful attitude towards globalization. If emerging adults and seniors rate the current global context as negatively related to their life satisfaction, they present higher levels of fear related to globalization, according to the FTSC. A total of three rounds of research on the Polish population between 2019 and 2021 suggest that the context that intensifies the association between subjective life satisfaction and fearful attitude towards

globalization is the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth noting that these results are consecutive, which in the Polish context indicates that there is no correlation between life satisfaction and accepting attitude towards globalization. These results support theoretical suggestions that experiences related to globalization are more negative than positive (Derbis et al., 2018). On the other hand, perhaps the very context of a pandemic understood as a negative manifestation of globalization interferes with the positive side of global change. Arguably, due to the global, widespread socio-political impact of pandemics (Grinin et al., 2021), negative perceptions of globalization are more accessible. Individuals surveyed during a pandemic are more sensitive to the risks and hence the higher intensity of the fearful attitude and the higher degree of explanation of these attitude in the empirical model. The fearful attitude results from, among other things, a reduced sense of security and uncertainty about how to cope with difficulties. Previous results clearly indicate that current macrosocial conditions are positively associated with higher levels of psychological stress and can be viewed as a threat to health and life (Kim, Jung, 2021).

Despite the presentation of new, timely, and socially relevant data, our article is not free of limitations. The first is that the study was conducted on the Polish population only. The second limitation is the method of data collection. Due to pandemic constraints, material were collected using online questionnaires. Due to sample size, analyses were limited to hierarchical regression analyses. The above comments affect the generalizability of the results. On the other hand, the presented study can form part of important comparative material with other populations.

5. CONCLUSION

The results indicate that emerging adults have higher level of accepting attitude towards globalization when compared to seniors. The fear of contracting COVID-19 is lower among emerging adults than among seniors. Fear of infection is a significant negative predictor of accepting attitude towards globalization only among emerging adults. A fear of COVID-19 infection in both groups is positively associated with the intensity of fearful attitude towards globalization. The correlation between fear of COVID-19 infection and fearful attitude is stronger in the senior group. In both groups, life satisfaction is negatively correlated with fearful attitude towards globalization.

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