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# LIFE SATISFACTION IN UNEMPLOYED COUPLES: THE ROLE OF FAMILY COHESION AND GENDER EFFECTS

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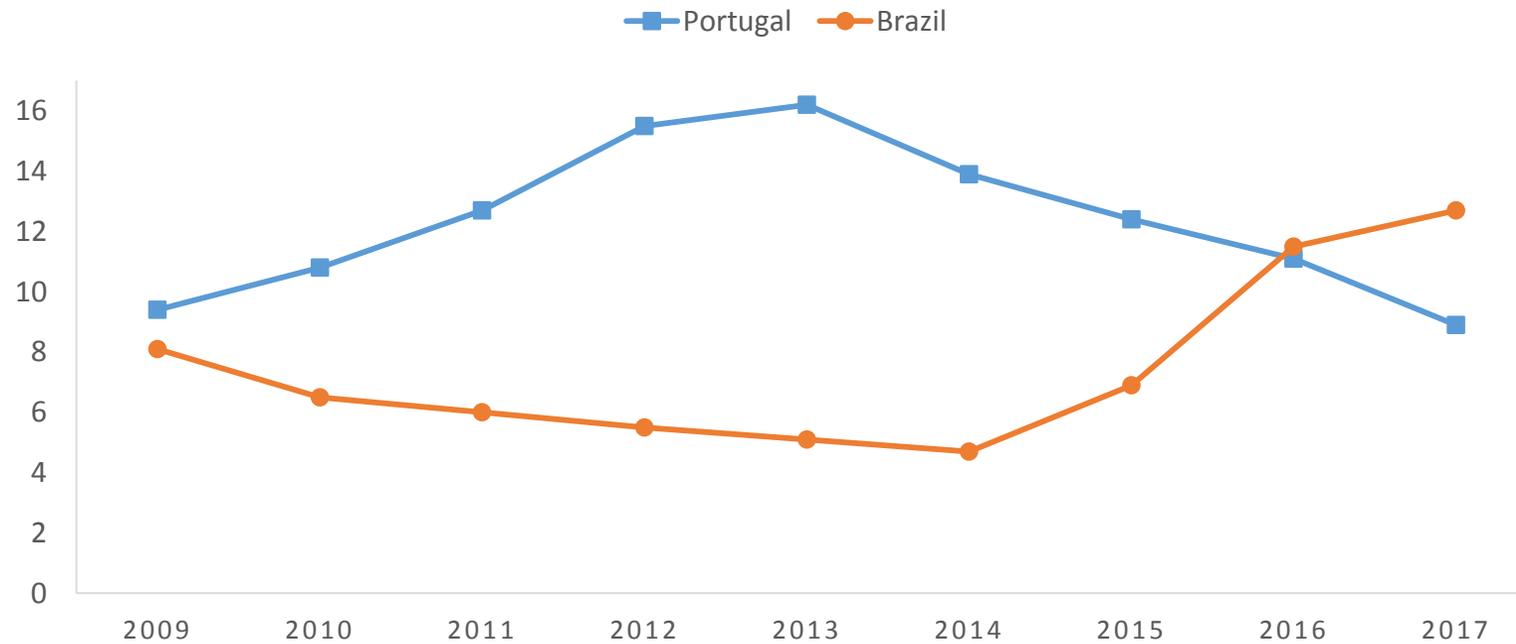
Luxembourg, April 2018

# 1. Background



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## ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



INE, 2018  
IBGE, 2018

# 1. Background

## (Impact of unemployment)



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### Empirical studies

- Well-being (Hanish, 1999; Mckee-Ryan et al., 2005)
- Happiness, self-esteem and satisfaction with life (Estramiana et al, 2012; Haid & Seiffge-Krenke, 2013)
- Stress, anxiety and depression (Procter, Papadopoulos, & McEvoy, 2010)
- Marital conflict and satisfaction (Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004; Zhang et al., 2015)

### Gaps

- Interpersonal / dyadic approaches
- Context/gender

# 1. Background (Individual vs Family level)



- Most studies have detailed how the condition of unemployment endangers the individual disregarding the role of other members in the family.
- **Family systems theory** assumes that families are interdependent systems: an individual's attitudes and behaviors are significantly affected by other family members' attitudes and behaviors.

Families are best viewed as social systems in which each family member directly and indirectly influences one another (Kerr & Bowen, 1988),

- To our knowledge, no study has addressed in a **dyadic manner** how family cohesion links with life satisfaction of both couple members.

# 1. Background (considering context)



- Unemployment in families significantly increased during the economic crisis
- Portugal seems to be a “family welfare” country, in which the obligations perceived with regard to family members are very strong.
  - Family is expected to be the privileged source of support for its most **vulnerable** members (Coimbra & Mendonça, 2013; Fontaine et al., 2006; Guerreiro & Abrantes, 2004).
- Intergenerational family solidarity/familism is associated with the prevalence of extended family and an indicator of the weaknesses in social protection systems
- **Family cohesion** may be an important resource to buffer the negative impacts of unemployment within the family

# 1. Background

## (Family cohesion as an important resource)



- **Familial cohesion:** degree of togetherness or closeness or emotional bonding that family members have toward one another (Olson et al., 1985)
  - *shared affection, support and caring among family members.*
- The quality of emotional ties between family members is an important characteristic that affects the well-being of family members and particularly their adjustment to social situations (Kager et al., 2000; Manzi et al., 2006; Vandeleur et al., 2007)
- This family support may be particularly relevant when families face socio-economic difficulties such as those caused by unemployment

# 1. Background (Gender and gender roles)



Is the impact of being unemployed similar to men and women?

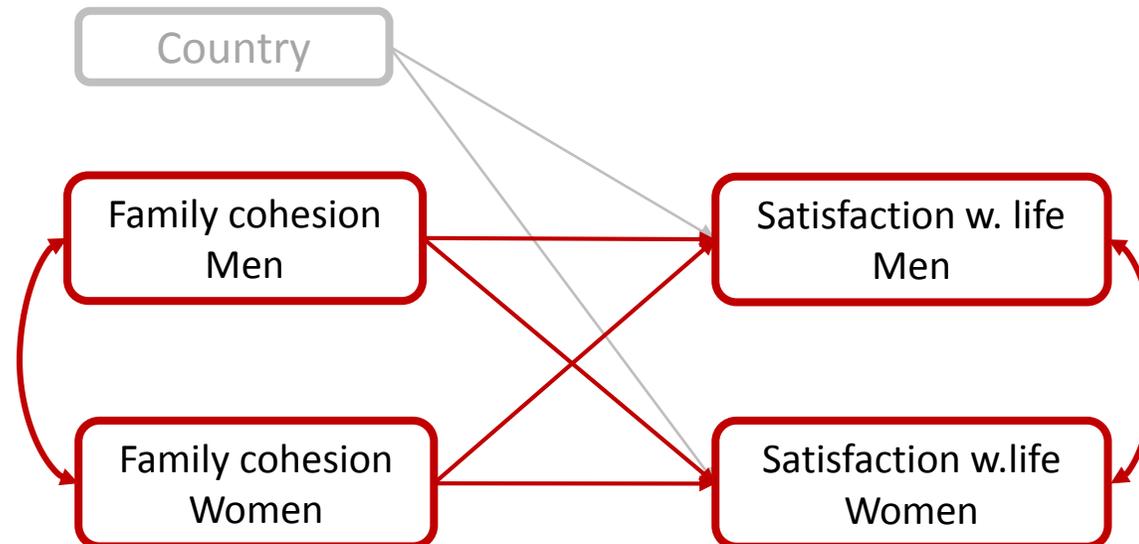
- Gender social prescribed roles (Eagly, 1987)
  - *Men with paid work*
  - *Women with house and child care*
- Men and women seem to have different relational experiences, which could be a result of gender differences in relational roles and in the way in which roles are fulfilled through behavioral styles (Impett & Peplau, 2006).
- Women are more relationship oriented than men:
  - *Relationships are more central in women's thoughts, motives, and behaviors than in men's (Cross & Madson, 1997).*
  - *Women may adopt a nurturing or caring role in their relationships more easily,*

# This study



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- Aim: investigate how perceptions of **family cohesion** affects own and partner's levels of **life satisfaction** when one member is unemployed, differentiating the **gender of the unemployed member**.
- Embraces context, dyadic approaches and gender



**Wives  
unemployed**

**Husbands  
unemployed**

# 2. Method

## ■ Participants and procedure



Brazil 



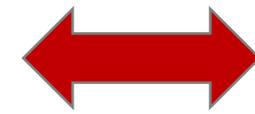
Portugal 

**G1**  | 73   
85   
**N = 158**

**Wives  
unemployed**

**G2**  | 40   
38   
**N = 78**

**Husbands  
unemployed**



# 2. Method



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	Wives unemployed (G1)		Husbands unemployed (G2)	
	H	W	H	W
<b>Age</b>	42.71 (10.92)	39.77 (10.35)	42.40 (8.01)	39.52 (8.35)
<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>&lt;12 years 86,6%</b>  University degree 13,1%	<b>&lt;12 years 84,2%</b>  University degree 15,9%	<b>&lt;12 years 77,9%</b>  University degree 22,1%	<b>&lt;12 years 66,2%</b>  University degree 33,8%
<b>Duration of unemployment (months)</b>		49.55 (55,73) ~ 4 years	27.66 (32,72) ~ 2,3 years	
<b>Nr. of Children</b>	1.73 (1.11)		1.71 (1.10)	
<b>Relationship length</b>	18.67 (10.46)		18.20 (9.47)	

# 2. Method



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## ■ Instruments

Scale (Authors)	Nr items/ Sample item	Reliability coefficient
<i>Satisfaction with Life</i> (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985), adapted by Neto, Barros and Barros, 1990)	5 items In most ways my life is close to my ideal. I am satisfied with my life. (...)	BR – $\alpha = .78$ PT – $\alpha = .77$
<i>Family Environment Scale</i> (Moos & Moos, 1986), adapted by Matos and Fontaine (1996) – <b>Family cohesion subscale</b>	9 items In our family there is a feeling of togetherness. My family members really support each other. (...)	BR – $\alpha = .81$ PT – $\alpha = .87$

6 point likert scale

# 2. Method



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	Portugal							Brazil					
	Nr items	N	$\chi^2/g.l$	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	$ \lambda  >$	N	$\chi^2/g.l$	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	$ \lambda  >$
<b>Satisfaction with Life</b>	5	395	1.403	.997	.994	.032	.524	327	1.595	.994	.992	.043	.580
<b>Family Cohesion</b>	8	396	2.369	.989	.982	.059	.538	327	1.899	.988	.979	.053	.588

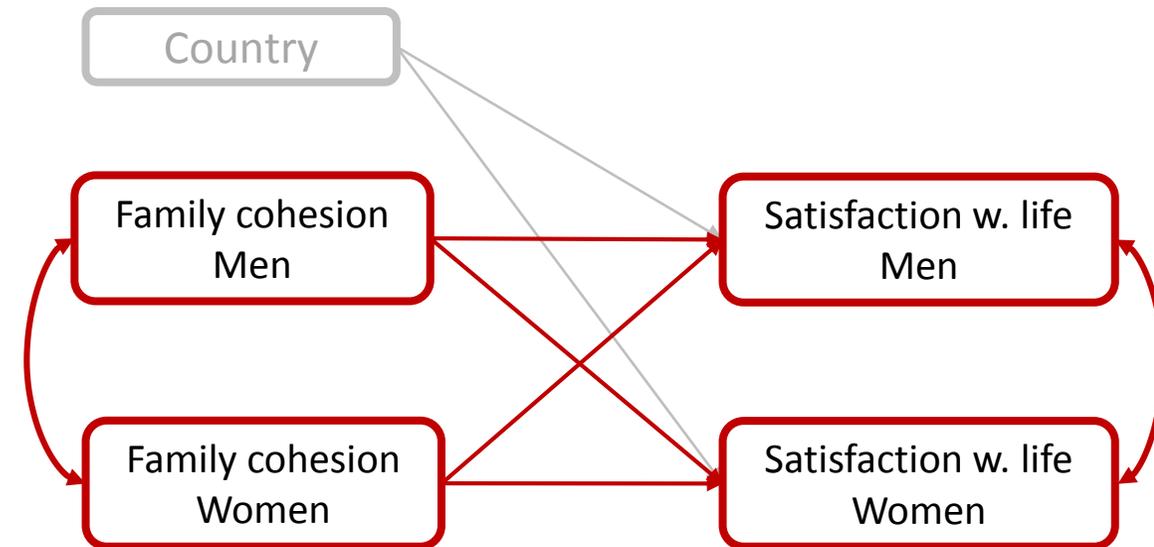
# 2. Method



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## Data analyses procedure

- Actor Partner Interdependence Model (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006)
  - *Analyzes were performed in AMOS using maximum-likelihood estimation method*
- Test of model fit
- Gender invariance in the direct paths was tested by a series of nested models in which the corresponding paths for men and women were set equal, one pair at a time (Gonzalez & Griffin, 2001).



# 3. Results



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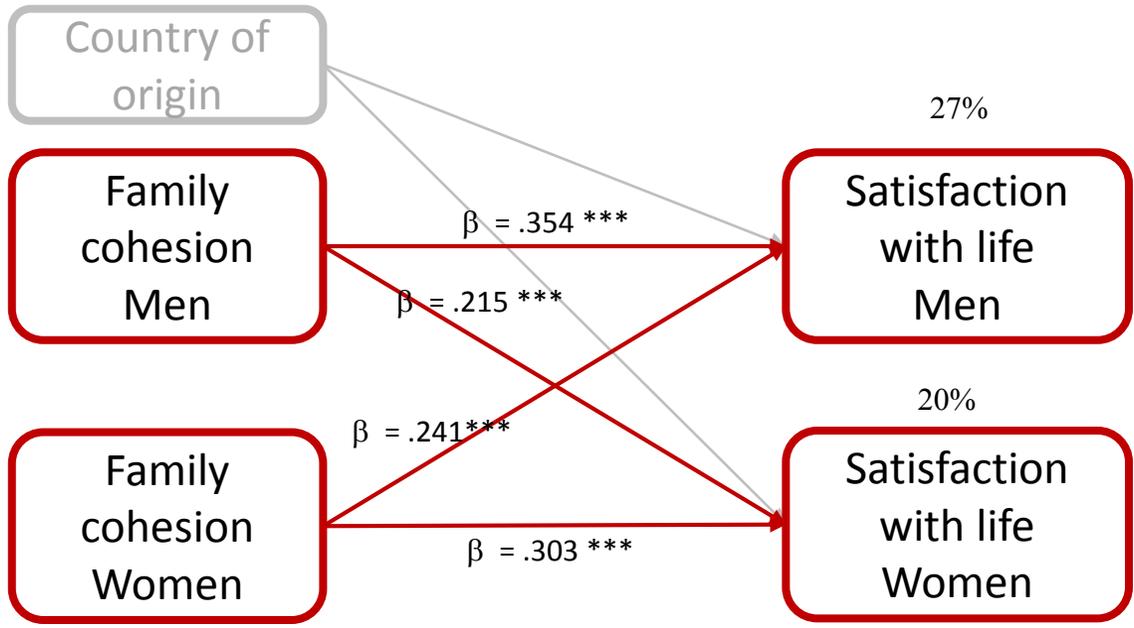
□ Mean differences

	Wives unemployed (G1)		Husbands unemployed (G2)	
	H	W	H	W
Satisfaction with Life	3.99 (1.06)	3.89 (1.16)	3.80 (.99)	4.01 (1.05)
Family Cohesion	4.88 (0.95)	5.04 (0.93)*	5.09 (.83)	4.95 (1.00)
	t(157) = 1.137; p = .037			

# 3. Results

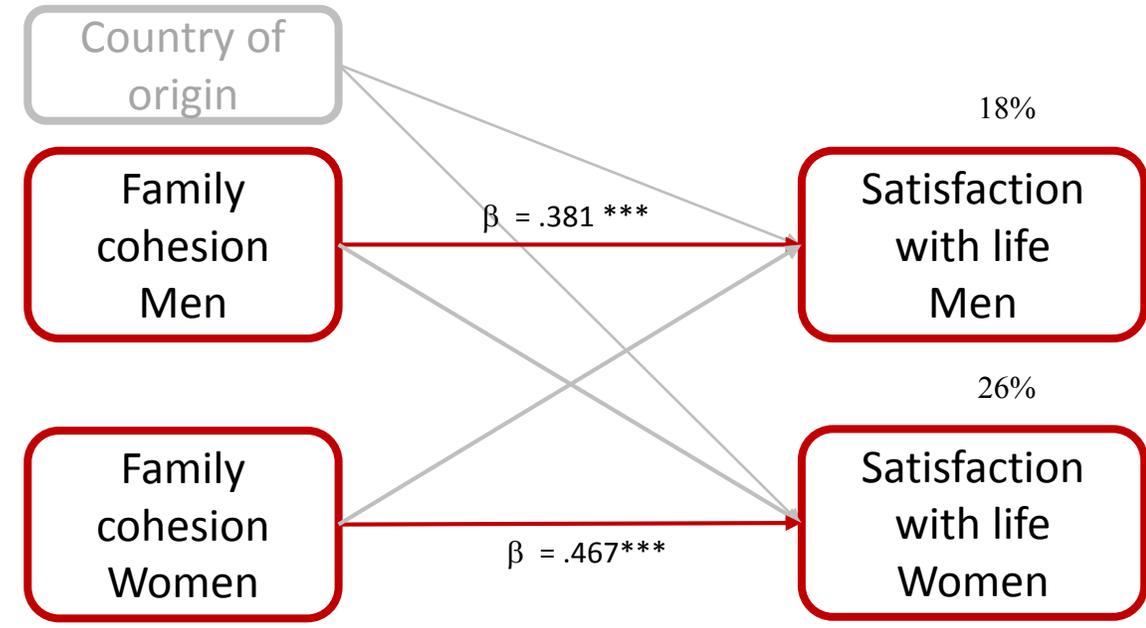


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$\chi^2(5) = 7,48; p = .188; \chi^2/df = 1.50; CFI = .982; RMSEA = .060$   
 $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 2.016, p = .569.$

**Group 1 – Women unemployed**



$\chi^2(5) = 7,90; p = .162; \chi^2/df = 1.58; CFI = .952; RMSEA = .087$   
 $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 4.008, p = .261$

**Group 2 – Men unemployed**

\*\*\* $p < .001$

# 4. Discussion



- ❑ Our results suggest that the experience of being unemployed may be quite universal
  - ❑ No country effect on satisfaction with life
  
- ❑ Portugal and Brazil are both collectivistic/familistic societies where family support and connectiveness is highly valued
  
- ❑ **Family cohesion** is a crucial resource to buffer the negative impacts of unemployment within the family, both for men and women

# 4. Discussion



- ❑ More similarities than differences across gender *but* in couples where women are unemployed there are both actor and partner effects
  - ❑ *Family cohesion has a wide impact within the family when women are unemployed*
  - ❑ *Women may be investing their time in promoting the quality of family ties promoting life satisfaction for all involved*
  - ❑ *Women may be gathering more support from their own branch of the family (namely from their mothers)*

# 4. Discussion



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## ■ Limitations

- Sample size, representativeness
- Not considering other dimensions  
(networks of support, family economic strain, number of children)

## ■ Contributions

- Grasp of a familial process with an intra-familial approach
- Accounting for context and gender



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**Thank you!**

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