



**Sello Editorial**

Universidad Nacional  
Abierta y a Distancia



# **HAPPINESS AND HUMAN WELL-BEING: INSIGHTS FROM REFLECTION, RESEARCH AND INTERVENTION IN LATIN AMERICA**

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Latin American Network for the Study  
and Intervention in Happiness and Well-being



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**Latin American Network for the Study and Intervention in Happiness and Well-being**

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# BOOK REVIEW

The book *“Happiness and Human Well-being: Insights from Reflection, Research and Intervention in Latin America”* arises as a process of the Red latinoamericana de estudio e intervención en felicidad y bienestar (Latin American Network for the Study and Intervention of Happiness and Well-being) formed by a group of academics and researchers from Colombia linked to the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia, Universidad Mariana and Universidad Única, from Mexico to the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, from Argentina to the Universidad Católica de Argentina and the Universidad de Buenos Aires and from Venezuela from the Universidad Metropolitana. One of the network’s aims is “to increase the level of happiness and well-being of Latin American people in their jobs, families, educational institutions and society.” This goal is fully in line with the third objective of solidarity development of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which aims to guarantee a healthy life and promote well-being at all ages, considering it essential for sustainable development. The book contains nine chapters that present research results or systematize intervention processes including various topics related to the clinic, education and organizations, thus allowing to show approaches to happiness and human well-being in children and university students. It also includes works that relate happiness and well-being with health, life project and insecurity. In addition, the book delves into the understandings of happiness and well-being within the framework of the approaches made from optimism, logotherapy and flourishing. In short, the book is considered an important contribution to the understanding of happiness and human well-being. It reviews different conceptual and theoretical positions and their applications, all based on careful and rigorous academic processes with deep social commitment..





# AUTHORS' PROFILES

## **Constanza Abadía García (Colombia)**

She holds a PhD in Education and Technology from UNAD Florida USA and a Master of Arts in Education - Higher Education School of Education, both from the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia in Florida USA, with specializations in Pedagogical Evaluation from the Universidad Católica de Manizales and Innovative Educational Projects from the Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica of Colombia. She is a Psychologist from the Universidad Santo Tomás in Colombia and an expert in Coaching Psychology certified by the Colegio de Psicólogos de Madrid in Spain. She also has experience in higher education as well as in academic, curricular and pedagogical-didactic management and innovation and quality assurance. She has held positions as Academic and Research Vice-President, Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities and professor. In secondary education, she has served as coordinator of distance high school, while in Educational Psychology, she has performed in the areas of vocational exploration, talent development, school adaptation and parenting school. She is a national and international lecturer on distance education issues and executive director of the Asociación Iberoamericana de Educación Superior a Distancia (AIESAD). She is also an academic member of the Consejo Nacional de Acreditación in Colombia and a founding member of the Psychology, Emotional Development and Education research group.

## María Elena Garassini Chávez (Colombia- Venezuela)

She is a psychologist with a PhD and a Master's Degree in Psychology, with emphasis on research in the development of socio-emotional skills, positive psychology and logotherapy. She is a professor of the PhD in Psychology at the Universidad Arturo Michelena, the Instituto Colombiano de Logoterapia and the Masters' Degree of Positive Leadership and Positive Education at the Universidad Tecmilenio of Monterrey-Mexico. She is also a professor of the course "Well-being in the 21st Century" at the Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano, professor and researcher of the Socio-emotional Skills Development Project at the Universidad Única and researcher (MinCiencias) at the Universidad UNICA.

She has worked on issues such as human development, well-being, resilience and sense of life in educational, hospital and organizational contexts. She has also designed training and intervention projects and programs in university and institutional contexts.

Her interest in addressing issues associated with well-being has allowed her to publish books, design courses and training programs and participate in various national and international events for the care of people in educational, family, organizational and governmental contexts.

## Pura Zavarce Armas (Venezuela)

She is a psychologist (School Mention) with a Master's Degree in Human Development Psychology (Universidad Central of Venezuela). Specialist in Family Therapy (Center for Couples and Family Development, USA-Fundana). NLP Practitioner by Dr. Richard Bandler. Certified Life Coach by ILC Academy. Graduate in Psychoneuroimmunology (Universidad de Los Andes – Creando Salud). She has Mindfulness Training with MSc. Josefina Blanco Baldó. She is the director of the School of Psychology at the Universidad Metropolitana de Caracas.

She was part of the founding team of the Diplomado de Psicología Positiva: bases para el bienestar (Cendeco-Unimet). She has been an advisor to various organizations and foundations on human development and well-being. She is the founder and president of the Sociedad Venezolana de Psicología Positiva - SOVEPPOS (Venezuelan Society of Positive Psychology), member of the Sociedad Venezolana de Psi-

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### **Astrid Sofía Suárez Barros (Colombia)**

She is a psychologist and a PhD (c) with a Master's Degree and a Specialization in Psychology, with an emphasis on Research and Family. She is a researcher for the Master's Degree in Community Psychology and Psychology of the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD) and a researcher categorized at the level of student with PhD (MinCiencias) of the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD). She is also a professor and trainer in human development and designer of virtual learning environments and teaching and human training materials. She has worked in the areas of human development, well-being and life projects in educational and organizational contexts, and she has designed human development projects and programs as part of public and private policies. She is interested in addressing issues associated with virtuality from emerging situations, subjectivities and themes that involve the subject in their new interactions, emphasizing the theme of the Life Project and the association and search for well-being.

### **Zeneida Rocío Ceballos Villada (Colombia)**

She is a psychologist and a PhD (c) in Psychology with a Master's Degree in Teaching and a researcher for the Master's Degree in Community Psychology and Psychology of the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD). She is part of the Psychology, Emotional Development and Education research group and a professor of the undergraduate program in Psychology and the Master's Degree in Community Psychology. She is also a trainer and designer of virtual environments. She is an academic peer of the Ministry of National Education of Colombia. She has worked on issues of human development, well-being, happiness and gender for 20 years in higher education educational contexts. She has also designed research and training projects. She is interested in deepening her knowledge of happiness and well-being, particularly applied from Latin American understandings, based on her own knowledge, especially from rural contexts.

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Well-being and happiness: research that relates well-being with school adaptation, life project and time periods. Speaker at different academic events.

Promoter and speaker at the Coloquio Internacional de Felicidad y Bienestar Humano (International Colloquium on Happiness and Human Well-being) (2016, 2018, 2020). Designer of virtual training courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Director of the Psychology, Emotional Development and Education research group (category C Colciencias). UNAD associate professor at Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), Colombia of Psychology programs and the Master's Degree in Community Psychology. Commissioner CONACES – Ministry of National Education. Linked to the Colegio Colombiano de Psicólogos (COLPSIC) as a Northern Zone Chapter Board member. He has also been deputy director of the Human Development -Life Cycle Field, author of books, book chapters, articles and papers at national and international levels.

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PhD in Educational Research and Innovation, Master's Degree in Higher Education, both from the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma of Puebla, Computer Systems Engineer from the Universidad de la Sierra, A.C. Experience in management of educational institutions. He has served as a professor, academic director, coordinator of teaching and research, training of instructors in upper secondary and higher education. Founding partner of the Centro de Investigación, Diagnóstico y Desarrollo de Talentos (Center for Research, Diagnosis and Development of Talents) whose model is based on the theory of positive psychology for human development, prioritizing

the well-being and happiness of its users. He is a lecturer and mentor in personal development, career counseling and talent-based entrepreneurship. He has published several research and scientific articles within the research lines of human development, well-being and happiness, educational inclusion, and educational technology. He is an active member and co-founder of the Red Latinoamericana de Bienestar y Felicidad (Latin American Network of Well-being and Happiness).

### **Lizeth Reyes Ruiz (Colombia)**

Psychologist, PhD in Social Sciences research in childhood and youth, PhD in Psychology, Master's degree in Psychology with research proficiency in human development, specialist in Clinical Psychology, specialist in Educational Project Management, researcher at the Centro de Investigación e innovación José Consuegra Higgins (José Consuegra Higgins Research and Innovation Center), research professor in undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the Universidad Simón Bolívar. Senior researcher (MinCiencias). Coordinator of the ASCOFAPSI 2020-2022

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### **Maira Alejandra Cruz Calderón (Colombia)**

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fear of crime, values and associated beliefs. She is also currently researching, from a gender perspective, the issue of attitudes towards women, gender prejudice and stereotypes, female leadership and the effective incorporation and integration of women in different areas.

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during the period 2020-2021. We have developed five events from the Caribbean node at the national level and we coordinated the network's national event in 2020. We are also generating knowledge as a product of research on issues related to the family.

### **Ingrid Catherine Burbano Guerrero (Colombia)**

Psychologist graduated from the Universidad Mariana, junior researcher for four years, institutional and regional speaker and author of the chapter of the institutional experiential book.

### **Jesús Andrés Estrada Cortés (Colombia)**

Psychologist and junior researcher for five years, institutional, regional and national speaker, author of several publications, including book chapters and newsletters.



# PRESENTATION

This book emerged from the Red Latinoamericana de Estudio e Intervención en Felicidad y Bienestar (Latin American Network for the Study and Intervention in Happiness and Well-being), consolidated at the end of 2020. This happy work team was created from the concerns of a group of researchers from the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia, belonging to the Psychology, Emotional Development and Education research group<sup>1</sup>. They were interested in analyzing and studying different problems related to quality of life and well-being. The event called Coloquio Internacional: Felicidad y Bienestar Humano (International Colloquium: Happiness and Human Well-being) was born from these concerns. Its first edition was held in 2016 and has subsequently been held biannually (2018 and 2020), celebrating three versions so far, in which different researchers and speakers have participated in the subject and the particular approaches proposed for each edition.

Since the first version in 2016, and with great enthusiasm, the proposal to develop an International Network on the subject arose. This proposal finally materialized in 2020 after the invitation made to the different participants in these colloquiums. The positive response of a significant number of these guests allowed the establishment of the Network by the end of the year 2020.

One of the Network's interests is disseminating experiences, knowledge and research on its topics of study and application, which is why this book was proposed based

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1 This group is made up of Astrid Sofía Suarez Barros, Zeneida Rocío Ceballos Villada, Nancy Flechas Chaparro, Constanza Abadía García and Alfredo Rojas Otálora.



on contributions from members of the network. Thus, this book contains research and conceptualizations of great quality and importance for the reader in its different chapters.

It is important to highlight that the topics of happiness and human well-being have appeared since the beginning of time. This concept can be said to have originated from the survival of individuals from their most primitive organizations and from the beginning of human life.

This concept would go back to the oldest human structures of development. By looking back to the origins of thought and language, it could be hypothesized that the issues in question were related to and perhaps gave rise to the oldest religious beliefs and then to the beginnings of philosophy.

However, since the written word came much later than language, it is difficult to establish a search for the earliest concepts.

In our Western cultural heritage, the milestones of happiness focus on the philosophical tradition of ancient Greece. There, Aristotle proposed happiness as the supreme or ultimate good and focused all human activities directed to that end. He associated happiness with the practice of virtue, asserting that one is truly happy if one acts well, not just occasionally, but for the most part, as a constant in its life. This model of happiness is known as eudaimonic, which means “living authentically”, that is, oriented towards personal growth and self-realization.

In contrast, another way of approaching happiness is the hedonic model, which refers to enjoyment, that is, the pursuit of pleasure. At the same time, simple and not excessive pleasures were proposed, such as the school of Epicurus, which focuses on hedonism within moderate pleasures. A third way focused on reducing the dependence on external factors to achieve self-sufficiency, such as the attitude of Diogenes and his cynicism, or the option of stoicism, which focused on living with the minimum necessary.

The study of happiness and well-being was the subject of philosophy for nearly 30 centuries and was also related to religions and the aspects that shaped the doctrines on the existence of divinities that decided on the lives of men.

With the development of the sciences of society and the mind, this subject began to be studied in a scientific way. Thus, psychology, sociology, psychiatry and neurology

began to work on the side of psychopathology to evaluate the causes of discomfort. Consequently, the ideals of well-being began to be studied in order to understand these issues.

From the end of the 19th century, the vision of psychopathology and madness as a non-magical and non-demonic problem was emphasized. Therefore, the knowledge of psychiatry, psychoanalysis and clinical and developmental psychology began to focus on the problems of the pursuit of happiness and well-being. Subsequently, sociology and neurology found changes to understand social causes and knowledge of the internal processes of the brain that guide the functioning of pleasure and well-being.

In the 1950s, the centers of pleasure in the brain were discovered, thus opening the whole route of knowledge of the biological bases of well-being and happiness. Later, in the 1970s and 1980s, sociology and psychology began the scientific and systematic study of these topics.

In psychology, Michael Argyle, from Oxford University in England, was a pioneer in the scientific study of happiness, publishing “The Psychology of Happiness” in 1987. Likewise, in sociology, Ruut Veenhoven, from the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, Netherlands, from his PhD on ‘Conditions of Happiness’, synthesized the results of 245 empirical studies on happiness. From there, he built the World Database of Happiness, which currently covers more than 20,000 research results.

At the end of the 20th century, Martin Seligman broadened and deepened the tendency to study happiness from psychology by proposing a field called positive psychology. With this name, he sought to emphasize the look of human development, transcending, without demeriting, all the study and work on the tools that have been developed from psychology and psychiatry to work on psychopathology and mental disorders and behavioral difficulties.

Seligman’s proposal has generated an important global movement to review and work on human development and the pursuit of scientific knowledge on happiness and well-being.

From this perspective and as an initiative of the Kingdom of Bhutan, in 2013, it was proposed to create the International Day of Happiness, which is celebrated every year on March 20, seeking the achievement of human development focused on this topic.

In Latin America, this view has been developing along with the recovery of the perspectives of the native peoples, rescuing related concepts, such as “good living” and similar that the different ancestral cultures raise in very interesting ways and that have been reviewed from different perspectives, such as anthropology, sociology and psychology.

The Red latinoamericana de estudio e intervención en felicidad y bienestar (Latin American Network for the Study and Intervention in Happiness and Well-being) has arisen from the interest in broadening and deepening the study, research and application of knowledge on the topics of happiness and human well-being. This interest has in turn given rise to this book.

This book contains nine chapters that integrate different perspectives and topics that are reviewed with great interest to contribute to these studies proposed by the Network.

In Chapter 1, Pura Zavarce Armas, from Venezuela, raises the importance of optimism and hope. She focuses on the conceptualization from a cognitive-behavioral perspective and from the model of lasting well-being proposed by positive psychology. She presents research results of quantitative studies with Venezuelan adults that show pessimistic attributional styles, especially in young people. However, there are also high levels of hope with levels of expectations of control in adverse circumstances. It is determined that optimism and hope become protective and preventive factors in mental health.

In Chapter 2 María Elena Garassini, takes the realities of Colombia and Venezuela, contexts in which she works, to show the perspectives of positive psychology and logotherapy as two conceptual visions that take psychology beyond the task of curing and improving mental problems and disorders, going beyond to a higher level of development and growth that allows individuals to achieve a life of enjoyment in quality and psychological well-being. The main approaches of positive psychology and those of logotherapy are presented to identify meeting points between these two perspectives that unite in the search for a deep understanding of well-being.

In Chapter 3, Marcela Muratori from Argentina explains how the experience of having witnessed or been a victim of a crime, as well as a high perception of insecurity, generate strong social effects and significantly affect the quality of life and social integration of individuals.

This chapter proposes the variation of social well-being based on the levels of concern about insecurity, risk perception and fear of crime in university students. The results show that, in addition to objective insecurity, which must be managed and reduced as much as possible by the entities in charge of society, it is necessary to deepen the knowledge of subjective insecurity and its effects on people's quality of life.

In Chapter 4, Rosa Domínguez Bolaños from Mexico presents the proposal that interventions in the field of positive psychology have become necessary for all levels of education to promote mental health and quality of life, thus generating attitudes that help to cope with the difficult times of today. During these times, for example, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, reality has become very unstable and it is necessary to strengthen attitudes to improve skills to actively seek well-being.

A proposal for educational intervention in positive psychology in medical students at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla is presented. The processes of design and implementation of this intervention are detailed, as well as its complementary evaluation and the analysis of these results.

In Chapter 5, Colombian authors Astrid Sofía Suárez Barros, Alfredo Rojas Otálora, Yolima Alarcón Vázquez and Lisette Reyes Ruiz evaluate how the life project construct has had different approaches and conceptualizations, but there is no evidence of an appropriate level of theoretical foundation. This is why the authors propose an approach from a configurational perspective. The exercise developed through a documentary review of different sources led to the conclusion that the life project construct can be analyzed as a configuration that integrates character traits and can be considered as a social network focused on prediction and prospective in the search for the individual's well-being.

Chapter 6 presents the meanings that children construct about the concept of happiness based on a study conducted by Zeneida Ceballos Villada, Constanza Abadía García and Nancy Flechas Chaparro. They investigated school-aged children between 9 and 11 years old in the cities of Bogotá, Neiva and Pasto in Colombia. This research shows important results, such as explanations and attributions in relation to happiness that are divided between arguments that show the reasons for being happy, criteria and symbols that allow valuing happiness, making evident a complex structure of children's understanding of happiness.

In Chapter 7, Erick Ibarra Cruz and Rosa Elba Domínguez Bolaños from Mexico show the importance of career counseling provided to students before they start university. They evaluate the results of an approach focused on personal strengths, oriented to the accumulation of positive characteristics such as virtues, strengths, abilities, gifts, talents, knowledge, experiences and positive emotions, which are inherent to the person. This analysis has found that these internal factors positively impact on performance in the academic and work environment, contributing to constant states of well-being and happiness.

In Chapter 8, Zeneida Ceballos Villada, Constanza Abadía García and Nancy Flechas Chaparro evaluate the dimensions of psychological well-being in children in the city of Pasto, Colombia. The results show the importance of emotional bonds with family members (original or extended), as well as with caregivers and people in the educational community. A series of conclusions are drawn with recommendations to strengthen these bonds and address aspects evaluated as negative. A psychoeducational program is proposed based on the concept of psychological well-being for school children in this city.

In Chapter 9, authors Ingrid Catherine Burbano Guerrero, Maira Alejandra Cruz Calderón, Jesús Andrés Estrada Cortés, and Claudia Carolina Cabrera Gómez present an analysis of the impact of a psychological well-being program on employees at a Higher Education Institution (HEI). This analysis is based on a pre-experimental quantitative study that highlights the program's contribution to mental health in the workplace. The program is approached from the perspective of positive psychology and organizational psychology. The study evaluated psychological well-being levels before and after implementing the program, finding evidence of significant improvement in well-being. The dimensions with the greatest statistical significance were personal growth, mastery of the environment and purpose in life, rising to high levels, very high with respect to the initial results. This showed the program's impact and its contributions to the promotion and prevention of mental health.

This is therefore a text on a variety of topics that provides a glimpse of the research perspectives on happiness and human well-being in Latin America, hoping that it will be the beginning of a series of publications that will broaden and deepen this knowledge and applications.

**Alfredo Rojas Otálora PhD**

Red latinoamericana de estudio e intervención en felicidad y bienestar (Latin American Network for the Study and Intervention in Happiness and Well-being)



# FOREWORD

On March 11, 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The forecasts regarding its impact, infections, losses and mental health effects fell far short; we are still here, wearing masks and holding our breath. In 2021, eighteen months after being plunged into uncertainty and on alert due to universal depression caused by the deadly virus, I am grateful to receive the honorable commission to write the prologue for the book that you now have in your hands or that you are viewing on your digital screen. This book opens a bright path through the darkness to understand in a very interesting way the contributions, challenges and benefits of managing psychological well-being based on the broad frame of reference of positive psychology.

Positive psychology, with its name and notable authors, already surpasses two decades of visibility. Psychologist Martin Seligman is known as its pioneer after his famous inaugural speech of 1998, when he formally received the presidency of the American Psychological Association (APA). During his speech, he announced the turn he would give to his mission during the mandate of the most notorious guild of psychologists in the world. A new approach to psychological well-being would be the main protagonist. From that time on, he already anticipated, between the lines, the path of his successful publications: “Authentic Happiness,” “Flourish” and “Learned Optimism,” among others.

The authors of this book are followers and managers of positive psychology (207 mentions) and well-being (373 mentions), who do not intend to make us followers of an ideological movement of fanaticism and self-help tools. As the reader progresses through the nine chapters, he/she will realize that each chapter is supported by re-

search work and theoretical review. It will certainly not be a quick glance at the pages of a novel that will activate curiosity and rush to reach the end and soon find out the fate of the protagonists in the outcome of the story. Step by step, you will note that in this publication you will be activating the provocation and the desire to explore, in an intertextual way, the wide and debated fields that characterize positive psychology today, which fortunately are addressed with digestible theoretical proposals, more experiential, inspiring and humanistic.

The pages weave together the challenges presented by the authors, which could be interconnected as follows. I have synthesized them into four key areas:

1. Deepening the study of subjective insecurity and the effects on people's quality of life.
2. Encouraging the development of lifestyles with optimistic thinking.
3. Designing, implementing and evaluating psychoeducational programs with theoretical and experiential learning of the mediating variables of healthy behaviors, personal strengths, which affect optimism and hope as key factors of psychological well-being.
4. Taking more collective responsibility for the prevention and promotion of mental health; the configurationist life project could be a useful tool for these purposes.

The authors' work is enriched because the theoretical perspective is approached in a multidimensional way. It would have been difficult to bring together Martin Seligman, Victor Frankl and Carol Ryff, among others, in the same space and time. It is appreciable that in this book, published in 2021, Latin American psychologists and researchers residing in various latitudes: Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela, come together to present the findings of studies conducted with samples of children, adolescents and adults, representing citizens, school, university and work teams.

We hope that this publication will serve as a reference and encouragement to those interested in the social sciences, who wish to explore the field of positive psychology and well-being research, so that hopefully they will take the risk of broadening semi-otics and providing new conceptualizations, assessment tools and strategies that will

materialize in intervention programs for precarious individual and collective mental health.

We are positive for the next phase of human history, which will soon be called the post-pandemic.

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# OPTIMISM: HEALTHY CHARACTER TRAIT AND PROTECTIVE FACTOR



Pura Zavarce Armas<sup>2</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Limited scientific publications on optimism and hope, as well as their expression and correlates in Venezuelan samples, justified their approach in studies linked to the research line called Psychological Well-being and its relationship with emotional bonds, emotional intelligence, motivation towards forgiveness, optimistic attributional style and hope in adolescents and adults by Professor Pura Zavarce Armas (Universidad Metropolitana de Caracas). This chapter aims to clarify the conceptualization from the cognitive-behavioral perspective and the model of lasting well-being proposed by positive psychology, highlighting the relevant correlates that confirm its influence on psychopathological and mental health variables. Likewise, it presents the findings on its manifestation in Venezuelan adults from two quantitative, non-experimental and transactional-descriptive research studies. The results first show a predominance of pessimistic attributional style, especially in young people, where personalization has the greatest contribution, with self-esteem being identified as an area of concern. Second, there is a high level of hope due to the non-permanent and per-



sistent nature of the causes of negative events, which is related to the perception of personal control space in the face of adverse circumstances. It confirms that optimism and hope positively influence positive affect and psychological well-being, making them protective and preventive factors for mental health, especially during changes or challenging situations.

**Keywords:** attributional style, optimism, hope, psychological well-being, anxiety and depression.





## RESUMEN

Limitadas publicaciones científicas sobre el optimismo y la esperanza, así como su expresión y correlatos en muestras venezolanas, justificó su abordaje en estudios vinculados a la línea de investigación denominada Bienestar psicológico y su relación con vínculos afectivos, inteligencia emocional, motivación hacia el perdón, estilo atribucional optimista y esperanza, en adolescentes y adultos, de la Profa. Pura Zavarce Armas (Universidad Metropolitana de Caracas). El propósito del capítulo se orienta hacia precisar la conceptualización desde la perspectiva cognitiva-conductual y el modelo de bienestar duradero propuesto por la psicología positiva, resaltar los correlatos relevantes que confirman su influencia en variables psicopatológicas y de salud mental. Así mismo, presentar los hallazgos sobre su manifestación en adultos venezolanos aportados por dos investigaciones de enfoque cuantitativo, diseño no experimental y transaccional-descriptivo. Los resultados muestran primero un predominio del estilo atribucional pesimista, especialmente en jóvenes, donde la personalización tiene la mayor aportación, identificándose a la autoestima como un área de



atención. Segundo, se evidencia alta esperanza, por el carácter no permanente y persistente de las causas de los eventos negativos, lo cual se relaciona con percepción de espacio de control personal ante las circunstancias adversas. Se confirma que el optimismo y la esperanza influyen positivamente sobre el afecto positivo y el bienestar psicológico, convirtiéndolos en factores de protección y prevención de la salud mental, especialmente en tránsitos o situaciones adversas.

**Palabras clave:** estilo atribucional, optimismo, esperanza, bienestar psicológico, ansiedad y depresión.



# INTRODUCTION

From the epistemological bases of psychoneuroimmunology, the contributions of neurosciences and epigenetics in the construction of a new perspective of health, on the one hand, show that neuroplasticity becomes evident by confirming that brain cells can regenerate and regions of the brain destined to one function can be used to carry out different functions, which shows the enormous potential for change and evolution throughout the life cycle. On the other hand, advances highlight the limits of genetics (with its associated determinism) and extend into epigenetic considerations that reveal the idea of control over genetics.

The space opened up by this biological perspective emphasizes the importance of personal choices, the level of consciousness, the lifestyle cultivated, the emotional experience managed, the quality of thoughts created and the coping strategies implemented in the face of problems and difficulties. All this influences the activation of the genetic regulatory mechanisms associated with health or disease, and the changes are transmitted to future generations.

The decision to activate or deactivate the environmental factors that contribute to building health and avoiding or reducing disease risk factors can be managed through conscious healthy practices. Cultivating optimism emerges as a beneficial practice for developing qualities that foster good character, based on a cognitive activity that enables the formation of future-oriented thoughts conducive to a positive, healthy emotional experience and attitudes toward life that make it worth living.



# CONCEPTUALIZATION OF OPTIMISM AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Experiences and how people perceive them affect feelings and behaviors. Understanding the process requires addressing the interpretation of events, mediated by the belief system, the bond with the people involved, areas of life that are compromised, values, etc. Whether consciously or not, meanings are built from childhood and nurtured throughout life.

Emotions indicate the quality of thoughts and the narrative they constitute. If you feel anxiety, fear or panic, it is evident that the thoughts are related to events that have not happened, but negatively compromise the emotional experience in the present.

Positive emotions associated with the future include experiences of satisfaction, confidence and faith, feeling confident, optimism and hope. The resulting positivity creates a more favorable mood to overcome sadness, improve resistance to depression, achieve better work performance and enhance health (Seligman, 2005). It paves the way for positive emotions to flow into experiences, thereby fostering positivity that creates a conducive space for making and implementing future plans (Fredrickson, 2009).

Thoughts about the future may result in either an optimistic or pessimistic outlook. An optimistic disposition does not mean creating a false sense of reality and the future by ignoring the negative aspects of experiences and conditions in order to believe that everything is fine when in fact it is not. On the contrary, studies predict that people who tend to adopt an optimistic perspective develop an equally optimistic attitude towards their own lives, which in turn predicts greater success in their endeavors (Seligman, 2006).

For positive psychology, a model that emphasizes the study of the processes underlying lasting well-being, character strengths represent traits with moral value whose conscious practice facilitates the cultivation of positivity and the management of a meaningful life. Moderately experienced positive traits nurture the notion of good character and virtuosity. Optimism, along with hope, implies believing in a better future, in working to achieve it and having a space of control over it.



As character traits, they cultivate the virtue of transcendence, which includes emotional strengths that go beyond the person to build higher and permanent connections with others, the meaning of life, the divine and the universe (Peterson & Park, 2009).

The study of optimism from a cognitive-behavioral perspective defines it as a dispositional personality trait that mediates between external events and personal interpretation of them and implies the tendency to expect a favorable future (Seligman, 2006). Therefore, it is related to the attitude towards circumstances, which has direct consequences on mood, behavior and the behavioral outcomes (Avia and Vázquez, 2011; Seligman, 2006; Seligman, 2011).

Research confirms that this positive quality, activated through coping strategies and an adequate level of emotional stability, facilitates actions aimed at preserving and managing health (Martorelli and Mustaca, as cited in Calvanese et al., 2010). Similarly, Calvanese et al. (2010), point out that its relationship with health is studied from a cognitive-behavioral and psychophysiological perspective, being considered as a mediating variable that promotes healthy behaviors. This, in turn, has positive effects on the course of an illness by increasing survival in terminal illnesses and facilitating a better perception of well-being and overall health. For example, Ridder et al. (2000), indicate that among patients with multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, there is a relationship between optimism and better adaptation to the disease and the necessary medical measures for treatment.

Londoño (2009) reports that he found a positive relationship between dispositional optimism and success in the university career in a group of Colombian students aged 17 to 26, observing a lower number of students withdrawing from or postponing courses. In another study, Kamenetzky et al. (2009) in Argentina found that personal characteristics such as low anxiety and an external attributional style that tends to optimism lead to a reduction or elimination of the aversive state of frustration.

From a relational framework, evidence shows that pessimistic people tend to have a passive attitude toward difficulties and challenges, which reduces their willingness to seek out connections with others in order to request support (Ferreira & Sherman, 2006; Seligman, 2006). This experience may limit the resources and hinder the development of healthy relationships aimed at fulfilling security and support needs during adverse situations, which is crucial for health and lasting well-being (Berscheid, 2007).

# OPTIMISTIC AND PESSIMISTIC EXPLANATORY STYLE. CORRELATES WITH PSYCHOPATHOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

In optimism, studied through the attributional reformulation of learned helplessness theory (Abramson et al., 1978), the causes that people attribute to positive and negative events are explored. This cognitive process establishes attributional dimensions that lead to either an optimistic or pessimistic explanatory style (Carr, 2007; Seligman, 2006).

Sanjuán and Magallares (2006) add that attribution could be understood as the cognitive process through which people provide explanations for the situations they experience. Depending on the reasons inferred, different emotions will be experienced.

On the other hand, Seligman (2006) emphasizes that the explanatory style is more than just words spoken when things go well or poorly; it is a way of thinking that is learned in childhood and adolescence. This style derives from one's own beliefs about their place in the world, personal worth, feelings of deservedness and contribution, as well as their capacity for hope. These conceptions define whether one is optimistic or pessimistic and are a result of the interpretative pattern associated with three dimensions that shape the explanatory style. These dimensions are personalization, permanence and pervasiveness.

Personalization refers to the degree to which a situation is explained by internal or external causes (internality – externality), meaning the personal responsibility attributed to the event. In this sense, optimists tend to externalize the causes of adversities that happen to them and internalize the causes of their achievements. Conversely, pessimists internalize the causes of negative events and externalizes the causes of successes, attributing them to chance or luck.

Permanence refers to the time that the causes of the event last or are maintained (stability – instability). In this case, optimists attribute stability to situations they view as positive and perceive adverse situations as temporary. Conversely, pessimists believe that the causes and consequences of adverse events tend to remain over time, while those associated with positive events are unstable or fleeting.

Finally, pervasiveness considers the extent to which causes affect various areas of life or are limited to the specific situation (globality – specificity). In this case, optimists perceive positive events as having the potential to impact multiple areas of their lives, while negative events are seen as having a specific impact on the situation or circumstance without necessarily affecting other areas. On the contrary, pessimists believe that negative events and their causes will impact multiple or all areas of their lives, while the causes of positive events may have a minimal impact and are limited to the specific context in which they occurred.

These interpretive views construct an attributional style that organizes the way life and its events will be interpreted, taking the form of an Optimistic Explanatory Style (OES) and a Pessimistic Explanatory Style (PES).

### **The Optimistic Explanatory Style (OES) tends to consider:**

- The causes of negative events as external to the person, temporary and affecting a specific area of life.
- The causes of positive events as internal to the person (referring to personal qualities or characteristics), permanent over time and affecting other areas of life, meaning they are global.

### **In contrast, the Pessimistic Explanatory Style (PES) features the opposite characteristics:**

- The causes of negative events are attributed to personal characteristics (internal), have a permanent nature over time and have a broad impact (global impact).
- The causes of positive events are attributed to external factors (external), are temporary, and their impact is specific.

According to Seligman (2006), one can have an optimistic perception in one dimension and a pessimistic perception in another.

From the attributional model, how is hope constructed? Having or lacking hope will be a consequence of the dimensions of permanence and pervasiveness, considering only the attribution to the causes of negative events. Therefore, these dimensions focus on valuing the temporary and specific nature of the causes. This helps to limit feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, thereby fostering hope, especially during transitions through adverse or negative situations. When negative events and their causes are perceived as permanent and global, it fuels hopelessness and the impression that nothing one does will affect what happens in their life (Seligman, 2006).

Sanjuán et al. (2013) present a review of studies reporting the effects of optimistic (positive) and pessimistic (negative) attributional styles. They point out that according to Abramson et al.'s (1978) theory of hopelessness, with regard to negative events, the dimension of personalization (internality) predicts declines in self-esteem and is less important than the dimensions of permanence (stability) and pervasiveness (globality) in predicting depression. Similarly, with respect to cross-sectional studies, most show an association between the Pessimistic Explanatory Style (PES) and the development of depressive symptoms. However, in other studies, some of which are longitudinal and also analyze PES in relation to adverse events, results report that PES predicts clinical depression, anxiety symptoms and disorders, hostility, personality disorders and schizophrenia.

Other research also explains the relationship between optimistic/pessimistic attributional style, depressive symptoms, and well-being. In a 14-week prospective study with young adults, Southall & Roberts (2002) found that participants who were asymptomatic at the beginning of the study and had low self-esteem and a negative attributional style exhibited an increase in depressive symptoms when exposed to high levels of stress, compared to the rest of the sample.

Sanjuan et al. (2013), with the aim of analyzing the psychometric properties of the Spanish version of the Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ by Peterson et al., 1982) for negative situations, in a sample of 815 people, not only confirmed that the items fit the original three-factor model associated with the three attributional dimensions but also reported results demonstrating a positive correlation between the attributional dimensions and the negative explanatory style, with depression and negative affect, and a negative correlation with positive affect.

Finally, Moreno and Marrero (2015), when examining the relationships between optimism, self-esteem, subjective well-being and psychological well-being in a sample of 1,403 Mexican adults aged 17 to 78 of both genders, found that optimism and self-esteem positively correlated with various indicators of subjective well-being and psychological well-being. Additionally, for both genders, optimism was the main predictor of subjective well-being, while self-esteem was the main predictor of psychological well-being.

Some research with Venezuelan samples provides relevant information about optimism and its correlates. Bencomo et al. (2004) studied 117 nursing staff members at the Hospital Universitario of Maracaibo to examine the relationship between personality traits, psychological adjustment and burnout syndrome. The findings not only indicated an absence of a relationship with a “type personality” but also confirmed a connection with specific traits and psychological adjustment ability. A relevant trait present in non-burned-out individuals was optimism, along with a realistic perspective of events, the ability to establish interpersonal connections and high psychological adjustment.

In another study, Sojo and Guarino (2006) evaluated personal characteristics and psychosocial, demographic, economic and physical and mental health factors among unemployed individuals. They found that optimistic people with high self-esteem and a sense of control exhibited fewer physical and psychological symptoms, concluding that these variables serve as protective factors for health.

Correia and Rodríguez (2014) explored the relationship between family dynamics, economic hardship, self-concept, achievement motivation, gender and psychological well-being in high school students aged 15 to 18. One of the most significant findings was that individuals with higher psychological well-being had lower levels of hopelessness and a tendency toward positive self-evaluation.

Finally, when relating attributional style to depression, Seligman (2005) points out that a pessimistic thinking style can have an adaptive value, being useful in anticipating risks and making decisions. However, if it becomes more pronounced, it may predispose individuals to depressive episodes, lack of initiative and poor health.

# OPTIMISM AND HOPE IN VENEZUELAN ADULTS

The evidence presented is conclusive regarding the importance of optimism as a protective factor for mental health and well-being. The limited scientific publications on its expression and correlates in Venezuelan samples motivated its approach in several research studies that resulted in undergraduate theses for the degree of Psychology at the Universidad Metropolitana de Caracas. The contributions of these studies are presented below. The research studies fall under the research line of Professor Pura Zavarce Armas, called Psychological Well-being and its relationship with emotional bonds, emotional intelligence, motivation towards forgiveness, optimistic attributional style and hope in adolescents and adults.

It aims to deepen the understanding of the psychological processes underlying behavior in each dimension of the development mentioned above in adolescents and adults. Similarly, by approaching the relationships identified between these variables and psychological well-being, the goal is to provide scientific evidence to facilitate the evaluation of explanatory models that adjust to the complexity of the processes in the Venezuelan context, as well as the design of resources aimed at the prevention and promotion of personal and collective well-being.

The empirical contributions of two quantitative research studies on the optimistic/pessimistic attributional style and its relationship with psychopathological and mental health variables are particularly relevant. The following section details the methodology and main results, which will be used to formulate the integrated conclusions in the final part.

The first study aimed to associate optimistic/pessimistic attributional style, attachment styles and various sociodemographic variables with anxiety and psychological well-being in adults aged 20 to 65 from the Metropolitan Area of Caracas (Olivares, 2018). It was a descriptive-correlational field research study with a non-experimental and cross-sectional-descriptive design and a partial explanatory value (Hernández et al., 2008). The study involved a sample of 260 individuals of both genders, aged 20 to 65, and marital status was also considered.

**The instruments used were:**

- Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) (Peterson et al., 1982), with a linguistic validity version by experts, conducted by Ceballos and López (2018) and Olivares (2018).
- Fraley et al.'s (2000) Close Relationships Scale, validated by Herrera and Lyon (2012).
- State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (IDARE) by Spielberger and Díaz – Guerrero (1975).
- Ryff's (2007) Psychological Wellbeing Scale, validated by Zambrano (2018).

The data were analyzed using Pearson's bilateral correlation statistic to determine relationships, and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used.

The study results report two predictive profiles for anxiety (one for state anxiety and another for trait anxiety), with hope identified as a potential protective factor. Predictive profiles indicate that individuals who are divorced or widowed and feel hopeless are likely to experience higher levels of state anxiety. Conversely, younger individuals with more a pessimistic attributional style, insecure attachment style, female gender, who perceive low levels of hope and have a pessimistic attributional style in positive situations, are more likely to exhibit higher levels of trait anxiety.

Regarding psychological well-being, five predictive profiles were found, highlighting that an optimistic attributional style and a healthy (secure) attachment style are significantly associated with greater perceived psychological well-being, especially in the dimensions of positive relationships, achievements, self-acceptance and confidence. In the dimension of positive relations, individuals with a more optimistic attributional style and a secure attachment style tend to report higher levels of satisfaction. For the achievements dimension, older individuals with a more optimistic attributional style in positive situations and a secure attachment style will experience higher levels of well-being. With regard to the dimension of personal growth and purpose in life, age is the sole contributing factor, indicating that younger individuals are more likely to value greater satisfaction. In the self-acceptance and confidence dimension, only individuals with an optimistic attributional style report greater satisfaction. Finally,

for the competence dimension, no sufficient correlation was found to suggest a predictive profile. Overall, an optimistic attributional style and a secure attachment style are the best predictors of higher levels of total psychological well-being.

The second study aimed to identify the effect of emotional intelligence as a mediator in the relationship between the optimistic/pessimistic attributional style and its impact on psychological well-being and depression among young adults in the Metropolitan Area of Caracas (Ceballos and López, 2018). This was a correlational and explanatory research with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design and an explanatory scope. The sample consisted of 243 individuals of both genders, aged 18 to 30. Marital status and socioeconomic status were also considered using the Grafar-Méndez method (Méndez y Méndez, 1994). The instruments used were:

- Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) (Peterson et al., 1982), with a linguistic validity version by experts, conducted by Ceballos and López (2018) and Olivares (2018). Ryff's (2007) Psychological Well-being Scale, validated by Zambrano (2018). TMMS-24 Scale (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2004).
- Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI-II) (1996), in its Spanish adaptation (Sanz et al., 2003). The path analysis was used to explain the relationship of endogenous variables with an exogenous variable and a mediator, using AMOS 22 from the PAWS Statistics software package. This technique was chosen under the assumption that the study variables are quantitative and, according to the diagram by Pedret et al. (2000), is the appropriate analysis to observe the effect and magnitude of the optimistic/pessimistic attributional style and emotional intelligence on psychological well-being and depression, and to determine the existence or absence of a moderating effect of emotional intelligence.

The most significant results of the study indicate that among the young adults in the sample, there was a predominance of a pessimistic attributional style. Specifically, the dimension of personalization leaned towards pessimism for both positive and negative events, contributing more heavily to the development of a pessimistic attributional style. In contrast, the dimensions of permanence and pervasiveness showed a more optimistic trend, especially in relation to negative events. Consequently, hope was high, and emotional intelligence was average across the three factors that constitute it (attention, clarity and repair). As for psychological well-being, scores were within the normal range across its five dimensions (positive relations,



achievements, personal growth and purpose in life, self-acceptance and confidence and competence), and lastly, levels of depression were low.

On the other hand, only two significant relationships were associated with sociodemographic variables with optimistic/pessimistic attributional style and psychological well-being, thus demonstrating that socioeconomic status I (upper class) reflects higher levels of psychological well-being and an optimistic attributional style compared to the other status (II, III and IV).

With respect to emotional intelligence, it does not moderate the impact of the variables but rather predicts them. Therefore, it is considered an exogenous variable with a direct relationship with the optimistic/pessimistic attributional style and psychological well-being. It is emphasized that depression is entirely excluded from this relationship since the relationship is not significant due to the low levels of depression.

When observing the path analysis, the attention factor (perception) has a negative impact on the dimension of achievements in psychological well-being, indicating that greater attention is associated with a lower valuation of well-being in this dimension. The clarity factor (understanding) positively predicts all dimensions of psychological well-being and the attributional style, meaning that greater emotional understanding enhances the appreciation of well-being and tends to make the attributional style more optimistic. Regarding the repair factor (regulation), it has a positive impact on four of the five dimensions of psychological well-being (positive relations, achievements, personal growth and purpose in life and self-acceptance and confidence) and negatively predicts the attributional style, meaning that greater emotional regulation is associated with a more pessimistic attributional style.



# CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from both studies indicate a prevalence of the pessimistic attributional style, especially among young adults, with the dimension of personalization contributing most to the pessimistic trend. This implies that positive events are attributed to external factors, with a temporary duration and a specific impact, whereas negative events are attributed to internal characteristics of individuals, considered permanent over time and having a global impact.

Personalization refers to the personal space of responsibility attributed to causes. Given the pessimistic trend, the constructed perspective places greater responsibility on personal characteristics associated with limitations and flaws, while attributing positive outcomes to others or chance. Thus, it can be a familiar experience to have high expectations for one's own responsibilities that seem unattainable, limitations in recognizing one's influence on positive events, fostering devaluation and low self-esteem, feeling unloved by others and failing to appreciate talents that nurture healthy notions of self-efficacy. The consequent personal effect can negatively influence different areas of a person's development, making it a crucial area of focus, especially among young adults.

Despite the prevailing pessimistic trend, hope was high in more than half of the sample in both studies. The dimensions constituting hope are the permanence and pervasiveness of negative events, and in both dimensions, the trend was optimistic. High levels of hope refer to viewing the causes of negative events as temporary and specific. This can enhance the perception that one's actions can influence life, limiting hopelessness and nurturing hope during the transition through adverse situations (Seligman, 2006).

On the other hand, dysfunctional cognitions associated with the attribution of causes and emotional bonds are those that predict anxious experiences, both temporarily (state) and more generally or over time (trait) (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998; Seligman, 2006; Olivares, 2018). Therefore, an optimistic attributional style, hope and a secure attachment style are confirmed as protective factors for mental health,

particularly in the assessment of negative or adverse events. This opens up opportunities for prevention, suggesting the need for psychological and psychoeducational interventions aimed at fostering these protective factors.

With respect to emotional intelligence, it does not moderate the impact of any variable but rather positively predicts psychological well-being and optimistic attribution. Skills associated with emotional intelligence, such as the ability to identify the different emotions and the thoughts that provoke them and regulate them, become personal domains for learning to cultivate optimism and hope, as well as to appreciate a healthy and optimal psychological functioning. The fact that emotional regulation has a negative effect on the way positive and adverse events are interpreted highlights the importance of personal space in controlling and regulating emotional states and its influence on interpretation. If this personal space leads to a more pessimistic attributional style, it is possible that greater control may lead individuals to interpret negative events with more personal responsibility and positive events with less influence. This hypothesis is further supported by the fact that the dimension contributing most to a pessimistic attributional style was personalization, which predicts decreases in self-esteem and is less important than permanence and pervasiveness in predicting depression (Abramson et al., 1978).

The evidence provided by these studies with Venezuelan samples reinforces the association of a pessimistic explanatory style as a factor of vulnerability or predisposition to developing different forms of psychological distress. Additionally, it highlights the preventive opportunities available by guiding psychological and psychoeducational interventions towards the development of healthy, optimistic and hopeful thinking styles, alongside addressing personal dimensions and self-esteem, and fostering secure attachments.



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# WELL-BEING: CONTRIBUTIONS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND LOGOTHERAPY



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## ABSTRACT

The study and promotion of well-being became very popular in the twentieth century. However, it is not a new topic; it has its roots in Greek philosophy, where thinkers discussed eudaimonia, a form of happiness derived from a good spirit, genius or consciousness (eu: good, daimon: spirit). Martin Seligman's speech as president of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1998, where he pointed out that psychology as a science aims to both heal what is broken and promote the best of each person, led to the development of a corpus of research on human well-being, positive and virtuous aspects of behavior, known as positive psychology. According to positive psychology theory, well-being is comprised of five elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning in life and accomplishments, with a cross-cutting axis formed by character strengths. Logotherapy or therapy of meaning is as a form of existential analysis developed by Dr. Viktor Frankl based on his experiences as a prisoner of war in Nazi concentration camps. Frankl first introduced logotherapy in 1926 to an academic audience during a conference held at the Academic Association for Medical.



Psychology, founded by Fritz Wittels, Maximilian Silbermann and Frankl himself. Logotherapy involves a set of principles and techniques for therapeutic work, both individually and in groups, designed to awaken the individual's spiritual or noetic dimension, which remains healthy but can lie dormant. The core of logotherapy emphasizes the importance of a meaning in life for personal development, considering the development of values such as creation, experience and attitude, and the lack of meaning as a form of noogenic neurosis experienced by many people.

Positive psychology integrates the development of a meaning in life as a fourth element of well-being, and similarly, it includes this concept in its classification of character strengths under the virtue of transcendence, particularly represented in the strength of spirituality. The central approaches of positive psychology and logotherapy allow us to identify the meeting points between the two approaches and their contributions to the current understanding of well-being.

**Keywords:** well-being, positive psychology, logotherapy, character strengths, meaning in life.



## RESUMEN

El estudio y la promoción del bienestar ha tomado gran auge en el siglo XX, aunque no es un tema nuevo, ya que ha sido planteado desde los filósofos y pensadores griegos que hablaban de la eudaimonía entendida como la felicidad que proviene del buen espíritu, genio o conciencia (*eu: buen, daimon: espíritu*). El discurso de Martin Seligman como presidente de la Asociación Americana de Psicología (APA) en 1998, donde señala que la psicología como ciencia tiene como objetivo tanto curar lo que está roto como promover lo mejor de cada persona, dio nacimiento a un corpus de investigaciones referidas al bienestar humano, aspectos positivos y virtuosos de comportamiento que se denominó psicología positiva. La teoría del bienestar de la psicología positiva plantea que el bienestar está constituido por cinco elementos: emociones positivas, experiencias óptimas, relaciones interpersonales, sentido de vida y logros, y un eje transversal constituido por las fortalezas del carácter. La logoterapia o terapia del sentido considerada como una forma de análisis existencial, fue creada por el doctor Viktor Frankl tras sus vivencias como prisionero de guerra en los campos de concentración Nazi. Frankl habló por primera vez de logoterapia en 1926, ante un públi-



co académico durante una conferencia realizada en la Asociación Académica para la Psicología Médica, fundada por Fritz Wittels, Maximilian Silbermann y Frankl. La logoterapia posee una serie de principios y técnicas para el trabajo terapéutico en forma individual y grupal que buscan despertar en los individuos su dimensión espiritual o noética que nunca enferma, pero puede estar dormida. El centro de sus planteamientos refiere a la importancia del sentido de vida para un desarrollo pleno considerando el desarrollo de los valores de creación, experiencia y actitud, y la falta de sentido como la neurosis noógena, que viven muchas personas.

La psicología positiva integra el desarrollo del sentido de vida como cuarto elemento del bienestar y de igual manera lo integra en la clasificación de las fortalezas del carácter en la virtud de la trascendencia, particularmente representada en la fortaleza de la espiritualidad. Los planteamientos centrales de la psicología positiva, así como de la logoterapia nos permiten identificar los puntos de encuentro entre ambos así como los aportes de cada uno a la comprensión actual de bienestar.

**Palabras clave:** bienestar, psicología positiva, logoterapia, fortalezas del carácter, sentido de vida.

# INTRODUCTION

Learning about human well-being has become a prominent focus in the 21st century, particularly following Dr. Martin Seligman's 1998 statement as president of the American Psychological Association (APA). Seligman stated that his tenure would focus on a "more positive" psychology, one that would consider the study of human well-being alongside the study of pathologies and intelligence. Psychology should not only study disorders and weaknesses but also the potentials and virtues of human beings (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology is the scientific study of the healthy psyche, intended to counterbalance the traditional focus on the study of mental disorders and provide a theoretical framework for understanding the processes, conditions and mechanisms that describe a good life. It aims to expand beyond the traditional biomedical model inherited from medicine by studying psychological well-being, thus identifying, measuring and enhancing the promotion of a healthy life across various human contexts (Lupano and Castro, 2010).

When we delve into the conceptual foundations that gave rise to positive psychology, we find significant contributions from Viktor Frankl in logotherapy, humanist theories and emotional intelligence. All of them emphasize the importance of self-realization, finding the meaning in life and emotional management as fundamental aspects, like a compass that guides human development.

Taking up the core of positive psychology, which is the scientific study of well-being that fosters human flourishing through the elements outlined in the PERMA model—Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishments—we see that finding meaning in life is regarded as one of the key sources of well-being within this conceptual framework. By presenting Viktor Frankl's theories on logotherapy, which inspired one of the pillars (Meaning) of the PERMA model, we not only gain a conceptual framework that offers valuable insights into the existential or spiritual dimension of human beings but also deepen our understanding of meaning in life as a source of well-being in the PERMA model of positive psychology.

The chapter will begin with a general overview of positive psychology. It will then move on to discuss logotherapy, and finally, the concept of meaning in life within the framework of positive psychology. To conclude, the chapter will offer some final reflections on the contributions of both conceptual frameworks to the contemporary study of well-being.

## HISTORY OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The history of positive psychology is a journey through the evolution of our understanding of the human being, encompassing physical, psychological, social and even spiritual dimensions. From the survival anxieties of early humans and their defense against threats to the existential concerns of the great thinkers of Athens, who grappled with fear and death, there has been a long-standing focus on understanding and addressing problems, painful aspects, and distress in human behavior.

The birth of medical sciences, philosophy, sociology, major religions and psychology as a science initially centered on the understanding of the human being from a negative or suffering perspective. Early psychology, therefore, focused on studying, explaining and aiding pathological behaviors and mental illnesses. The multiple theories and conceptual frameworks that emerged provided insights into the formation and functioning of the human psyche, as well as the causes and development of mental pathologies throughout different stages of life. Research in genetics, biochemistry, psychology and sociology contributed to the understanding of human behavior and the development of interventions through psychotherapy and pharmacological treatment.

In the 19th century, Western thought was grounded in the scientific paradigm of classical positivism, where experimental research was considered the preferred method of study. A key milestone in this era was the establishment of the first experimental psychology laboratory by Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig in 1879. Alongside the emphasis on experimental studies, the medical model for treating the body became prominent. Consequently, the treatment of mental illnesses mirrored this biomedical approach, with Sigmund Freud at the forefront of studying and treating women with hysteria (Gancedo, 2008).



Philosophy also provides significant insights into human nature, reflecting the prevailing considerations of its time. René Descartes, for example, proposed a dualistic view of humanity, where the mind and body were seen as distinct dimensions. Consequently, psychology was tasked with studying, intervening in and healing the psyche, just as medicine focused on the body (Gancedo, 2008).

The study of the potentialities and positive aspects of human behavior had not received much attention from the academic community, given the prevailing focus on mental illness, its study, treatment and intervention. Consequently, in the care of people affected by mental disorders, particularly in the aftermath of the world wars in the 20th century, their potentialities as a resource for recovery—both physically and psychologically—was often overlooked.

In his inaugural speech as president of the APA in 1998, Martin Seligman, after a thorough analysis of psychology as a science that studies the human being, identified three primary focuses: the study of pathologies and human suffering, the study of intelligence as a distinguishing human trait and the study of human potentialities to foster personal and collective well-being. In his speech, Seligman emphasized that psychology should address both the weaknesses and strengths—or the bright aspects—of human beings. He also stressed that people, even without any mental disorders, have a great capacity for recovery and integrity through discovering a positive dimension in critical situations. This recognition of a healthy and highly potential dimension within humans is inherited by positive psychology from logotherapy and Viktor Frankl's research. Developing a conceptual framework to fully understand and cultivate the potential of all individuals has been an ongoing challenge for psychology as a science (Seligman, 2002).

Historically, around the 1950s, the medical model began to show limitations and proved inadequate for addressing the societal challenges of the postwar era. This led to a broader debate on the concept of health and illness. In 1947, the World Health Organization (WHO) proposed a definition of health that transcended the mere absence of disease, defining it as a complete and integral state of well-being encompassing physical, mental, and social dimensions (Gancedo, 2008).

Parallel to WHO's emphasis on a comprehensive concept of health, during the 1950's and 1960s, humanist psychology proposed that the study of human beings should focus on meeting needs ranging from the most basic physical-biological aspects to social-relational and psychological-emotional spheres, ultimately enabling

individuals to achieve self-realization. In their conceptual frameworks, leading figures of this movements, such as Rogers (1993) and Maslow (1991), emphasized studying healthy populations, focusing on subjective experience, individual freedoms in making choices and the importance of personal meaning. The conscious use of personal resources was highlighted as a fundamental principle for effectively facing the challenges and difficulties that life presents.

The emergence of humanistic psychology marked the first step toward the so-called salutogenic approach, which shifts the focus of mental health to the development of psychological potential. This trend to consider and cultivate human potential has made significant contributions to psychotherapy practice. Additionally, in the field of social sciences, due to its relevance to its object of study, it also left its mark on existential philosophy and phenomenological methods. However, this legacy did not make a more substantial impact on academia due to the strong influence of traditional empirical science (Arancibia et al., 2000).

The consolidation of the salutogenic approach in medicine, social sciences and psychology emerged in the 1980s, developing the principle of health promotion. In psychology, research and applications began to explore the concept of health and its promotion, leading to a growing emphasis on health psychology. This field focuses on studying the health-disease continuum and integrates the salutogenic model. Thus, psychology as a science started to show interest and integrate studies related to human potentialities and their development. Research on attachment (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1986), psychological well-being (Diener, 1994; Ryan et al., 2008; Ryff & Singer, 1998), creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; De Bono, 2008; Sternberg, 1997), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996; Steiner, 2002), multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1998), and resilience (Cyrulnik, 2007), among others, provides evidence of the growing interest in studying positive human characteristics.

The body of research on human potential has shown how the development and promotion of human well-being act as cushions against psychological pathologies and as drivers of holistic health that permeates the physical, psychological and social spheres of human development. Examining the impact of studying positive factors, even beyond these two dimensions, it becomes clear that cultivating human qualities, virtues, and strengths can serve as resources for coping with adversity and trauma. This approach informs treatment and rehabilitation strategies that enhance psychological capital and improve overall quality of life (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Ryff and Singer, 2007; Seligman, 2002; Vásquez and Hervás, 2009).

The principles of health prevention and promotion, derived from the thorough scientific study of human potential (Ryff and Singer, 2007), as well as treatment and rehabilitation (Vázquez and Hervás, 2009), guide the research direction of the salutogenic model's scientific production. These models have also led to the development of training programs in both international and national contexts (Cabrera and Caldas, 2019; Norrish et al., 2013).

## WHAT IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

Positive psychology, or the science of well-being, is the scientific study of human potential or positive aspects. Its focus on knowledge and empowerment aims to foster subjective well-being and provides an ideal conceptual framework for health promotion. This approach, which emphasizes the study of positive traits (potential, strengths or virtues) rather than merely focusing on illness, is known as a salutogenic approach.

All findings and insights into human potential, emerging from the salutogenic model, have proven valuable for designing effective interventions. Thus, understanding psychological resources and personal strengths, as well as promoting their development, has become the responsibility of educators, parents, coaches and companies (Delle Fave et al., 2009).

In the early 20th century, positive psychology and the three foundational pillars of well-being (human strengths, positive emotions and positive institutions) laid the groundwork for the salutogenic approach (Seligman, 2002). Martin Seligman, the father of positive psychology, introduced the concept of happiness as enduring happiness, referring to the happiness formula proposed by researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky:

$$H = S + C + V$$

In this formula, “H” represents enduring happiness, “S” refers to the set point for happiness, influenced by genetics (inheritance), “C” refers to life circumstances (where control and manipulation are relatively limited) and “V” indicates voluntary activities. Studies have shown that the “V” factor has the greatest impact on how we perceive well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Seligman, 2002).

In the early 21st century, research into human well-being began to unveil fascinating discoveries: individuals who experience happiness tend to live longer and enjoy

better health. In the workplace, they are more productive and valued. Physically, they handle pain more effectively, are more attentive to their health and safety and their positive emotions help offset negative ones. Similarly, happy people tend to be more sociable and have better interpersonal relationships (friends, partners and social groups), experience less loneliness and demonstrate a greater capacity for altruism, focusing less on themselves (Seligman, 2002). Additionally, they exhibit greater wisdom, a willingness to be curious and a joy in learning, which helps them make significant life decisions (Aspinwall, L. G., & Brunhart, S. M. 2000; Seligman, 2002).

The integration of humanist theories into this emerging field of well-being, or positive psychology, including Frankl's insights on the meaning in life, has illuminated the notion that fostering well-being involves engaging deeply with life's details, personal growth, and dedicating to something greater than oneself—whether that be a cause, another person or a significant pursuit (Frankl, 1963).

In considering these principles, positive psychology initially proposed cultivating three essential pillars for achieving happiness: the pleasant life, the engaged life and the meaningful life (Seligman, 2002).

The “pleasant life” is developed by nurturing positive emotions—pleasures and gratifications—across past, present and future experiences. The “engaged life” is achieved by creating flow in activities where our strengths are used to take on challenges. Finally, the “meaningful life” is cultivated by employing our most developed strengths to achieve goals that go beyond personal interests and contribute to the greater good.

In his 2011 publication, *Flourish*, Martin Seligman expands upon the theory of well-being within positive psychology by introducing five elements and a central axis: character strengths. The focus of the study shifts from mere happiness to the core of positive psychology—well-being. The gold standard for measuring well-being is personal growth and the goal of positive psychology is to increase such growth. Through his mission to disseminate the implications of positive psychology for the full development of individuals, Seligman employs the metaphor of plant care and flourishing, paralleling it with the identification and utilization of human potential for fostering well-being.

Martin Seligman's theory of well-being, encapsulated in the PERMA model, identifies five essential elements that individuals should recognize and cultivate in a personalized manner to achieve true well-being (Seligman, 2011). These elements are Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement.

- **Positive emotions:** These are the psychophysiological responses we experience in reaction to external and internal events we perceive and value as pleasurable. Positive emotions, such as joy and interest, broaden our range of actions and complement negative emotions, like fear and anger, which help us respond to perceived threats and aid our survival. Recognizing and consciously enjoying positive emotions promotes well-being and mitigates the disruptive effects of negative emotions.
- **Engagement:** This refers to the state of being fully absorbed in an activity that challenges us and for which we possess the necessary skills. It involves using our strengths and achieving flow states, similar to positive emotions, which can be cultivated in various ways. Engagement occurs in activities where we excel and become increasingly skilled, such as sports, music, manual tasks, reading, or cooking. During these flow states, our perception of time becomes subjective, and we experience a profound sense of satisfaction, marking an optimal experience.
- **Relationships:** Interpersonal relationships based on healthy interdependence and mutual support are key sources of well-being. Healthy and secure relationships allow us to enjoy the company of others, deepen connections, negotiate and align expectations with each interaction. For many positive psychology scholars, nurturing interpersonal relationships is central to life and human growth because we are inherently social and interdependent beings.
- **Meaning:** Seeking the common good by contributing through our strengths fosters well-being and cultivates a meaning in life. This element is associated with the experience of being part of and serving something greater than oneself. When our actions leave a lasting legacy in any aspect of life, we experience the well-being associated with the meaning in life.
- **Accomplishment:** It relates to the pursuit of goals through perseverance and determination. It is based on the idea that people strive for success, performance and execution for their intrinsic value. It involves the persistent effort individuals make to achieve a goal that interests them and allows for personal growth.

Human strengths are the cross-cutting axis of the PERMA theory; they are the resources we have to enhance ourselves, grow and contribute. According to some scholars, character strengths are our psychological capital, our beliefs about ourselves, others,

and how the world operates. These personal resources are essential for navigating daily life and tackling new challenges. The implementation of strengths is evident in our ability to work as a team, our desire to learn, humility, perseverance, sense of humor, creativity and curiosity, among others. They enable us to solve problems and make contributions within the human systems where we operate: work, family, friends, neighbors and community.

## LOGOTHERAPY

Logotherapy, the third Viennese school of psychotherapy after Freud's psychoanalysis and Adlerian psychology, is more of an existential-humanistic approach or attitude and a complement to psychotherapy than a distinct school of thought. The therapeutic method of logotherapy directs individuals to become aware of their fundamental responsibility concerning their unique life's mission, to which they are called to respond personally based on their freedom. According to Frankl, humans have an anthropological unity within ontological multiplicity: the body (biological or physiological dimension, "life"), psyche (psychological or sociological dimension, "life consciousness") and spirit (spiritual or noetic dimension, "will to find meaning in life"). The spiritual dimension is specifically human and essential, encompassing and expanding the physical and psychological dimensions (Luna, 2015).

Logotherapy, or the therapy of meaning, is grounded in existential analysis and emerged from Viktor Frankl's exploration of noogenic neuroses—those caused by a loss of meaning in life. This therapeutic approach carries significant philosophical weight, focusing on the search for meaning in life in the face of existential vacuum. This existential vacuum, resulting from the failure to awaken the noogenic or noetic dimension of the individual (a dimension that, while not susceptible to illness, can be obscured, hidden, or dormant), is responsible for psychological, emotional and physical symptoms. Frankl's work reflects the influence of philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Husserl, who contributed to his development of the therapy of meaning.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1998), health encompasses physical, psychological, social and spiritual-transcendental domains. From this perspective, considering the domain of spiritual-transcendental well-being as a factor impacting health encourages us to revisit and integrate logotherapy's emphasis on the importance of meaning in life and spirituality.

Embracing life's challenges with a "yes" implies that life can have meaning despite the adversities one encounters. Frankl posits that this search for meaning, which constitutes the vital drive, is the engine of existence, complementing the ideas of his predecessors who emphasized pleasure and power in human motivation. Individuals can always exercise their freedom to some extent by choosing their response to life's adversities. As Fabry (1977, cited by Luna, 2015) explains, logotherapy is founded on three principles: life has meaning in every circumstance; individuals possess a will to find meaning and feel frustrated or empty when unable to exercise it; and people are free, within their circumstances, to realize their meaning in life.

Meaning is discovered; it already exists as part of human nature, but it is relative and subjective, referring to the unique experience of each individual. Therefore, this meaning is valid only for that person. When meaning is not discovered or remains dormant, human suffering finds a fertile ground.

## HUMAN THEORY: SUFFERING AND MEANING

According to Viktor Frankl, humans have three dimensions: the somatic or physical, the mental or psychic and the noogenic or spiritual. When the spiritual dimension remains undeveloped, it creates a fertile ground for psychological disorders. To lead a fulfilling life that promotes and integrates the noetic dimension of human existence, Frankl suggests cultivating three types of values that lead to meaning and, consequently, human well-being: the values of creation, associated with work and contributing to society, values of experience (derived from relationships with others and sensory experiences) and values of attitude, related to resilience and overcoming suffering. The presence of this trilogy of values in one's life enables coping with existential despair and strengthens human capacity for responsibility and freedom in making life choices. For Frankl, mental pathologies come from the meaning we assign to suffering, which can often be unavoidable, rather than the discomfort itself. This principle, which is the core of the logotherapeutic concept of tragic optimism, counters the reductionism of behaviorism (Luna, 2015).

Frankl believed that death could enrich the meaning of our lives. If we lived forever, we would keep postponing each act indefinitely. The awareness that life has limits

can be used as motivation to make the most of each situation and live it more fully. In logotherapy, a certain degree of conflict in our daily activities is seen as positive. The search for meaning can arise from some internal tension, rather than always from a balance state. This tension occurs between what has already been achieved and what remains to be obtained, thereby stimulating us to seek more challenges. Life is always a challenge that will bring tensions, presenting us with the personal challenge of finding meaning (Alvez, 2013).

On the other hand, expanding on the topic of suffering, Frankl argues that not all psychological problems or pains can be therapeutically eliminated. Some must be endured, and the more one understands the “why” behind them, and thus finds a “for what,” the better one can endure them. To do this, there must be something—a loved one or a task to complete—that needs us, and out of love for this, one can accept great pain. This is described as a courageous attitude toward inevitable suffering, thanks to not being alone in the world and finding meaning in pain. In our society, there is a compulsive search for happiness that prevents exploring growth and increasing tolerance for the frustration that pain can bring (Luna, 2015).

## TYPES OF NEUROSIS ACCORDING TO FRANKL

In his study of individuals and the role that meaning plays in their lives, Frankl described various types of neuroses based on their causes. Among these, the noogenic neurosis stands out as a central focus in logotherapy (Luna, 2015).

### NOOGENIC NEUROSIS

Noogenic neurosis is the primary reason for seeking help from logotherapists. It arises when individuals experience a loss of meaning in life, leading to existential vacuum. This type of neurosis results from the dissatisfaction of the noogenic or spiritual dimension of a person. Hopelessness and loss of meaning occur when individuals fail to find meaning in their suffering, thus leading to the development of noogenic neuroses.



## COLLECTIVE NEUROSIS

In modern life, people in large cities share the same belief systems that shape their culture and face a common historical reality that challenges them, leading to what are known as collective neuroses. These collective neuroses can manifest in attitudes that can be grouped into four types: conformity, characterized by adhering to the behavior of the majority and collectivist thinking; fatalism, where all events are attributed to external causes with no exercise of freedom and responsibility; fanaticism, where the group idealizes its own beliefs from a fundamentalist stance and is intolerant of others; and lack of future orientation, where there is an indifferent attitude toward reality, focusing solely on immediate needs.

## SUNDAY NEUROSIS AND VACATION NEUROSIS

The constant occupation of time and the importance of having a life filled with achievements characterize modern humans. This results in work and daily tasks leading to exhaustion. During periods of leisure or lower demand, such as weekends and particularly Sundays, individuals may experience feelings of inadequacy, apathy or even existential vacuum, which are referred to in logotherapy as Sunday neurosis.

When extended periods of an individual's usual activities are absent, resulting in a prolonged form of Sunday neurosis, it manifests as vacation neurosis. This is typically caused by the loss of work, maternity leave or any activity that previously filled a person's time, leading to feelings of uselessness and apathy due to the absence of life challenges.



## **OTHER NEUROSES: PSYCHOGENIC, REACTIVE, SOMATOGENIC AND PSYCHOSOMATIC**

Psychogenic neuroses are classified based on their origins: reactive neuroses arise from psychological factors such as beliefs and attitudes, and are a response of the organism to the presence of somatic or psychological symptoms; psychosomatic neuroses are characterized by physical symptoms caused by psychological factors (e.g., asthma); and somatogenic neuroses result from biological dysfunctions, such as hyperthyroidism or excessive nervous system reactivity, and meaning in life in positive psychology.

According to Alves (2013), positive psychology and logotherapy share the common goal of enhancing human potential. Both approaches emphasize consciousness (although the unconscious is important, it does not hold as much relevance as it does in psychoanalysis). Logotherapy refers to the spiritual unconscious, an inherent aspect of human beings that never becomes ill and can always be redeemed, even in the most adverse situations.

Positive psychology and logotherapy focus on prevention, taking care of individuals before difficulties and conflicts arise and highlighting each person's potential. In the 1930s, Viktor Frankl was a pioneer in establishing youth counseling centers that addressed existential issues. Martin Seligman coordinates a Positive Psychology Network made up of three centers founded in the early 21st century to support human well-being with scientific studies: the Center for the Study of Positive Emotions, the Center for the Study of Positive Personality and the Center for the Study of Positive Institutions (Alves, 2013).

Both approaches work from the healthy aspects of individuals. For Frankl, it is self-transcendence; for Seligman, it is his theory of well-being with its five pillars and the overarching concept of character strengths. Seligman suggests that a meaningful life is one that contributes to something greater than ourselves, and the higher that something is, the more meaningful our existence becomes. He also emphasizes how

positive emotions and improved connections with others foster a sense of service, allowing us to find meaning and purpose in life.

In positive psychology's PERMA model of well-being, transcendence plays a fundamental role in human flourishing. Transcendence involves considering that life has a purpose beyond our personal scenario, extending to an object of inspiration that gives life meaning and seeks to benefit others. The objects of inspiration can vary widely: ecology, nature, God, family, a political cause, an artistic or social project, among others, but they are all characterized by their focus on the common good. This is where the famous phrase of positive psychology co-founder Christopher Peterson, "Other people matter," gains significance. Other people matter because, through our strengths, we can contribute to their well-being and leave a legacy. The other, who is different from me, complements me, and I complement them.

The construction of meaning in life begins in adolescence and continues throughout adulthood (Fry, 1998, as cited by Góngora and Castro Solano, 2011). The creation of meaning is related to the development of each person in conjunction with other vital processes such as relationships, life goals and identity (Steger, 2009).

Michael Steger (2009) is the author who, within the framework of positive psychology, has focused on studying the meaning in life. According to positive psychology, the meaning in life develops through the conscious use of our strengths, which allow us to grow, value ourselves and contribute to the common good. Steger suggests that people find meaning in their lives when their actions transcend the immediate present and project into the future. For most people, there are several important sources of meaning in their lives: spirituality, work and close personal relationships. These findings are also presented by Emmons (2003), an expert in gratitude who has also studied the meaning in life. Diener & Biswas-Diener (2008) emphasize the importance of a meaning in life for living a fulfilling life. One of the special characteristics of humans is the ability to live virtuously and find purpose in life while acknowledging the importance of pleasure and its combination with meaning.

The "spiritual" dimension that drives the search for meaning is as intrinsic to human beings as the physical dimension. Among other things, it provides us with the capacity for "faith," a belief system that allows us to introspect and relate to others through mutual contribution. Spirituality and health care must be developed in a balanced way as nourishment for the meaning in our lives.

# TECHNIQUES OF LOGOTHERAPY

Faced with the existential vacuum experienced by individuals, the goal of logotherapy is to help the patient find meaning in their life. According to Frankl, the logotherapist should use the following techniques (Martínez, 2013).

## **SOCRATIC DIALOGUE**

Socratic dialogues are compared to the work of midwives who assist others in giving birth to something important and essential to them. Socratic dialogue occurs within existential communication and involves the skillful use of questioning to support and challenge the speaker's narrative regarding the events they are experiencing. In some cases, it is necessary to challenge the interpretations based on the individual's beliefs through what are called naive questions.

## **DE-REFLECTION**

For some people, cognitive rumination of their problems causes anxiety, disturbing and even paralyzing their daily lives. Excessive self-focus or "navel-gazing" is known in logotherapy as "hyper-intention," and the repeated focusing on problems is termed "hyper-reflection." These issues are addressed using the technique of de-reflection, which involves shifting attention to other actions that utilize the person's potential, promote altruistic behavior and generate positive emotions that cultivate experience or enjoyment.

## **CONFRONTATION**

The confrontation technique, used across many forms of psychotherapy, addresses behaviors generally rooted in social conditioning. It involves presenting questions to the individual that allow them to understand the incongruence or excessive concern in their behavior in certain contexts or with certain people. This technique helps rec-

ognize patterns so that the person can become aware of them and work towards modification.

## PARADOXICAL INTENT

Paradoxical intention is a technique in logotherapy that focuses on the symptom presented by the person, encouraging them to voluntarily and consciously intensify its appearance until its function becomes meaningless. In this way, when an event that usually causes anxiety occurs, such associated consequences do not occur. The development of humor is one indicator that the technique will be more effective in helping people confront their fears. It has been used for disorders such as fear of public speaking and insomnia.

The logotherapist encourages the patient to broaden their perspective and discover other viewpoints, making all possible meanings and principles conscious and visible to them. Rather than imposing their own ideas, the logotherapist allows the patient to search for these on their own. This helps the patient move away from hyper-reflection, providing an alternative to repetitive thinking about their problems. The logotherapist develops strong relational and dialogical skills, enabling them to guide the patient in reflecting and finding attitudes to cope with the events in their life.



# CONCLUSIONS

## FINAL REFLECTIONS: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND LOGOTHERAPY

After presenting both positive psychology and logotherapy, it becomes evident how these conceptual frameworks facilitate the current study of well-being. They also highlight Frankl's contributions regarding meaning in life to understanding and developing the spiritual or noetic dimension of human beings, allowing us to delve into this fourth element (*meaning*), integrated into the PERMA theory of well-being of positive psychology.

The topic of spirituality, considered by logotherapy as the noogenic dimension of human beings, is central to Frankl's theories. This dimension guides existence and, at the same time, results in noogenic neurosis when we fail to use our freedom to find meaning in our lives through actions for a cause, experiences with others or ourselves or our attitudes toward adversity. Similarly, the core techniques of logotherapy promote the development of consciousness, freedom, will, attitude toward suffering, potential, sources of meaning and self-transcendence through giving to others.

In the case of the theory of well-being of positive psychology, it offers a framework with five elements (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishments) and transversal axis (character strengths) that promote well-being. In this model, spirituality is considered a character strength and one of the five pillars of the PERMA theory of well-being. As a character strength, it is seen as an emblem within the virtue of transcendence, characterized by individuals who have coherent beliefs about the purpose and meaning of their actions in the world. The theory posits that there is an ultimate meaning in life, referring to the belief and commitment to the transcendental (non-material) aspects of life that shape behavior and provide

comfort to those who possess this strength. Similarly, the meaning in life as one of the five pillars of the PERMA theory suggests that well-being can be cultivated by finding **meaning** in our lives, developing awareness and will and considering that life with meaning is our contribution to the common good. This involves the conscious use of our most developed strengths and contributing them to a cause beyond ourselves. Thus, we see how this spiritual (noogenic) dimension that Frankl emphasizes as central to his logotherapy approach has been recognized as an element that promotes well-being in positive psychology.

From a macro perspective, Alvez (2013) suggests that positive psychology and logotherapy share aspects related to their objects of study and their conception of the human being, such as the enhancement of human potential and the emphasis on awareness. For Frankl, awareness is the organ of meaning, and spirituality is not only a dimension of human beings but a specific and central one. For Seligman, identifying and becoming aware of one's own resources, understood as the elements and transversal axis of the PERMA theory of well-being, facilitates human flourishing. Both positive psychology and logotherapy also focus on prevention, not just solving problems when they arise but considering the potential of each person for their full development and using resources when facing adversity, enabling the development of resilience.

Both approaches consider the healthy aspects of human beings. From Frankl's perspective, it is self-transcendence through giving to others; from Seligman's view, it is his theory of well-being with its five pillars and the importance of contributing to the common good through our strengths. Seligman states that a life with meaning is one that contributes to the common good, and the higher the contribution, the greater the meaning of our existence. Positive emotions promote connection with others, help find a vocation of service and illuminate the path to the meaning and purpose of our lives. Positive emotions that create meaning include love, compassion, hope, wonder, gratitude, trust and joy. Giving and receiving love allows us to feel important and effective. Commitment and compassion create satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. The essence of finding meaning in our lives is to share with others, to learn to appreciate what others see as good in us, our strengths. In Viktor Frankl's words, finding meaning in our lives enables us to self-transcend (Alvez, 2013).

If we revisit the idea from the theory of well-being of positive psychology that the meaning in life is our contribution to the common good, based on our potentials and strengths, and combine it with the contributions of logotherapy, which identifies

three types of values leading to meaning and, thus, happiness—namely the values of creation, related to work and societal contribution; the values of experience, associated with interactions with others and sensory experiences that enable enjoyment; and the values of attitude, which have to do with overcoming suffering—we can provide people with the opportunity to analyze their lives in terms of their actions to contribute to others, enjoy life and be resilient in the face of adversity.

The main techniques used in logotherapy or meaning therapy (Socratic dialogue, de-reflection, confrontation and paradoxical intention), as described in this chapter, are excellent tools for generating reflections on our worldviews and awareness of our resources. It is worth studying these techniques so that, whether in group settings or personal work, we can be more proactive in managing our well-being based on the contributions of the theory of well-being of positive psychology.



This fusion and complementary use of logotherapy techniques and well-being elements can serve as excellent tools for achieving full development, fostering a proactive and learning-oriented attitude in the face of adversity and valuing our contributions to the world to lead a life with meaning.



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# WELL-BEING AND CITIZEN INSECURITY IN ARGENTINE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



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## ABSTRACT

Numerous research studies reveal that witnessing or being a victim of a crime, or even having a high perception of insecurity, significantly impacts social dynamics and influences the quality of life and social integration of individuals. This study aims to analyze how social well-being varies based on the level of concern about insecurity, perceived risk and fear of crime among university students from different fields and their commitment to security (both civilians and military personnel). For this purpose, a descriptive, group-difference, non-experimental design study was conducted. The purposive, non-probabilistic sample consisted of 516 Argentinian university students (44% women; 56% men; Age = 23.04; SD = 4.08). Data reveal that, despite low levels of fear of crime, participants perceive a high likelihood of becoming victims of crime in the near future. Furthermore, most participants report having been a direct victim of a crime, with a higher percentage experiencing indirect victimization.

While the results show relatively high levels of social well-being, statistically significant differences are observed based on the type of victimization,



fear of crime and perceived risk. Additionally, differential profiles are observed based on whether individuals are civilians or military personnel. It is concluded that, beyond addressing and ideally reducing objective insecurity, it is crucial to deepen the study of subjective insecurity due to its impact on individuals' quality of life.

**Keywords:** well-being, citizen insecurity, university students, civilians, military.







## RESUMEN

Numerosas investigaciones muestran que tanto el haber sido testigo o víctima de algún delito como incluso una elevada percepción de inseguridad, tienen importantes efectos sociales y condicionan, de alguna manera, la calidad de vida e integración social de las personas. Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar como varía el bienestar social en función del nivel de preocupación por la inseguridad, el riesgo percibido y miedo al delito en estudiantes universitarios de distintos ámbitos y compromiso con la seguridad (civiles y militares). Para ello se llevó a cabo un estudio descriptivo, de diferencias de grupo, de diseño no experimental. La muestra, no probabilística intencional, estuvo compuesta por 516 estudiantes universitarios argentinos (44 % mujeres; 56 % hombres; Edad = 23.04; DE=4.08). Los datos revelan que, a pesar de los bajos niveles de miedo al delito, los participantes perciben una alta probabilidad de volverse víctimas de delitos en el futuro cercano. Asimismo, la mayoría de los participantes admite haber sido víctima directa de algún delito, porcentaje aún mayor con respecto a la victimización indirecta.



Si bien los resultados muestran niveles relativamente altos de bienestar social se observan diferencias estadísticamente significativas según el tipo de victimización, el miedo al delito y el riesgo percibido. También, se observan perfiles diferenciales en función de ser civil o militar. Se concluye que, más allá de la inseguridad objetiva, que debe ser controlada e idealmente reducida, es necesario profundizar en el estudio de la inseguridad subjetiva, dado sus efectos en la calidad de vida de las personas.

**Palabras clave:** bienestar, inseguridad ciudadana, estudiantes universitarios, civiles, militares.



# INTRODUCTION

In Argentina, as in most Latin American countries, (in)security has become a significant social issue, emerging as one of the major public concerns (Föhrig, 2006; Kessler, 2012).

Security, as a fundamental human condition, is considered one of the primary basic needs, essential for personal well-being and development (Maslow, 1954/1987; Schwartz, 2001). It falls within the category of psychological needs, acting as a driving force that directs behavior toward goals that, when achieved, contribute not only to survival and well-being but also to health (Páez et al., 2007). Therefore, perceiving security in one's home, neighborhood, city and society at large, is a crucial requirement for individual well-being (Franc et al., 2012).

In this context, the impact of negative events, such as witnessing violent acts or experiencing traumatic and violent situations, can have adverse or even devastating consequences for both the affected people and their environment (Chía et al., 2011). Numerous studies reveal the effects of crime and victimization on various aspects of people's lives, ranging from physical and economic harm to moral and psychological damage (Freeman, 1994). Many researchers have focused on the consequences of victimization on people's well-being (Cohen, 2008; Hanslmaier, 2013; Hanson et al., 2010; Kuroki, 2013; Leiva and Ramírez, 2021; Lelkes, 2006; Powdthavee, 2005; Staubli et al., 2014), showing that both directed and indirect victimization have significant effects on people's health, diminishing the perception of quality of life, satisfaction and happiness. Thus, criminal victimization has proven to be a significant predictor of well-being.

In addition to victimization, many research studies have explored the implications of fear of crime on people's physical and mental health (Chandola, 2001; Davies & Hinks, 2010; Franc et al., 2012; Jackson & Stafford, 2009; Méndez et al., 2020; Morrall et al., 2010; Stafford et al., 2007; Sulemana, 2015), revealing that fear of crime has negative effects on psychological well-being for both crime victims and non-victims. In some cases, fear of crime and concern for personal safety can have a greater impact

on well-being and life satisfaction than victimization itself. As Pegoraro (2002) points out, these perceptions are undeniably embedded in the daily life of modern life and carry consequences for democratic life, beyond the objective reality of the phenomenon.

One of the most widely accepted premises in the various fields studying this issue is that reducing crime is key to diminishing fear of crime (Ferraro, 1995). Much of the academic, social and political interest in fear of crime has focused on the relationship between crime and fear, and the negative impact it has on individuals and communities (Jackson, 2009; Vozmediano et al., 2010). However, different studies have shown that there is no direct correspondence between crime rates and citizens' subjective perceptions of insecurity (Kessler, 2009; Smulovitz, 2006; Vozmediano, 2010a). Furthermore, as Míguez and Isla (2010) argue, it is not only the increase in crime frequency that spreads the perception of insecurity socially; other factors, such as media influence and the levels of trust in State agencies responsible for controlling criminal activity and proposing preventive policies, also play a role. According to Moreno (2014), it is essential to evaluate the problem of insecurity from its dual nature: both as a victim of a criminal act and as a perception of insecurity, since both aspects have significant social consequences and affect the quality of life and social integration of people. Thus, there is a clear need to understand the relationship between subjective insecurity and social well-being.

In other words, it is important to assess how people perceive their environment in terms of personal safety and how these perceptions might alter their evaluation of well-being. On the one hand, this study aims to understand how criminal acts and the perceptions they generate impact a sample of university students, especially given their high probability of victimization. This research seeks to contribute to the analysis of differential profiles of subjective insecurity and well-being by introducing a variable not considered in previous studies: the degree of personal involvement with control and security, operationalized in this study by the type of sample (civilians vs. military personnel). Furthermore, this study is justified by the need to reflect on how subjective insecurity, in terms of fear of crime and perceived risk—beyond actual and objective victimization—affects social well-being and quality of life. From this perspective, the research aims to contribute to understanding the phenomenon by addressing a local gap in the analysis of the psychosocial aspects of insecurity and perceptions of the social context.

# METHODOLOGY

## STUDY DESIGN

A descriptive, group-difference, cross-sectional, non-experimental study was conducted, focusing on university students of both genders as the unit of analysis.

## PARTICIPANTS

The purposive, non-probabilistic sample consisted of 516 university students, representing two different contexts regarding involvement with security: civilian ( $n = 267$ ) and military ( $n = 249$ ). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 40 years, with a mean of 23.04 years ( $SD = 4.08$ ). The sample was 56% male and 44% female.

## INSTRUMENTS

The following scales were utilized in this study:

5. Social Well-Being Scale (Keyes, 1998; adaptation by Muratori & Zubieta, 2021). This scale, consisting of 17 items, uses a Likert-type scoring system from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to evaluate people's perception of five aspects of their social environment that contribute to their well-being. The dimensions are:
  - a. Social Integration: Feeling part of the community, having support and sharing with others ("I feel close to other people"). This dimension facilitates the satisfaction of needs for attachment, affiliation and belonging (3 items:  $\alpha = .633$ ).
  - b. Social Acceptance: Having a positive attitude towards others in general ("I believe people only think about themselves" – reverse item). It involves perceiving that relationships with others allow for self-acceptance and self-esteem (4 items:  $\alpha = .800$ ).

- c. Social Contribution: The feeling of having something positive to offer society and that one's activities are valued ("I think what I do is important for society") (3 items:  $\alpha = .767$ ).
  - d. Social Actualization: Believing that the social world is developing or can develop for the better ("For me, social progress is something that does not exist" – reverse item). It is associated with perceiving that the environment allows for personal growth (3 items:  $\alpha = .618$ ).
  - e. Social Coherence: Believing that the world is predictable, intelligible, and logical ("I don't understand what is happening in the world"- reverse item) (4 items:  $\alpha = .603$ ). The reliability coefficient of this scale was satisfactory ( $\alpha = .791$ ).
6. Concern and Perception of Insecurity. To assess the level of concern about insecurity, participants were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 = no concern to 10 = very concerned, the degree of concern felt by people in general about citizen insecurity versus their own in their daily lives. In addition, participants were asked to indicate how safe they felt in their residential area, using a scale from 1 = very safe to 10 = very unsafe. Participants also responded to a three-point Likert scale, rating their experience living in the country and their neighborhood from 1 = safer, 2 = just as safe to 3 = less safe, (Vanderveen, 2006). Furthermore, they rated how they perceive changes in crime and insecurity on a continuous scale from 1 = significantly decreased to 10 = significantly increased.
7. Risk Perception. This measure included two questions about the perception of risk at personal and general levels. Participants were asked to rate how likely they think it is that they could become a victim of a crime in the next year, versus how likely they think it is that a city resident could be a victim of a crime in the next year, on a scale from 1 = unlikely to 10 = very likely.
8. Fear of Crime Scale (Vozmediano, 2010). Based on a list of 12 security-compromising crimes, participants were asked to answer the question: how often have you been afraid or worried about being a victim of these crimes? (1 = never to 5 = always).

9. **Victimization Scale.** To measure the frequency of direct victimization, a scale was constructed based on the victimization scale used by Vozmediano (2010). This scale included the same crimes as the Fear of Crime Scale, except for the homicide item. Participants answered the question: In the past year, have you ever been a victim of these crimes? (0 = never, 1 = 1 or 2 times and 2 = 3 or more times). To assess indirect victimization, participants were also asked if they had witnessed any crimes in the past year (0 = never, 1 = 1 or 2 times and 2 = 3 or more times). In addition, they were asked if friends, family or relatives had been victims of any crime (1 = no, 2 = yes). Finally, a variable was constructed combining the three categories: direct victim (yes/no), indirect victim as witness (yes/no), indirect victim by knowledge of family or friend (yes/no), resulting in a variable of exposure to violence with four values: 1 = not affected; 2 = indirect victim, 3 = direct victim, 4 = both direct and indirect victim.

## RESULTS

### SOCIAL WELL-BEING

As shown in Table 1, participants report relatively high levels of social well-being. The highest scores were observed in the contribution dimension, while the lowest scores were found in the acceptance dimension. On the one hand, this indicates that participants feel most positive about their sense of utility and value, viewing themselves as essential members of society who are effective and contribute to the common good. On the other hand, the dimension with the greatest deficits is acceptance, reflecting lower trust in others, less positive attitudes among people, and a lack of perceived honesty, kindness, and competence.



**Table 1.** Mean Scores in Social Well-Being

Dimension	Mean	SD
Social Integration	4.03	0.69
Social Acceptance	3.05	0.86
Social Contribution	4.22	0.83
Social Actualization	3.72	0.88
Social Coherence	3.82	0.77

**Note.** Continuous response for the Social Well-Being Scale (1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

## CONCERN ABOUT INSECURITY AND PERCEIVED RISK

Regarding the perception of insecurity, participants consider that crime has significantly increased in recent months ( $M = 7.78$ ;  $SD = 1.97$ ). 74.1% of the participants think that living in the country is becoming less safe, 22.7% believe it is just as safe and only 3.2% feel it is becoming safer. Regarding their neighborhood, 51.2% believe that it is becoming less safe, 45.7% think it is just as safe and 3.1% feel it is becoming safer. Although both contexts are perceived as very unsafe, these perceptions differ significantly from the assessment of the country ( $M = 2.71$ ;  $SD = .51$ ) or the neighborhood ( $M = 2.49$ ;  $SD = .56$ ) being that the more general, distant or less controllable scope is even less safe ( $t_{(504)} = 9.48$ ;  $p = .00$ ).

This optimistic bias, likely linked to control and the sense of belonging felt regarding the place where one lives, is evident in the participants' response about how unsafe they feel in the area they live ( $M = 5.66$ ;  $SD = 2.54$ ), where the score slightly exceeds the theoretical mean. On the other hand, the level of concern about insecurity was analyzed at two reference levels: general concern and personal concern. It was found that the level of concern participants believe people generally feel about citizen insecurity ( $M = 8.80$ ;  $SD = 1.76$ ) and personally in their daily lives ( $M = 7.81$ ;  $SD = 2.29$ ) are both very high, with significant differences between the both assessments ( $t_{(510)} = 10.49$ ;  $p = .00$ ).



## Risk Perception

Regarding risk perception, or the perceived probability of victimization, participants believe it is highly likely that they themselves will become victims of a crime in the next year ( $M = 6.01$ ;  $SD = 2.51$ ). However, these values are significantly higher when referring to city residents in general ( $M = 8.55$ ;  $SD = 2.07$ ) rather than to oneself ( $t(507) = -20.51$ ;  $p = .00$ ). This data supports the illusion of invulnerability to victimization in relation to the previously mentioned illusory optimism, as a result of a social comparison process where people estimate that their own risk is lower compared to others.

## Fear of Crime

Participants exhibit relatively low scores for fear of crime, with street robbery being the only crime that exceeds the theoretical mean. Additionally, fear of property crimes ( $M = 2.82$ ;  $SD = 1.09$ ) is significantly higher than fear of personal crimes ( $M = 2.06$ ;  $SD = .98$ ) ( $t_{(487)} = 18.92$ ;  $p = .00$ ).

**Table 2.** *Descriptive Statistics of Fear of Crime*

	Mean	SD
Fear of crime	2.48	0.94
Fear of property crime	2.82	1.09
Street robbery or mugging	3.40	1.29
Burglary when no one is home	2.82	1.36
Theft or damage to vehicle	2.73	1.45
Burglary while someone is home	2.64	1.29
Credit card fraud or theft	2.47	1.30
Fear of personal crimes	2.06	0.98
Kidnapping or being held against your will	2.41	1.33
Sexual assault	2.25	1.36
Homicide	2.10	1.31

	Mean	SD
Victim of excessive use of public force	2.00	1.92
Terrorist attack	1.58	1.05
Physical assault	2.80	1.29
Harassment, threats, or verbal abuse	2.56	1.34

**Note.** Author's own work

## Victimization

Regarding victimization, 56.7% of participants report having been direct victims of at least one crime. Among these, 51% have experienced both direct and indirect victimization (having a family member or friend who has been a victim of a crime and having witnessed a crime in the past year), which significantly increases their degree of victimization or exposure to violence. It is noteworthy that 79.2% of participants know someone (a friend, family member or relative) who has been a victim of a crime and 35.4% have witnessed a crime, indicating that the rate of indirect victimization is also very high. Consequently, 12.3% of participants in this sample have not been victims in any form, whether direct or indirect. When analyzing direct victimization in terms of the nature of the crime, it is observed that 39.7% were victims of property crimes, with street robbery and theft from/in their vehicle being the most common, and 14% experienced personal crimes, with excessive use of public force being the most reported crime.

## Differences by Sample Type (Civilian/Military)

Regarding social well-being, statistically significant differences were observed in social actualization ( $F_{(1,512)} = 5.80$ ;  $p = .02$ ;  $\eta^2 p = 0.01$ ) and social contribution ( $F_{(1,506)} = 34.03$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $\eta^2 p = 0.06$ ) based on the type of sample.

Civilians ( $M = 3.86$ ;  $SD = .85$ ) tend to believe that their environment allows for greater personal growth compared to the military personnel ( $M = 3.58$ ;  $SD = .88$ ). However, military personnel ( $M = 4.41$ ;  $SD = .83$ ) feel more useful and perceive, to a greater extent, that they can contribute something to the community compared to civilians ( $M = 4.03$ ;  $SD = .80$ ). This finding is confirmed when controlling for the variable of gender.

## Perception of Insecurity

Firstly, as shown in Table 3, military participants are more concerned about insecurity in their daily lives and consider themselves most likely to become a crime victim in the next year. Conversely, regarding hetero-perception, civilian participants more strongly believe that people in general are concerned about insecurity and that city residents are more likely to become crime victims.

Secondly, military participants perceive a higher degree of danger in various geographical areas, feel more insecurity in the area where they live, and perceive, to a greater extent, that crime has increased recently.

**Table 3.** Differences in Perception of Insecurity by Sample Type

	Civilians	Military	F	df	p	$\eta^2p$
Self-Perception	6.87 (1.96)	6.95 (2.00)	5.34	1,506	.02	.01
Hetero-Perception	9.08 (1.11)	8.22 (1.96)	17.95	1,505	.000	.03
Security in the Area Where One Lives	5.44 (2.25)	5.90 (2.80)	8.78	1,493	.003	.02
Perceived Increase/Decrease in Crime	7.67 (1.92)	7.90 (2.01)	11.38	1,509	.001	.02

**Note.** Author's own work

## Fear of Crime

As shown in Table 4, military participants exhibit higher levels of fear of crime, both for common and extreme crimes, compared to civilian participants. These findings are consistent with previous results, indicating that the military personnel experience more fear and believe that they are more likely to become crime victims, reflecting alignment between the affective and cognitive levels of their perceptions.

**Table 4.** Differences in Mean Fear of Crime by Sample Type

	Civilians	Military	F	df	p	$\eta^2p$
Fear of Crime	2.42 (.89)	2.46 (.99)	7.08	1,485	.01	.01
Fear of Common Crime	2.80 (1.03)	2.84 (1.15)	4.95	1,497	.03	.01
Fear of Extreme Crime	1.92 (.07)	2.23 (.08)	6.65	1,491	.01	.01

**Note.** Author's own work

#### Differences in Social Well-Being Based on Risk Perception, Fear of Crime and Victimization

Statistically significant differences in social well-being are observed based on risk perception, fear of crime and victimization. As shown in Table 5, participants who perceive low probabilities of becoming crime victims have more positive attitudes towards others, feel more useful and perceive, to a greater extent, that they can contribute something to the community and that their environment allows for personal growth compared to those with high perceptions of risk.

**Table 5.** Differences in Mean in Well-Being Dimensions Based on Risk Perception

	Low	Medium	High	F	df	p	$\eta^2p$
Acceptance	3.21 (0.08)	3.00 (0.07)	3.00 (0.06)	2.98	2,500	.05	.01
Contribution	4.31 (0.07)	4.10 (0.06)	4.26 (0.06)	2.82	2,498	.06	.01
Updating	3.93 (0.07)a	3.75 (0.07)	3.58(0.06)b	6.86	2,504	.001	.03

**Note.** Only well-being dimensions with significant differences are presented. Different letters indicate different groups in the post hoc Bonferroni analysis. Response scale from 1 to 5.

Although *post hoc* tests do not specify which groups differ, it is evident that participants with high levels of fear of crime ( $M = 2.82$ ;  $SD = 0.12$ ) feel less integrated with their environment, compared to those with medium ( $M = 3.00$ ;  $SD = 0.06$ ) and low ( $M = 3.12$ ;  $SD = 0.05$ ) levels of fear of crime ( $F_{(2,478)} = 3.00$ ;  $p = .05$ ;  $\eta^2_p = 0.01$ )

When assessing victimization (see Table 6), it is observed that people who were direct victims of personal crimes experience a lower sense of belonging to their community, compared to those who were not victims. Regarding indirect victimization, those who witnessed a crime show less positive attitudes towards others but believe more strongly that the world is predictable and logical, and they are more interest in and concerned about their community.

**Table 6.** Differences in Mean in Well-Being Dimensions Based on Victimization

		No	Yes	F	df	p	$\eta^2p$
Victim of Personal Crime	Integration	4.06 (0.67)	3.86 (0.78)	4.10	1,491	.04	.01
Indirect Victim (Witness)	Acceptance	3.13 (0.88)	2.91 (0.82)	7.69	1,493	.01	.01
	Coherence	3.76 (0.78)	3.92 (0.75)	6.39	1,491	.01	.01

**Note.** Only well-being dimensions with significant differences are presented. Different letters indicate different groups in the post hoc Bonferroni analysis.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this final section, the main findings of the study are discussed, contrasted with previous literature. The derived contributions are also highlighted.

Descriptively, it should be noted that the study participants exhibited a generally satisfactory level in terms of social well-being criteria. They perceive their relationship with their environment and what it provides them to meet their social needs positively. Both civilian and military students valued social contribution highly, indicating that they feel vital members of society and contribute to the common good. However, the evaluation was more deficient regarding the dimension of social acceptance,

which refers to interpersonal trust, feeling that others are honest and kind, and that this generates positive attitudes towards people. The findings are consistent with a general trend observed in both international (Bilbao, 2008; Cicognani et al., 2008) and national (Fernández et al., 2013; Muratori et al., 2012; Muratori et al., 2014; Muratori and Zubieta, 2013; Zubieta and Delfino, 2010; Zubieta et al., 2012) studies. Good levels of well-being are also likely associated with the sample's characteristics: they are young, have high levels of education and possess intellectual skills, with the possibility of studying at the university.

With respect to subjective insecurity, several issues can be highlighted. First, it was found that study participants consider it highly likely that they themselves will become victims of a crime in the next year. This likelihood increases significantly when referring to the average city resident, confirming findings reported by the *Barómetro de la Deuda Social Argentina* (Barometer of the Social Debt Argentina) (Moreno, 2014). Additionally, nearly eight out of ten participants believe that living in the country is becoming less safe, decreasing to five out of ten when referring to their neighborhood. Although both areas are perceived as very unsafe, perceptions differ significantly, since the country is seen as a more general, distant and less controllable area, making it more insecure compared to the neighborhood. This demonstrates an optimistic bias linked to control and a sense of belonging to the place where one lives.

Second, the findings show that the levels of fear of crime are relatively low. However, in line with previous studies, fear of street robbery is the crime that generates the most fear among participants. Furthermore, from an ecological-social perspective, the trend observed in vulnerability model-based studies indicates that young populations are less fearful. As for the degree of concern about insecurity, the university students analyzed attributed high concern to the general public, and they themselves exhibited significant concern, although this decreased significantly from the general to the personal level. This is consistent with the findings from the *Barómetro de las Américas del Proyecto de Opinión Pública de América Latina* (Barometer of the Americas of the Public Opinion Project of Latin America) (2012), which indicate that four out of ten respondents feel insecure, and the *Centro de Opinión Pública* (Center of Public Opinion) (July, 2015), which shows a progressive deterioration in the perception of insecurity since 2006, with six out of ten individuals in Buenos Aires expressing high levels of insecurity. Regarding the objective dimension of insecurity, half of the participants in the sample reported having been directly and indirectly affected by a crime in the past year, reflecting high exposure to crime. Moreover, most participants were direct victims of crimes, with property crimes being the most common. These figures corroborate data provided by the *Barómetro de la Deuda Social Argentina* (Moreno, 2014), the Lab-

oratorio de Investigaciones sobre Crimen (Crime Research Laboratory, Institutions and Policies) (March, 2015), and the Observatorio Electoral (Electoral Observatory) (January, 2015), which reveal a concerning and objective increase in insecurity.

The study explored differences based on a variable not considered in previous studies: sample type (civilian vs. military students). The distinction between military and civilian students revealed that military students exhibit a high perception of insecurity, both cognitively and affectively. Compared to civilians, military participants reported feeling more insecure about their residential area and perceived a greater increase in crime in recent years. They also feel that they are more likely to become crime victims and are more afraid of both property and personal crimes. Although previous studies did not consider this analytical variable, the observed differences may stem from various aspects. Perception of insecurity can be related to the socialization and training processes typical of the military field, since training in military academies has certain characteristics that differ from civil ones.

Military academies, being responsible for training future military officers, focus on national security issues, providing students with tools and knowledge that prepare them for defense, conflict, or extreme external threats. Therefore, having more preparation, more knowledge and commitment to security issues make them feel more vulnerable and alert to citizen insecurity in their daily lives. The unidentified criminal poses a constant threat, leading to higher perceived risk, greater fear, and more self-protective behaviors. The results open an interesting line of research as this social category can be further explored and incorporated into studies of individual factors, particularly in relation to the vulnerability model. As Vozmediano (2010a) points out, certain groups are more vulnerable to crime and, therefore, to the perception of insecurity. Findings can also be interpreted in relation to the perceived insecurity linked to values and beliefs. As Muratori and Zubieta (2015) show in their study, the military population, compared to civilians, has higher levels of social dominance and authoritarianism, leading to higher perceived risk and fear of crime, due to viewing the environment as more insecure and threatening.

Finally, the results become relevant in the light of the victimization model. Since military students were direct victims of personal crimes at a higher rate than civilians, it is not surprising that they exhibit greater concern and perception of insecurity. Studies indicate that direct victimization is a cause of higher subjective insecurity (Ferraro, 1995; Hale, 1996; Kury and Ferdinand, 1999; Russo & Roccatò, 2010; Visser et al., 2013).

The comparative analysis of civilian and military students confirms that the assessment of well-being varies based on context and cultural differences. Military students reinforced social contribution more, partially corroborating previous findings (Muratori et al., 2014). It is somewhat expected that those in military training institutions, which impact national defense, need to feel useful and vital to society. In contrast, civilian students rated social actualization higher.

Finally, the findings verified differential profiles in social well-being levels based on indicators of insecurity. Those who assigned higher probability to crime also showed less positive attitudes towards others, less social utility and less confidence in the potential for growth and development of society. Similarly, those who exhibited greater fear of crime reported feeling less integrated into their environment in terms of social well-being. These results align with several previous studies showing that people with higher levels of risk perception and fear of crime exhibit lower life satisfaction and well-being (Chandola, 2001; Davies & Hinks, 2010; Franc et al., 2012; Jacskon & Stafford, 2009; Møller, 2005; Morrall et al., 2010; Pearson & Breetzke, 2014; Stafford et al., 2007; Sulemana, 2015; Vuanello, 2006). The data are also consistent with the local study by Muratori and Zubieta (2013) conducted with a general population sample in Argentina, which shows that people with higher fear of crime show less trust and acceptance of others and perceive a more negative emotional climate. In terms of objective insecurity, those who were direct victims of crimes against the person feel less integrated. In terms of indirect victimization, those who witnessed crime exhibited lower levels of social acceptance. The findings are in line with other studies showing that being both a direct or indirect victim has significant implications for health, satisfaction, and happiness (Chía et al., 2011; Cohen, 2008; Denkers & Winkel, 1998; Hanslmaier, 2013; Hanson et al., 2010; Kuroki, 2013; Lelkes, 2006; Lorenc et al., 2012; Powdthavee, 2005; Staubli et al., 2014). Locally, Muratori and Zubieta (2013) verify that having been a victim of crimes, compared to not having been one, decreases social acceptance, that is, positive attitudes towards others.

Based on these results and in line with other studies (Enders et al., 2009; Ruiz, 2007; Ruiz and Turcios, 2009; Wilcox Rountree & Land, 1996), it is relevant to promote a line of psychosocial research. Understanding the complexity of citizen insecurity as a perception influenced by multiple factors reflects the need to design security policies that not only address crime reduction but also incorporate active community participation, emphasizing preventive and control measures rather than repressive and violent ones. This approach contributes to fostering cultures of peace and improving living conditions with significant multiplier effects.



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# EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION IN POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: DESIGNING A COURSE IN THE HEALTH FIELD



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## ABSTRACT

A world where life and living have fundamentally become part of complex dynamics, where the constant experience is uncertainty and the only certainty is the uncertain, demands more than ever contributions that provide citizens with tools to face adversity, crisis and painful moments resulting from the internal and external dynamics experienced by the planet itself. In this context, educational interventions in positive psychology have become not a luxury but a necessity at all educational levels. In these times, considering well-being is a matter of health and nearly of survival. It is now clear that we cannot continue perpetuating behavioral models that lead us to further divide ourselves as a society, nor can we sustain schemes that drive us to compete against each other. The pandemic that has hit the entire world leaves us with a clear message about the need for cooperation and collaboration with one another for our well-being. One of the main objectives of education is to train people to go out and face the world effectively and efficiently, equipping them with skills not only to act but also to allow themselves to be human in such a rapidly changing world.



This chapter presents a proposal for an educational intervention in positive psychology for students at the School of Medicine of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. Through this chapter, you will explore the process involved in designing, implementing, adapting and evaluating a course program in this disciplinary field.

**Keywords:** educational intervention, positive psychology, well-being, curriculum design, health.





## RESUMEN

Un mundo en el que la vida y el vivir han pasado a ser fundamentalmente parte de las dinámicas de la complejidad, dentro de la cual la constante que se experimenta en el día a día es la incertidumbre y en donde lo único cierto es lo incierto, requiere hoy más que nunca aportes que permitan a sus ciudadanos contar con herramientas para enfrentar la adversidad, la crisis y los momentos dolorosos resultado de las dinámicas internas y externas que el propio planeta experimenta. En este contexto las intervenciones educativas en el campo de la psicología positiva se han vuelto no un lujo sino una necesidad en todos los niveles educativos, es decir, en estos tiempos, pensar en el bienestar es un tema de salud y casi casi de sobrevivencia. Hoy es claro que no podemos seguir perpetuando modelos de comportamiento que nos lleven a dividirnos aún más como sociedad y mucho menos podemos sostener esquemas que nos conduzca a competir unos con otros. La pandemia que ha azotado al mundo entero nos deja un mensaje claro de la necesidad de cooperación y de colaboración de unos con otros para y por nuestro bienestar. La educación tiene como



uno de sus objetivos principales, formar a los hombres para que estén habilitados para salir y enfrentar el mundo de manera eficaz y efectiva, dotándolos de competencias no solo para actuar sino también para permitirse ser humanos en este mundo tan cambiante.

El presente capítulo aborda una propuesta de intervención educativa en psicología positiva en estudiantes de la Facultad de Medicina de la Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. A través de este recorrerás el camino de lo que implica el diseño, la puesta en marcha, las adecuaciones y la evaluación de un programa de asignatura en este campo disciplinar.

**Palabras clave:** intervención educativa, psicología positiva, bienestar, diseño curricular, salud.



# INTRODUCTION

One of the common ideas we encounter in various academic forums when addressing the topic of well-being and happiness is the perception that happiness means always being well, smiling, and showing that everything is flowing smoothly in our lives. Nothing could be further from the truth. Positive psychology, as the newest paradigm in this field, seeks to establish a more balanced view of human behavior. It suggests that studying illness, pathology, drama, and unpleasant situations in people's lives is as legitimate as focusing on the things that work well and make people feel fulfilled and self-actualized. Thus, the central point of this field is not to deny those aspects that are not functioning or are not well but also to highlight the factors that contribute to helping people flourish and thrive.

From the moment we are born, life presents us with a significant number of challenges, difficulties, and tough situations. Each of us, to some extent, has had to face complicated circumstances, and it is precisely in these moments that the study of well-being and happiness becomes meaningful. Having scientifically proven tools to generate well-being and happiness can make a difference in people's lives, as experiencing difficulty with psychological resources to help navigate through it is far different from doing so without them. Therefore, it is essential to clarify that many of the strategies, techniques and activities provided by positive psychology not only enhance people's well-being but also support them in navigating adverse times.

When we talk about adversity, what do we mean? We are referring to all those challenging experiences and crises that people generally do not wish to happen in their lives, as facing them often results in significant stress and emotional pain. Many of these experiences lead individuals to go through processes of mourning, as these situations often involve some form of loss. As human beings, it is a fact that the greatest cause of unhappiness and suffering lies in having to face the pain caused by these losses; however, it is something we can never avoid in anyone's life. For this reason, providing psychological tools becomes extremely important, as living through such complex situations can easily cause people to lose their sense of direction and become disoriented, making it very difficult for many of them to find the path that will allow them to move forward.

# BACKGROUND ON THE COURSE DESIGN

Going through a period in my life where I faced adverse situations was precisely the driving force behind my decision to dedicate my work to helping people achieve well-being and happiness. In 2011, while working at the academic institution, I began to experience extremely stressful and difficult situations. Over the course of approximately three years, I faced a persistent work environment marked by harassment, hostility, and animosity from my supervisor and her team. This led me to develop an anxiety disorder and nervous gastritis, according to medical diagnosis. Dealing with these illnesses, which required me to take a significant amount of medication to manage, left me feeling very unwell physically, to the point where I was unsure whether my discomfort was due to my body or the medication itself.

It was then that, observing how my physical and emotional health were being affected and realizing that my body was receiving an excess of medication, I decided to take action and start applying what I knew about positive psychology to myself. Gradually, I began to overcome the gastritis, and of the ten medications prescribed by my gastroenterologist, I was left with just one. The treatment for anxiety was also phased out gradually, and I started feeling better and better. Through this experience, I realized the damage that adverse and stressful environments could cause to our health, leading me to rethink what I was doing in my professional life.

Tal Ben-Shahar, in his 2016 video *“Make a Choice,”* mentions that we are the result of our choices and that we can decide at any moment regarding our well-being.

It is even possible to choose to change our circumstances if we do not like what we are experiencing, and if for any reason change is not possible, we can still reinvent or recreate them. Considering these ideas, I decided to reevaluate what I was doing at that stage of my professional and work life. I asked myself what I wanted to dedicate the rest of my life to—a deeply existential question that triggered many profound inquiries and made me reflect on my purpose in life.

After a few days of reflection and asking myself many questions about what I wanted to experience from that moment forward, I decided I wanted to create something that would allow me to help people. I had always enjoyed helping others but was not

doing it in the way I desired. Since I was working at a Higher Education Institution (HEI), I thought about helping students and other members of the university community who were experiencing high levels of stress and adversity, similar to what I had gone through. I chose the School of Medicine as the place to make this change in my life. Given its characteristics, it is one of the largest faculties in the institution, and due to the nature of the medical program, students experience constant stress. Once the decision was made, I processed my transfer to a new academic unit and began a new path in building my well-being and that of the community I would be part of.

Thus, seven years ago, I arrived at my new workplace with the desire to help others. The initial steps were not easy because I was entering a completely unfamiliar environment: a School of Medicine, one of the largest in the university. Initially, the structure of the medical curriculum was very different from most of the institution's other curricula. Therefore, the first thing I did was to understand how it was designed and how it was implemented in practice. At the same time, an institutional call was made for new faculty positions, and I had the opportunity to apply for one. Among the requirements was to critique the medical curriculum, present a research proposal, and deliver a sample class.

Through these activities, I gained a clear understanding of how the Bachelor's Degree in Medicine was structured and found a way to propose an idea for the students and the community. I initially considered creating a new course within the curriculum.

I developed the design for an elective course that would address topics related to positive psychology, which I named "Development of Skills for Well-Being" (DHPB in Spanish). I adhered to the procedures established by the institution for the creation and approval of this course by the legally authorized bodies. The course was approved in the summer of 2015 and has been offered to all students in the Bachelor's Degree in Medicine since the fall semester of 2015. It is worth noting that initially, only one section was opened, but over time, the number of sections increased to six, all of which have been fully enrolled.

A relevant fact considered as a priority for implementing the course was that at that time, the stress level of students in the School of Medicine who were about to enter their clinical rotations was so high that approximately 40% of them had some mood disorder (anxiety disorder or depression). This data was provided by the Psychiatry Department's coordination in 2015. This information highlighted the urgent need

to support these students, as they were going to be responsible for addressing the health needs of the population at that time. If they were already struggling before completing their degree, how could they provide the best care for others?

Initially, a course program was designed for the curriculum in place at that time, known as the four-monthly plan. Later, an update to the curriculum of the Bachelor's Degree in Medicine, known as the semester plan, was implemented, which is the one currently in use. For this, the elective course that was initially designed had to be updated. It is important to mention that most students from the four-monthly plan have now completed their degree, so the offering for this plan has decreased, while the number of sections in the semester plan has increased. The first offering of the course was conducted with a single group, which had high demand from the start. As time has passed, the number of sections offered has increased, confirming the identified need among students regarding stress management.

## DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COURSE

The learning objective of the course from the outset has been for students to understand the theories, methods and strategies that enable them to develop psychological skills to approach life positively. The course design considered a competency-based pedagogical model, aiming to integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes into its planning. Each study unit was designed to ensure that students could master the knowledge on each topic and apply it to their activities. As its name suggests—Development of Skills for Well-Being—it is a more practical than theoretical course, but that does not mean students are exempt from mastering the fundamental knowledge in the field of positive psychology (see Table 1). The design was planned so that practical exercises were preceded by content that would allow students to understand the topic and serve as a guide for implementing each practice.



**Table 1.** *Student Workload*

Concept	Hours per Period		Total Hours per Period	Number of Credits
	Theory	Practice		
Theory and Practice Hours	16	32	48	3

**Note.** BUAP (2015).

Regarding attitudes and values corresponding to the “being” aspect, it was considered that these could be developed and evaluated through the discourse students use to write their activity reports, as well as through their participation and practices in class. The criteria for evaluating the “being” aspect include:

1. That the student shows a constructive and proactive attitude towards their experiences and observations in their real and immediate context.
2. That the interactions around the class and its activities follow an active and constructive pattern and aim to contribute positively.
3. The student’s appreciation of who they are and everything they possess.
4. The attitude of seeing oneself as an agent of change who constructs their own reality and is the protagonist of their own life.
5. The determination to face life’s difficulties with resilience.
6. Utilizing their character strengths in various areas of life.

Regarding the course structure, it is important to note that while positive psychology is more commonly discussed and recognized in Mexico today, in 2015 it was not widely known. The first formal efforts to advance this new field of study in Mexico began in 2013 with the creation of the Instituto de Ciencias de la Felicidad (Institute of Happiness Sciences) at the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, part of the TecMilenio system (TecMilenio, 2013). A review of existing positive psychology programs worldwide was conducted, and the content of the course was structured based on the educational trends at that time. At that time, everything related to this field was

truly novel in Mexico, and academic programs offering such thematic content were very limited.

Thus, the first course program, developed and approved in the summer of 2015, comprised seven thematic units as follows:

1. Unit 1: Introduction to the Study of Positive Psychology. The primary goal was for students to identify the main theories and authors proposed by the new paradigm of positive psychology.
2. Unit 2: Components of Well-being and Happiness. This unit aimed for students to identify the key elements that make up well-being and the factors that determine it.
3. Unit 3: Positive Emotions. The goal was to develop students' self-awareness and self-regulation of positive emotions, enabling them to achieve a state of well-being and counteract the effects of negative emotions.
4. Unit 4: Positive Relationships. The objective was to develop skills in students to establish high-quality personal connections.
5. Unit 5: Resilience. The goal was to develop skills that would allow students to reconstruct themselves healthily in the face of adversity.
6. Unit 6: Purpose and Meaning in Life. The main objective was to develop an understanding of the importance of clarifying one's purpose and meaning in life, providing a tool to guide and orient the direction of their goals, objectives, and achievements.
7. Unit 7: Well-being and Health. The most important objective was for students to identify the positive impact of building and maintaining a state of well-being on their health.

In this way, it was possible to integrate a program that was well accepted and very well received by young students belonging to the four-monthly generation, which, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, was the first to implement this course. Over the months, the course became well-known among the faculty's student community. The way it gained such recognition was through word-of-mouth recommen-

dations among the students themselves, and the demand continued to increase over time, from its implementation to the present. Since then, students have referred to the course as “the happiness course,” and while this is not its official name, it is how they commonly refer to it.

On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge as part of the experience that, just as the course has had its significant successes, it also encountered some complex situations during its implementation. One such issue was the way the evaluation process was structured. This aspect, in particular, has been the most challenging to adapt to the faculty’s evaluation regulations, which stipulate that written exams are a primary form of assessment, accounting for 50% of the final grade (BUAP, 2021).

It is worth noting that, being a highly practical course, it somewhat conflicted with the evaluation methods established by the School of Medicine’s regulations, as most of the criteria considered in these regulations pertained to practical and application-based activities rather than theoretical knowledge. (See Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Evaluation Criteria*

Criteria	Percentage
Class Activities and Dynamics (Evidence Portfolio)	50%
Presentations and Class Participation	20%
Design of a Positive Life Project	10%
Spaces for Dialogue and the Construction of a Positive Life	20%
Total	10%

**Note.** BUAP, 2015.

It is important to mention that despite the difficulties of adhering to or deviating from the regulations due to the nature of the course, which has a largely practical focus compared to theory, the evaluation was carried out almost exactly as planned during the initial years of the course design.



# UPDATE ON THE COURSE PROGRAM

By early 2016, the university required an update of all curricula. Consequently, the entire curriculum map for the Bachelor's Degree in Medicine was reviewed, along with each course program. The review focused on adjusting the duration of the four-monthly (2009) and semester (2016) plans from 16 to 18 weeks, with a four-week intersession period, and making necessary adjustments to the curriculum map structure and course content. This new curriculum was implemented for the cohort that entered Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla in the fall of 2016 (see Figures 3 and 4) (BUAP, 2016).

The curriculum map is divided into two levels: The basic level and the formative level.

Basic Level:

It aims to establish the theoretical and methodological foundations necessary for the general and disciplinary training of students. It enables them to understand the biological structure of the human body, its development, function, and regulation in a state of health. (BUAP, 2016, p. 12) [Quote translated from its original in Spanish]

Formative Level: This level is where the course “Development of Skills for Well-Being” (DHPB) is situated. It is essential that students have:

The knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes necessary for the adequate application of preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation criteria, as well as the integration and practical application of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in previous levels through critical professional practice and social engagement. (BUAP, 2016, p. 13) [Quote translated from its original in Spanish]

The course “Development of Skills for Well-Being” (DHPB) was approved from the outset at the formative level of the curriculum map, within the block of elective courses (see Figures 3 and 4). Area of elective courses. This means that students can freely choose it from a selection of courses offered each semester.

Electives are classified into two categories:

(1) disciplinary and (2) complementary. Both types offer greater flexibility in the program and aim to provide students with opportunities to deepen their knowledge in both clinical areas and Formación General Universitaria (General University Education). There are three mandatory disciplinary electives. (BUAP, 2016, p. 15)

The DHPB course falls into the category of disciplinary electives, marked in pink on the curriculum map at the formative level (see Figures 3 and 4). As mentioned earlier, the DHPB course was approved as an elective during the summer of 2015. At that time, the active curriculum was the four-monthly plan (2009), so the course was only available to students in that plan and who were at the formative level of the Bachelor's Degree in Medicine. An interesting phenomenon observed in this plan was that students enrolled in the course between their ninth and tenth semesters, meaning near the end of their studies and before their internship. This is not the case with the current semester plan, as students can now enroll in the course starting from the fifth and sixth semesters. In this regard, I received feedback from students suggesting that the course should be positioned at the basic level, as it covers knowledge, competencies, and skills that could be useful for handling the challenges of their degree program, and should be mandatory rather than elective.





Finally, following the initial proposal for the course in the 2009 four-monthly plan, a second proposal was made as a result of the 2016 curriculum update (semester-based) in January 2017. This update included necessary adjustments to the course on Positive Psychology and Well-Being (DHPB), which underwent primary changes in weeks 16 to 18 and in content. The changes made to the thematic content of each unit are outlined below:

- 1.** Unit 1: Introduction to the Study of Positive Psychology. This unit remains nearly identical to the previous syllabus because it is crucial to provide students with the scientific foundations of positive psychology before starting any activities.
- 2.** Unit 2: Your Mental Model. This content was added to allow students to perform a self-diagnosis and understand their perspective on reality. The aim is for students to become aware of their concept of truth as it influences their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This self-awareness is essential before applying positive psychology tools in the subsequent units.
- 3.** Unit 3: The PERMA Model for Happiness and Well-Being / A Proposal by Martin Seligman. This part of the program also underwent changes from the previous version. The goal is to better integrate the PERMA model, as the previous syllabus presented the elements as isolated units.
- 4.** Unit 4: Character Strengths. Changes were also made to this unit, which now focuses specifically on character strengths. Although this topic was included in the previous syllabus, it lacked sufficient content and time for detailed review.
- 5.** Unit 5: Happiness, Success, and Prosperity – The Key to a Good Life. A new content and title were created for this unit. It was necessary to clarify that success does not always lead to happiness, but happiness can lead to success. Success is defined here as achieving a good life based on personal virtues and strengths, while prosperity refers to a life of abundance in all aspects.
- 6.** Unit 6: Meditation – A Tool for Mental and Emotional Control for Stress Management and Health. Significant changes were made to this unit in response to student requests for meditation exercises. Students reported that meditation helped them stay calm and improve their daily well-being. Consequently,



meditation became a thematic unit and a cross-cutting element of the course. This means that meditation and mindfulness practices are integrated into the course at various times, either at the beginning or end of classes, to help students form a regular meditation habit and easily incorporate it into their daily lives.

7. Unit 7: Resilience. It was essential to retain the content related to resilience in this unit. The focus here is on teaching students how the tools they learn throughout the course enhance their resilience and change their perspective on adversity, crises, and pain. Understanding that life has both positive and challenging moments, and that psychological tools from positive psychology can ease the process of overcoming difficulties, helps students move from fear to enjoyment of every moment.

In this way, the units were integrated into the updated course program concerning content. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, changes were also made to the hours and weeks, as shown in Table 3:

**Table 3.** *Student Workload*

Concept	Hours per Week		Total Hours per Period	Total Credits by Period
	Theory	Practice		
Hours of theory and practice	18	36	54	3
Activities under Instructor Guidance ( e.g., lectures, lab practices, workshops, online courses, seminars).				
(18 hours = 1 credit)				

**Note.** BUAP (2017).

As shown in Table 3, the course hours increased from 48 to 54, with the number of weeks extending from 16 to 18. It is important to note that all elective courses carry three credits, and each credit corresponds to 18 class hours. Additionally, adjustments to the assessment criteria were also made, as detailed in Table 4.

**Table 4.** *Evaluation Criteria*

Criteria	Percentage
Class Activities and Practices (Evidence Portfolio)	30%
Class Participation (Presentations and Voluntary Student Participation)	20%
Midterm Exams (two per semester)	50%
Total	100%

**Source:** BUAP (2017).

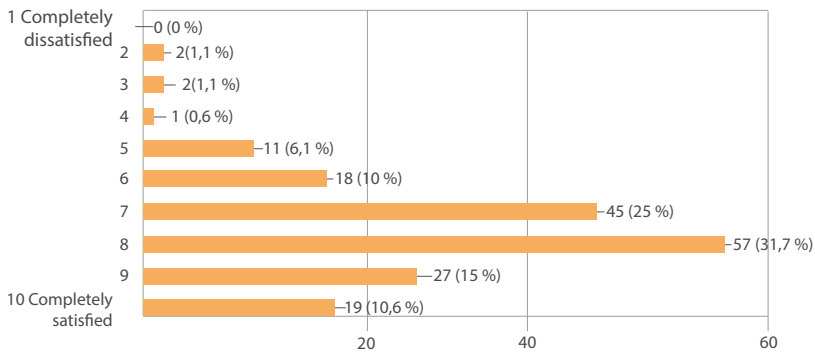
Finally, this section considers the evaluation regulations mentioned earlier, which propose that 50% of the evaluation be based on written exams. Given that the course is not highly theoretical, relying heavily on written exams for this percentage was not ideal for developing skills. After analyzing how to apply this regulation, a balance was achieved in the evaluation criteria.

## INITIAL AND FINAL EVALUATION OF THE COURSE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO STUDENTS

I would like to conclude this chapter by sharing some results from the student responses for one of the periods with the highest enrollment, Fall 2020, which was also one of the most critical periods of the pandemic. The following figures provide comparative data from the initial and final diagnostic questionnaires administered to the students in the courset.

**Figure 3.** Question 1. Initial Questionnaire.

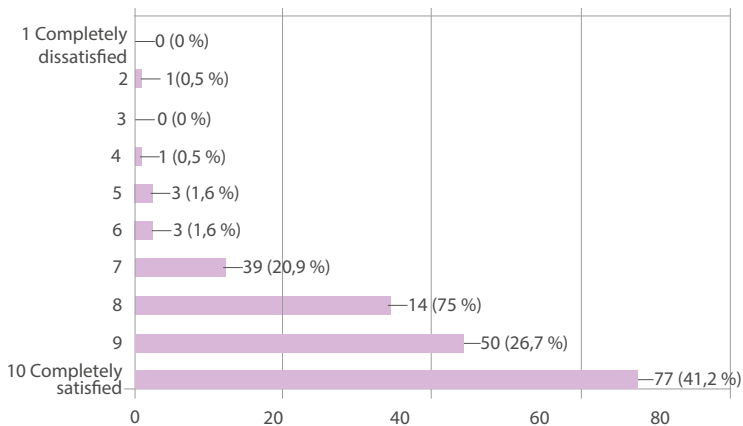
All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life at this moment? Please use this scale where 1 means “completely dissatisfied” and 10 means “completely satisfied”. Where do you fall?  
180 responses



**Source:** Created by the author.

**Figure 4.** Question 1. Final Questionnaire.

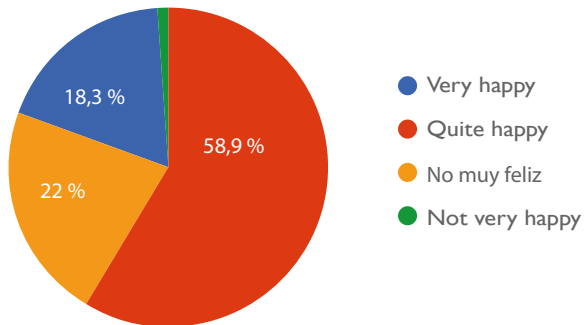
All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life at this moment? Please use this scale where 1 means “completely dissatisfied” and 10 means “completely satisfied”. Where do you fall?



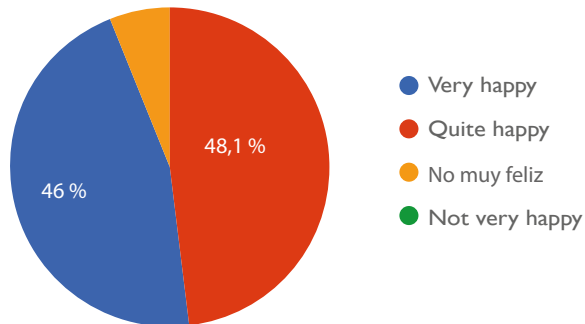
**Source:** Created by the author..

**Figure 5.** Question 2. Initial and Final Questionnaires.

Taking the overall picture, how would you describe yourself?  
180 responses



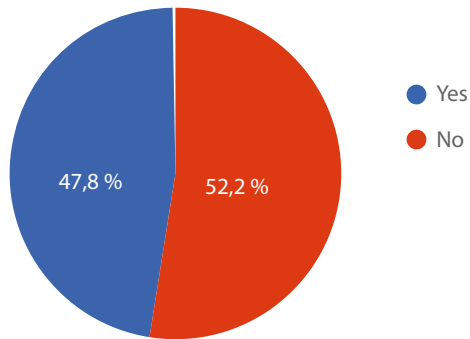
Considering how you felt at the beginning of the course and how you feel now at the end, would you say you feel?  
180 responses



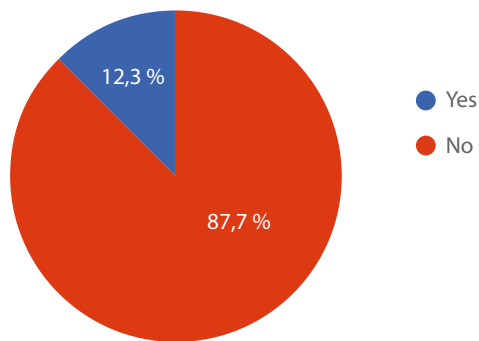
**Source:** Created by the author.

**Figure 6.** Question 3. Initial and Final Questionnaires

In the past few weeks, have you felt... Depressed or very unhappy?  
180 responses



In the past few weeks, have you felt... Depressed or very unhappy?  
180 responses

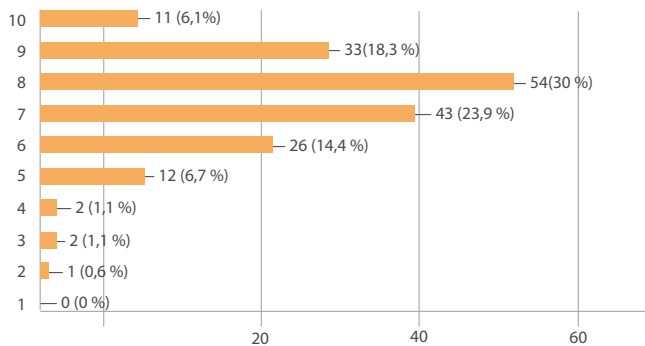


**Source:** Created by the author.

**Figure 7.** Question 4. Initial Questionnaire

Imagine a ladder with 10 steps, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest. Suppose the highest step represents the best possible life for you, and the lowest step represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder do you feel you are currently?

180 responses

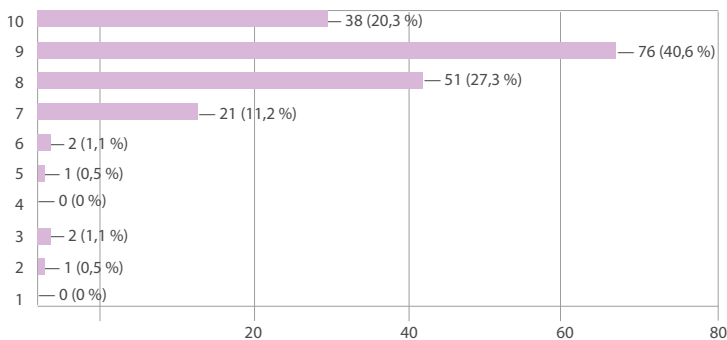


**Source:** Created by the author.

**Figure 8.** Question 4. Final Questionnaire

Imagine a ladder with 10 steps, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest. Suppose the highest step represents the best possible life for you, and the lowest step represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder do you feel you are currently?

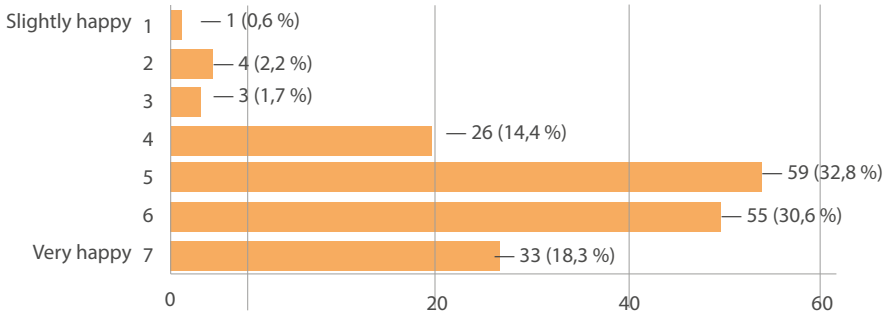
187 responses



**Source:** Created by the author.

**Figure 9.** Question 5. Initial Questionnaire.

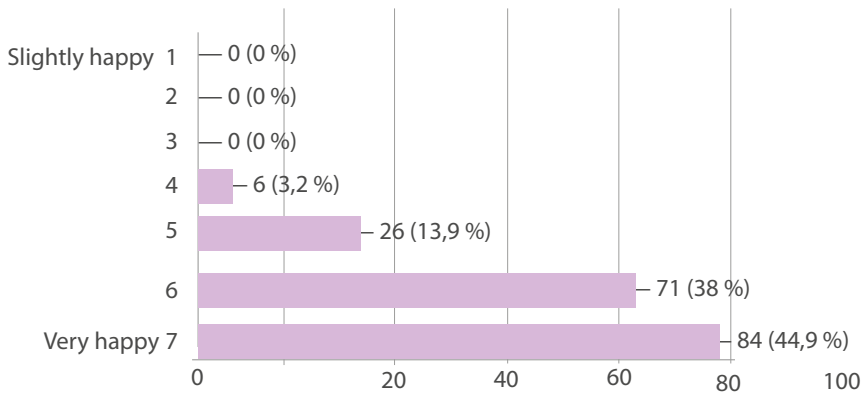
In general, I consider myself: 180 responses



**Source:** Created by the author..

**Figure 10.** Question 5. Final Questionnaire.

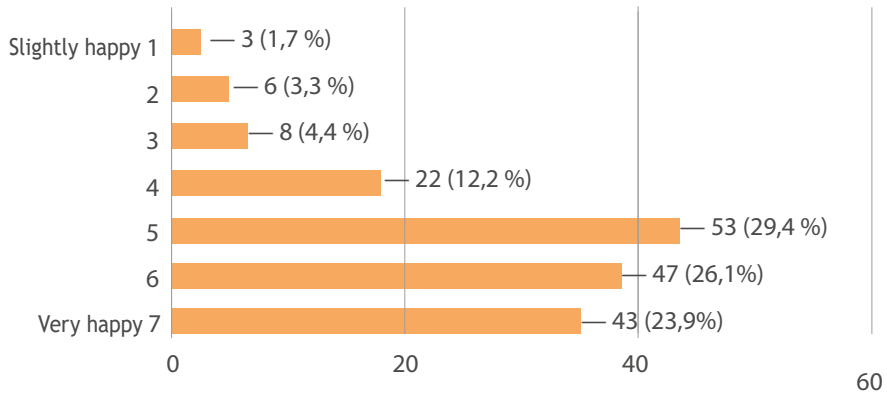
In general, I consider myself: 187 responses



**Source:** Created by the author.

**Figure 11.** Question 6. Initial Questionnaire.

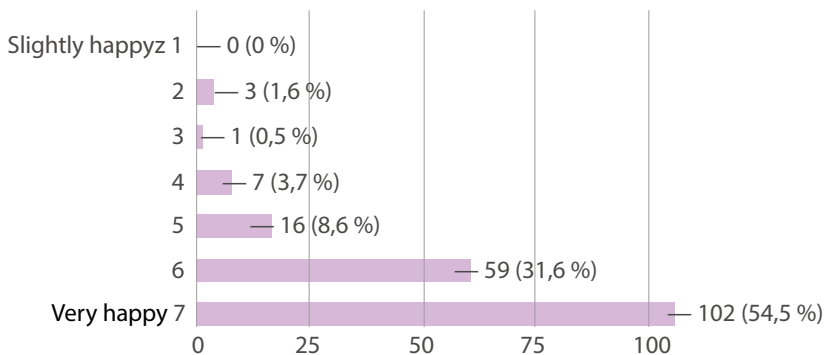
Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:  
188 responses



**Source:** Created by the author.

**Figure 12.** Question 6. Final Questionnaire.

Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:  
187 responses



**Source:** Created by the author..



As observed in all the figures presented on the previous pages, the changes shown by the students from the initial questionnaire to the final questionnaire reflect a favorable modification across all figures. This demonstrates quantitatively the effectiveness of the course for the students in the School of Medicine who took it. Similarly, it is clear that educational interventions in positive psychology can improve the well-being of the groups or communities in which they are implemented.

## CONCLUSIONS

The experience of implementing an educational intervention through the proposal, design, implementation and evaluation of a course aimed at helping students in the School of Medicine live well has been both challenging and rewarding. This course, focused entirely on the student and their well-being, stands out distinctly from the typical subjects offered in this academic unit. Students often remark that this course is very different from others they have taken, as it provides them with practical tools for their own benefit rather than for application to others.

One of the biggest challenges was gaining trust and acceptance for this new scientific paradigm. As previously mentioned, when the course “Development of Skills for Well-Being” was first implemented, the concept of positive psychology was relatively unknown and emerging in Mexico. One of the most significant hurdles was paving the way and earning credibility and recognition for this new approach within the scientific and health sciences communities. Consequently, the initial course program had both successes and shortcomings due to the limited knowledge at the time. The second iteration of the course program is now better organized and structured; however, it does not necessarily mean that one version is better than the other; each has its strengths and areas for improvement.

Another challenge was aligning the course evaluation with the School of Medicine’s evaluation regulations. Since the course focuses on skill development, evaluating it based on written exams, which are required to account for at least 50% of the grade, proved complex. However, from a competency-based perspective, the 50% allocated to knowledge exams was seen as a measure of the student’s understanding of the

topic, which could then be applied in practical activities. This perspective made the adaptation more manageable, as the remaining 50% evaluated the student's ability to apply knowledge in practice, as well as the necessary attitudes and values.

These adjustments have been particularly relevant since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as aligning content with activities has made it easier for students to follow the course.

The pandemic also necessitated a special mention, as the shift to remote learning due to university health measures to protect its community and prevent potential contagions presented a significant challenge for many professors. Specifically, the DHPB course transitioned to online education using the Moodle platform; therefore, it was crucial to have a clear understanding of the course components to apply them effectively to the instructional design needed. This design, based on a teaching-learning model proposed in my master's thesis, integrates learning objectives, content, and activities in a straightforward and clear manner. It was also supported by a competency-based pedagogical perspective focusing on knowing, doing, and being.

This approach allowed for a practical and simple design to guide students step by step towards achieving the course's goals. The online platform made it easier to design written exams and provide immediate feedback. The initial design of the course proved adaptable to online instruction, helping to maintain the core objective of the course—developing the skills necessary for well-being in life.

Regarding the changes made from a four-monthly program to a semester program, the experience was improved. Since the course is an elective with only three credits, which is relatively few hours, the longer term allowed for deeper exploration of topics and better consolidation of learning.

Finally, the improvements the course offers to students are evident from the statistics presented at the end of the chapter. Students enter the course with a certain understanding of their well-being, which can be enhanced throughout the course through educational interventions based on positive psychology. This evidence demonstrates the significant contribution that this new paradigm can make to education and encourages more colleagues to innovate in their educational practices.

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# LIFE PROJECT AND WELL-BEING IN STUDENTS IN VIRTUAL LEARNING: A CONFIGURATIONIST PERSPECTIVE<sup>6</sup>



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6 This chapter of the book is derived from the doctoral thesis *Configuración psicológica del proceso de construcción de proyecto de vida, en estudiantes de la modalidad virtual* (Psychological Configuration of the Life Project Construction Process in Students in Virtual Learning) from the Doctorate in Psychology at Universidad Simón Bolívar, Barranquilla, and the subproject *Experiencia subjetiva del tiempo en estudiantes de la modalidad a Distancia* (Subjective Experience of Time in Students in Distance Learning and its Relationship with the Life Project) developed in collaboration between UNAD and UNIMINUTO.

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## ABSTRACT

The construct of the life project has been described and characterized through various approaches and perspectives throughout its historical development. However, a documentary review of the literature, frequent use of the construct in various scenarios and the experiences with students in virtual learning reveal a lack of theoretical foundation in this field from a configurationist perspective. Configurationism offers a holistic, systemic, dialectical and complex theoretical model where ideas, theories and knowledge are logically interconnected to form a harmonious and coherent whole. The data collection technique used was a documentary review of articles, books, monographs and research projects. Findings indicate that the life project can be analyzed as a configuration from character traits and can be viewed as a social network with subjective codes, structures, continuities and discontinuities, functionalities and contradictions, all within a projective framework seeking ongoing well-being. This perspective allows for the construction of knowledge using a configurationist methodology.

**Keywords:** Life project, well-being, configurationism, virtual learning, students.

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## RESUMEN



El constructo proyecto de vida, en su trayectoria histórica ha sido descrito y caracterizado con diferentes abordajes y enfoques. Sin embargo, la revisión documental de la literatura, el uso frecuente del constructo en diversos escenarios, las vivencias y experiencias con estudiantes de la modalidad virtual develan la poca fundamentación teórica que existe en este campo, desde lo configuracional, como modelo teórico holístico, sistémico, dialéctico y complejo, en el que las ideas, teorías y conocimientos se interconectan lógicamente entre sí, para formar una totalidad armónica y coherente. La técnica de construcción de datos fue la revisión documental que se realizó con documentos tipo artículos, libros, monografías y proyectos de investigación. Los hallazgos muestran que el proyecto de vida puede analizarse como una configuración desde rasgos caracterológicos y siendo sensible a considerarlo como una red social, con códigos subjetivos, estructuras, continuidades y discontinuidades, funcionalidades y contradicciones y con una mirada proyectiva de búsqueda permanente de bienestar alrededor de la cual se puede construir conocimientos desde la metodología configuracionista.

**Palabras clave:** Proyecto de vida, bienestar, configuracionismo, modalidad virtual, estudiantes.



# INTRODUCTION

Life Project has been studied by various authors and disciplines (Rojas-Otálora & Suárez-Barros, 2019). A literature review has found that it is linked to the human need to overcome deficiencies and shortcomings in life (Frankl, 1980) and to seek well-being (Astorga & Yáber, 2019; Ryff & Keyes, 1995), satisfying one's capacity to love and work, reducing discomfort and suffering (Frankl, 1980), through organizing plans to address these challenges (Vargas, 2005). Studies suggest that it is the result of intersubjective and motivational processes (Rojas-Otálora & Suárez-Barros, 2015; Rojas-Otálora & Hernández-Garzón, 2011; Rojas-Otálora & Suárez-Barros, 2019), as well as intersubjective processes and potentials for individual and social reconstruction (D'Angelo-Hernández, 1999; Meertens, 2000). It is related to the concepts of happiness and well-being, which are fundamental aspects of human development (Maier, 1982; Rojas-Otálora & Hernández-Garzón, 2011). In these concepts, the integrality, multidimensionality and the historical-contextual condition of the individual play an important role in the ongoing reinvention required in response to social and cultural circumstances (Vygotsky, as cited in Carrera & Mozzarella, 2001; Lamus Canavate, 1999).

Although each author and study has emphasized different aspects in conceptualizing and arguing, they all agree on essential points such as:

1. The Life Project involves complex processes of the individual who conceives and builds it.
2. The Life Project is a subjective construct situated, "in situ" in space and time, involving the history and culture of the individual developing it.
3. The Life Project is associated with goals, objectives and resources: administrative aspects: (Aracena-Álvarez et al., 2005; Meertens, 2000; Rojas-Otálora, 2008; Rojas-Wilches et al., 2011; Vargas, 2005), interests, desires, aspirations and needs, motivational aspects and self-realization (Bozhovich, 1976; D'Angelo, 1998; Maslow & Lewis, 1950; Rojas-Otálora and Suárez-Barros, 2015;

Rojas-Otálora & Suárez-Barros, 2019), encompassing both individual and Collective dimensions (Ardila & Ostrosky-Solis, 2008; Casullo, 1995; D´Angelo-Hernández, 1999; Fernández-Sessarego, 2016; Luria, 1974/1977; Mesa, 2004; Rojas-Wilches et al., 2011).

However, despite the outline provided by the authors and the frequent use of the construct in public policy scenarios, psychosocial intervention programs and academic and research environments, there is a lack of a psychological theory (interaction, relationship, connection, links, structuring, dynamics from psychological components) in the construction and development of the Life Project, especially in emerging 21st-century social situations such as virtual education as a means to achieve it.

The concept of configuration is more commonly used in the sociological field, but it is also applicable for theory building and understanding human phenomena in other disciplines. This concept refers to structures, subjectivities and interactions, with their rigid or flexible relationships, resulting in the methodological translation of the reconstruction of the entirety relevant to explaining the Life Project construct.

In this chapter of the book, derived from research, it is assumed that configuration can be a core component of theory when it comes to creating substantive assumptions that show understanding of the process of constructing the Life Project in humans and how this construct is part of human development and is linked to well-being, both subjective, psychological and social.

This document presents the application of the concept of configuration to the Life Project construct, as discussed by psychology authors, under the perspective of well-being. It clarifies that each mentioned author has separately addressed explanatory and comprehensive aspects of the phenomenon without integrating the diverse views. It is specified that no author has discussed psychological configuration in the process of constructing the Life Project, but the analysis of theoretical assumptions studied can be associated with what is considered configuration or figuration, according to the reviewed authors.

This approach to the field of configuration will focus on character traits that identify this epistemological proposal; it will analyze the Life Project in terms of its development, interconnections, functions, meaning, regularities and configurative rhythm, within the configuring context of virtuality and through a cross-sectional analysis of the complete well-being model and its dimensions of subjective, psychological and social well-being.

# CONFIGURING THEORETICAL CONTEXT

## CONFIGURATIONAL THEORY VIEW

The analysis is conducted from the contemporary proposal of Ortiz-Cañá (2016/2017/2018/2019/2020) and the concepts configurationism, configuration and configuralogy. This approach provides concepts, perspectives and methodological paths for understanding, specially focusing on character traits.

Ortiz-Cañá introduces the need for a science for the third millennium, which he terms configurationism, as a:

Epistemic model that meets the demands of the 21st century and proposes a new epistemology for social sciences. According to the author, it is a holofaceted model because the results of scientific activity can be obtained in all facets of human knowledge, contributing to the enrichment of humanity's social, scientific, and cultural heritage (p. 234) [Quote translated from its original in Spanish]

Ortiz-Ocaña (2017) and Salcedo and Ortiz-Ocaña (2017) view configurationism as a holistic, systemic, dialectical and complex model, as it interconnects ideas, theories and scientific knowledge logically to form a harmoniously and coherently configured whole.

Configuralogy, as a theory of configurations from an epistemological perspective, embraces theories of complexity, holistic approaches and systemic and ecological frameworks. It proposes configuration as a logical category and a method of study to understand human and social processes through the “notion to investigate, deeply analyze, question, understand, argue and develop” (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2016, p. 292). In this view, configuration is a way of thinking about science, considering it as the “starting point of the socio-human scientific process, encompassing the problem, intention, method and solution” (p. 293).

For this comprehensive process, the concept of configurations is understood as:

An organized whole, composed of dynamic, functional and interrelated processes, both internally and externally, with other contextual configurations of the same or different complexity, which have meaning and significance for itself and for other related or unrelated configurations (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2016, p.293). [Quote translated from its original in Spanish]

From this perspective, the concept of configuring context emerges, defined as the psychological space and sociocultural environment where a configuration is expressed and enhanced through movements, processes, functions and vital changes in human life. It encompasses all processes within a specific proximity that can influence the dynamics of the configuration being studied.

The Life Project will be the configuration under study, within an expansive context characterized by constant interrelationships with other configurations: well-being and the context of virtual education, which define the context in which the Life Project is enhanced. The characterization of the process is facilitated through character traits that specify the process and distinguish it from others, enabling analysis, understanding, interpretation, description, explanation, argumentation and even “guidance, prediction and projection over time” (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2016, p. 293).

The character traits used to analyze the Life Project include: interconnections, which refer to the specific nature of the configuration in relation to other events and processes, generating multidimensionalities and new relationships and events within a larger process. Functions, which indicate that every configuration has an inherent dynamic, functionality and precise goals. Meanings and significance, referring to the sense derived from studying the configuration of an object or situation, involving a particular or collective attitude toward perceiving order and harmony in space, time or space-time. This involves the integration of imaginaries such as conceptions and perceptions, considering that its representation is the most elaborate and conscious instance of the subject’s knowledge. This sense gives it meaning from a hermeneutic perspective. Regularities, which constitute the invariant, most stable and significant character traits. The configurative rhythm refers to the dynamic functioning, spiral type, representing the “fluctuations, uncertainties and oscillations of human behavior and social system behaviors that generate transformational movements” (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2020, p. 110).

# LIFE PROJECT: STUDIED CONFIGURATION

The concept of “Life Project,” much like that of well-being, gained prominence in the 20th century. Researchers suggest that the “Life Project” materializes during adolescence and young adulthood, a period characterized by the pursuit of independence and identity, professional development, securing employment or occupation, leaving the primary family, and establishing a new family unit. The Life Project is linked to the concepts of happiness and well-being, which are fundamental motivations for human beings (Maier, 1982; Rojas-Otálora & Hernández-Garzón, 2011).

A review of the literature reveals various conceptual, theoretical, and methodological perspectives on this construct, especially as a psychological construct. The sociopolitical conditions of the 21st century have enhanced interest in this topic, encouraging social sciences, particularly psychology, to revisit, study, and connect it with psychological variables that shape it (Suárez-Barros et al., 2018). These authors review the subject and suggest that the concept’s evolution has shifted from an administrative/instrumental/business perspective to an integrated, reflective, and systemic view, where inter- and intra-subjective processes become essential elements of its configuration.

Some authors emphasize the Life Project as an operational and instrumental aspect of an individual, meaning a person’s identity is structured through resources and tasks, with their management and administration being crucial for achieving it. From this perspective, the Life Project can be understood as a short- or medium-term goal to which the individual dedicates their activities or efforts, focusing on survival strategies across dimensions of experience, identity, and perceptions (Aracena-Álvarez et al., 2005; Meertens, 2000). It can also be viewed as a “strategic planning of personality, which in educational contexts allows the development of actions towards the educational process, encompassing work, daily actions, the present, and the future”. (Vargas 2005, p. 16).

From a humanistic perspective, Maslow & Lewis (1950) approach a eudaimonic view of the individual through their hierarchy of needs, proposing a dynamic process of seeking satisfaction and guiding human actions toward the pinnacle of self-actualization needs. In this context, relating it to the Life Project, it is suggested that the

future also exists within the person in the form of ideals, hopes, duties, tasks, plans, goals, unrealized potential, mission, fate, and destiny. A significant advancement is the pursuit of deepening the concept, moving from instrumental-operational to a psychological construct of intrinsic motivation that values the human psyche.

In this evolution of the concept, Suárez-Barros and Rojas-Otálora (2018) expand the concept, highlighting the Life Project as a human, integral, dynamic, flexible process with motivational (internal and external motivation) and axiological (values) elements that contribute to understanding how it evolves within the individual and interacts with social and contextual factors, multidimensional in its application and pursuit of well-being (subjective, psychological, and social), balancing hedonic and eudaimonic aspects.

The mentioned authors conceptualize and configure the Life Project, as a dynamic, flexible construction based on motivation and axiological aspects. It is considered a construction because it can be defined as a procedural and continuous entity of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, based on the individual's experiences and meanings. The "construction" condition is also based on considering the Life Project as a hypothetical entity that is used but difficult to define within a scientific theory. It is commonly used in various contexts and discourses but is not a directly manipulable or tangible phenomenon and can be classified and studied as a system.

It is considered a dynamic process, with changes oriented towards goals and the achievement of partial tasks or objectives, which in turn allow for the creation of new goals or objectives, based on what are considered actions to improve and strengthen the Life Project. This is complemented by being a flexible structure, as it integrates elements systemically related and affecting each other through their interactions. These elements are organized during the individual's development based on internal basic needs and their adjustment and organization to the characteristics and demands of different contexts.

This construct is considered motivational because it includes factors of subjective, psychological and social well-being, leading more towards hedonic aspects or enjoyment, although linked to long-term developmental issues. Emphasis is placed on emotional executive functions, which refer to the ability to satisfy basic impulses using socially acceptable strategies. On an axiological and humanistic platform, the Life Project includes eudaimonic aspects such as personal development, growth or self-actualization, which are related to overcoming conflicts as outlined in Erikson's

model (1993), focusing on stage-specific goals or conflicts and concluding with the integrity versus despair conflict. This highlights the individual's life reflection, aiming to complete the entire process of the Life Project.

## INTERCONNECTED CONFIGURATIONS: WELL-BEING AND VIRTUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Throughout history, authors, thinkers and scientists from various disciplines have studied this construct, yet there is no consensus on the topic. This has led to contributions aimed at understanding its elements and components.

In the historical development of the Life Project, it intersects at various points with well-being and virtuality. In this document, well-being and virtuality will be approached as “configurations” within the comprehensive model of well-being, which includes subjective, psychological, and social dimensions. This well-being proposal will be analyzed across the character traits of the Life Project configuration and activated in educational contexts mediated by technology.

Subjective well-being will be considered as a configurational element with its own components, from a hedonic perspective where achieving happiness or satisfaction is the ultimate goal for all individuals. Diener (2002) represents this dimension of well-being, defining it as: “...the cognitive and affective evaluations a person makes about their life, including emotional reactions to events, as well as judgments about satisfaction and achievement, from dimensions of pleasant emotions, negative emotions, and high life satisfaction” (p. 63). Other authors, such as Veenhoven (1994), define it as: “Life satisfaction is the degree to which a person evaluates the overall quality of their life positively and how much they like the life they are living” (p. 91).

In relation to this concept and its connection with the Life Project, common points could be highlighted concerning the resources available to individuals, such as life opportunities or vital trajectories, the life course as part of life, and the stages that

evolve or devolve across different life cycles and the emotionality that pervades each lived event. Subjective well-being would be a global assessment of how life has been and the achievements reached through one's biography.

Psychological well-being is considered a transcendent construct from a eudaimonic, rather than hedonic, perspective. It includes social, subjective, and psychological dimensions and represents coping mechanisms for life, organizing how to identify, manage, learn from, and project the lived events, giving meaning and purpose to one's life. This configurational element of well-being is viewed through the multidimensional model proposed by Ryff & Keyes (1995). The significance of this theoretical proposal is that it is a measure of well-being rather than a predictor, leading to more positive emotions, life satisfaction, and pleasure, thus generating subjective well-being.

To complement this comprehensive model of well-being, social well-being is proposed as "the evaluation we make of the circumstances and functioning within society" (Ryff & Keyes, 1995, p. 122), within a "context that includes others individually (social contact), in groups (family and friends), institutionally, work-related, and recreationally" (Blanco & Valera, 2007, p. 17). Below is a table proposed by Blanco and Valera (2007) showing the dimensions of each type of well-being described in the previous sections.

**Image 1.** *Dimensions of Well-being-Comprehensive Model.*

Subjective Well-being	Psychological Well-being	Social Well-being
<p><b>1. Satisfaction:</b> overall judgment or assessment of various aspects that a person considers important in their life.</p>	<p><b>1. Self-acceptance:</b> feeling good and having positive attitudes towards oneself.</p>	<p><b>1. Social integration:</b> feeling of belonging, establishing social bonds.</p>
<p><b>2. Positive affect:</b> result of a whole-centered emotional experience in a certain life situation.</p>	<p><b>2. Positive relationships with others:</b> maintaining stable and reliable relationships.</p>	<p><b>2. Social acceptance:</b> trust in others and acceptance of both positive and negative aspects of one's life.</p>
<p><b>3. Negative effect:</b> result of a negative emotional experience in a certain life situation.</p>	<p><b>3. Autonomy:</b> ability to maintain their convictions (self-determination) and their personal independence and authority.</p>	<p><b>3. Social contribution:</b> feeling of usefulness, being able to contribute to the society in which we live. Self-efficiency.</p>



Subjective Well-being	Psychological Well-being	Social Well-being
	<b>4. Mastery of the Environment:</b> personal ability to choose or create favorable environments to meet one's own desires and needs.	<b>4. Social actualization:</b> trust in the future of society, in its capacity to produce conditions that promote well-being.
	<b>5. Personal growth:</b> effort to develop the potential and continue to grow as a person.	<b>5. Personal growth:</b> confidence in the ability to understand the dynamics and functioning of the world in which we live.

**Note.** Dimensions of the global or comprehensive model proposed by the authors. Extracted from the chapter of the book "Intervención psicosocial" by Amalio Blanco and Sergi Valera (2001).

Analyzing the Life Project through the lens of well-being also invites a review of the configuring context in which it is expressed. This context is situated in education, at the level of higher education, in undergraduate programs and in virtual modalities within the framework of the fourth industrial revolution, with modern distinctions between virtuality, virtual reality, cyberspace, and cyberculture.

Virtuality is a concept used to describe environments or situations that stem from or reflect physical reality. It contains flexible signs and symbols expressed in specific contexts. Virtuality is used to show contents, relationships and forms related to the virtual context. Within this conceptual framework, the term virtual reality refers to a space created by technological intervention, representing the form of virtuality.

In this work, virtuality is approached from two perspectives: objective and subjective, which some authors refer to as qualitative or quantitative. Both perspectives involve analyzing the situation based on the structuring and appropriation of different media axes: media infrastructure of transport, means of transport, communication media and digital means of communication. Objectivity is represented in communication network systems that engage both objective and subjective aspects. Subjectively, virtuality highlights relationships that emerge and are enhanced in the field.

Another element of the 21st century is cyberculture, which, from this configurative perspective, refers to the influence that the Internet has had on human beings and their relationships. This includes interactions with computers, customs, habits, morphological modifications, body projection, digital exchanges, face-to-face communications, synchronous and asynchronous communications, and the expansion of

interaction spaces in virtual reality such as video games, virtual worlds, simultaneous realities, and alternate scenarios.

It is important to clarify that within virtuality, two major curricula should be considered: the individual and the group. Discussing the Life Project within the digital culture context involves issues related to identities and otherness, represented in who we are, our role or position in life and society, how the body acts and participates, relationships, virtual space, real space and the symbols, signs and meanings each learner assigns to their social role.

## CONFIGURATIONAL METHODOLOGY

The method used for this analytical exercise was document review, consisting of the following phases: planning, selection, extraction and analysis.

During the planning phase, search axes and strategies were created, allowing for the selection of scientific documents, their analysis and the identification of significant data. For this chapter of the book, the analysis axis was raised as follows: what are the character traits observed in the conceptual and theoretical approaches of authors contributing to the study of the Life Project, considering it as a theoretical configuration? What interconnections exist between the Life Project configuration and the well-being and virtuality configurations?

Based on these guiding questions, documents were reviewed in databases such as Scopus, Science Direct, Scielo, Redalyc, Google Scholar and open repositories of doctoral theses, using the following inclusion criteria: documents such as scientific articles, postgraduate theses, working papers, associated with research carried out between 1999 to 2019. The search descriptors were: in Spanish: Proyecto de vida, Plan de vida, Proyección de vida; in English: life project, vital goals, life plan.

For this specific exercise, 50 scientific documents were consulted and selected, organized in an Analytical Summary Matrix (ASM). The selection prioritized scientific articles derived from research related to the topic, excluding other types of documents, such as essays, conference papers, or reflective texts. The document review exercise aims to analyze the configuration based on the character traits proposed by configurationism.

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF THE LIFE PROJECT CONFIGURATION

From the character traits that define a configuration (interconnections, functions, meanings, regularities, and configurative rhythm), the analysis is conducted through the methodological approach of document review and the theoretical framework of well-being and human development.

Starting with the first trait that characterizes the Life Project, namely “interconnections,” it is evident that the construct is associated with various elements, events, and multidimensional processes that connect and generate new relationships and events. Casullo (1995), for instance, views the Life Project as a process tied to individual human development in the realms of emotional and intellectual maturation. He categorizes it as a central aspect of the individual, i.e., constituted by “the set of things or realities that are important to the person, their values, and their way of life” (Mesa, 2004, p.16). With this latter author, one can see how he integrates internal (individual) and external (environment-society) elements, as highlighted by Elías (as cited in De la Garza, 2018), when discussing configuration.

Casullo’s theoretical stance (1995) posits that, for personal growth, the individual must learn over the course of their life and experience, integrating and overcoming psychological tasks (assumptions or goals to be achieved). This involves aligning their actions with their values, demonstrating responsibility in decision-making, and maintaining respectful attitudes towards others, accepting their singularities and differences, as well as their potential and limitations, both from an individual and collective perspective. In other words, this analysis shows that every Life Project inherently involves the pursuit of self-actualization (from subjective and psychological well-being) but must also be understood from the perspective of social well-being, regarding the need to make a social contribution to the society in which one lives, coherently linked to the understanding and functioning of the world and environment in which one finds oneself.

Further contributing to the configuration of the Life Project, Casullo emphasizes that during their construction process, individuals need elements such as self-knowledge and an understanding of the surrounding social reality. Regarding self-knowledge, he describes elements related to who the person is, what they want, need, desire, what interests them, their talents, and the resources they have. Regarding knowledge of their environment, he stresses the importance of understanding the family nucleus, the microsocial context, expectations and projections from the family, the social context, cultural characterization, and economic and political aspects.

From a configurational perspective and interconnections as a character trait, these authors highlight their contribution to the structure of the Life Project, incorporating elements such as psychological aspects, which involve subjectivities.

When considering the Life Project as a configuration, it is also acknowledged as a social representation derived from power relations throughout an individual's life path, within their own reality and daily life. Daily life is seen as the environment, sphere, or stage where an individual's actions unfold and where the worlds with which the individual interacts frequently and continuously are represented. Thus, the Life Project is understood as the result of the social constructions of the individual in their daily life (Uribe-Fernández, 2014), making these projects unique, irreplaceable, and specific to each situated individual. This is linked to psychological well-being through dimensions such as self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, seeking stable and reliable relationships, and the ability to autonomously create favorable environments, always with clear and precise vital goals that allow for personal growth.

Based on this, the Life Projects studied as a configuration demonstrate that they are a whole with interconnections of various elements from different perspectives and dimensions (personal, emotional, sociopolitical, cultural, professional, recreational, family cultural, spiritual, intellectual). They develop from dependence (external influences) to autonomy and the ultimate goal of personality (independence and self-awareness) (Bozhovich, 1976; Coll, 2001). In other words, the Life Project, as a central configuration, relates to two major events and processes: personality and context.

From a configurational theory perspective, it can be inferred that Life project(s) are constructed within a framework of psychological and social subsystems and processes. These are supported reflectively with coherence, integrative, ethical and value-based autonomy, making them flexible, open, creative and critical according

to the context in which they are situated and the needs and capacities for their performance, adjustment, renewal or abandonment (Suárez-Barros et al., 2018). This reflects structural elements, subjectivities and social interactions that are key to understanding a psychological configuration, which can be more clearly described through other character traits.

In analyzing the “functions” of the Life project, D’Angelo (1999) is highlighted as a significant contributor to this configurational and functional view of the construct. This Cuban author recognizes the Life Project as a process linked with functions and content of personality, covering vital life situations, and the interplay of physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual aspects of the individual from a critical-reflective perspective. It constitutes an inherent, creative and functional dynamic that spans the dimensions or spheres of an individual’s life.

According to Frankl (1980), every person has a specific vocation or mission in life aligned with their needs, values and preferences. This means they need to take agency and achieve both accomplishments and freedom: achievements of agency for well-being (functions) and freedoms of agency, i.e., freedoms of well-being (capabilities), to seek happiness, encompassing both subjective well-being and life satisfaction (Cuadra & Florenzano, 2003).

Regarding functions as a character trait, the Life Project also has a mission related to identity reconstruction (Gómez-Urrutia & Royo-Urrizola, 2015). This encompasses both the sense of doing (specific activities for survival and small initiatives for the future) and the sense of being (especially for displaced populations: coping with and overcoming the feeling of being out of place—negative affect—and seeking social integration). This gives significant weight to social and political aspects (previous experiences-life course-retrospective balance of experiences-life satisfaction-subjective well-being), differentiating how each individual faces their life, projects and the re-configuration of their social fabric (Meertens, 2000) and the supportive and solidarity networks in vital projects (Suárez-Barros et al., 2018).

In this character trait (functions), the framework of seeking to feel well (subjective well-being) emerges, driven by needs ranging from self-acceptance to personal growth, always within a configurational context that activates, halts, enhances, protects, or risks it, such as the social, territorial, and contextual environment in which it develops (social well-being).

In the field of psychology, Gómez-Urrutia and Royo-Urrizola (2015) argue that the Life Project is a construction of the reflective function of the self, with the goal of ensuring one's future based on imaginaries, the valuation of reality, and personal preferences. This categorizes it as a psychological structure through which the individual expresses themselves in their social context, according to societal determinants. Although the author's conceptual proposal emphasizes the subjective-psychological aspects of the individual, its projection and realization are placed in the social sphere, highlighting the influential role it has in the development of life projects.

Rojas-Otálora and Suárez-Barros (2016):Rojas-Otálora y Suárez-Barros (2016):

In their content analysis of data collected from virtual learning students, they reveal that the Life Project, as a goal-oriented proposal organized as a complex motivational structure, involves the interaction of the individual with their ideals. It requires self-analysis (review of available resources, deficiencies, contexts, desires), self-mastery, self-control (persistence, discipline, organization), and involves self-management (planning, resource administration and project evaluation), based on a scale of values and attitudes, with the aim of continuously seeking stability, quality of life and well-being to achieve constant self-actualization. (2016, p. 46)

The same authors have evolved their contribution. In 2019, they viewed the Life Project as a process that is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. They proposed essential elements that interact, dynamize and flexibilize its evolution. These central elements of the Life Project, according to the authors, include: motivation, experiences and meanings of being, personal reality, sense of life, projections, objectives and goals, contexts, discourses, metacognitive functions, executive and emotional functions, social interactions, values, coping mechanisms and the search for well-being.

This construct is also characterized by “meanings and significances” as it reveals a view of the construct where it is recognized that there are no unique or singular life projects. Instead, multiple life projects can be constructed (plurality), “with critical, reflective foundations oriented towards personal and creative self-actualization within a context of dignity and civic fulfillment” (D’Angelo, 2000, p. 7).

The Life project configuration has a sense that extends from the individual or particular to the collective, but in an ordered, harmonious manner, within a temporal-spatial context where the social is incorporated through actions, relationships and interactions. These elements are interrelated, dynamic and transformative, acknowledging the historical-socio-contextual condition of the individual who is always in search of their well-being and quality of life.

This view of the Life Project positions it as a dynamic, unique, performing entity that configures, deconfigures, and reconfigures according to different historical, contextual, class-based, belief-based and age-related peculiarities. It evolves from a proto-Life Project to concrete projects where the individual is embedded within a web of real interrelations with others (D’Angelo, as cited in Suárez-Barros et al., 2018), “based on their experience, possibilities, needs and aspirations developed earlier, adopting an objective position regarding their current and desired role in life” (Bozhovich, 1976, p. 56). This author complements his psychological perspective with sociology, linking the concept with Adorno and Elías’s views (cited by De la Garza, 2018), presenting an integrative view of the individual’s interdependence with society, weaving together dimensions of complete well-being (subjective, psychological, and social).

These authors’ reflections open a new scenario regarding two potential Life Projects: individual and collective (D’Angelo, 1999). An individual Life Project is built by the person through their interactions between desires and available possibilities, with a unique and particular characteristic that identifies it, and is created creatively and autonomously. A collective Life Project which refers to the future construction and perspective that identifies a group, institution, community or nation, integrating feelings, thoughts and actions emerging from dialogue, reasoning and a scale of values, where expectations, aspirations, goals and programs converge, embodying diversity and reflecting both imaginative and social realities that guide development perspectives in various fields (D’Angelo, 2000; Palomino et al., 1991).

The analysis of this construct reveals another character trait related to “configurative rhythm,” which shows the complexity, dynamism, fluctuations, uncertainties

and oscillations of this complex field of study. Suárez-Barros et al. (2018), drawing on D'Angelo (2000), suggest that the Life Project can be understood as a complex area of confluence: integrating, on the one hand, time, identity and subjectivity; on the other, the individual's actions in relation to societal structures; also, the dreams, desires and formulations of the individual's future in relation to the possibilities of realizing them; and finally, integrating the various spatial areas where the individual's life takes place.

A link is also proposed between the project and the sense of life (Frank, 1980). The latter is formed by the person's insertion into various relationships with society. (Franco-Silva and Pérez-Salazar, 2009; Galdámez Zelada, 2007). It is important to note that, although components, elements, dimensions, and points of convergence are outlined, the emphasis remains on the structure rather than on the process of how interaction among these elements occurs. This is essential for constructing, deconstructing or reconstructing the Life project for individuals, and highlights the fragmentation by authors when emphasizing certain aspects while neglecting others.

Despite the constant movements characterizing the studied construct, from a configurational point of view, the "regularities" of this configuration are appreciated, recognized as permanent, stable, significant and invariant elements that identify it.

Initially, there are microconfigurations that remain within the Life Project and are recognized by authors who have contributed conceptually, theoretically or methodologically to this field of study. Two of them are time and space. It is an area of intersubjective production, where temporal coordinates, spatial dimensions and diverse knowledge accessible to the individual converge, along with various individual or collective nucleations where the person develops their existence (Coll, 2001; Cornejo-Villegas, 2015). These elements converge between past and present places of existence and those where one wishes to live (i.e., the future) (Meertens, as cited in Suárez-Barros et al., 2018).

Similarly, goals are fundamental to the Life Project and are inherently linked to the temporal outlook. Difabio de Anglat et al. (2018) argue that the type of goals people set depends on their temporal orientation (predominance of the present, past, or future), and there are significant differences regarding age. They note that adolescents tend to have higher values in present hedonistic and fatalistic orientations, while people over 40 are more focused on eudaimonic goals related to the past and immediate future.



This statement links temporal orientation and the hierarchical structuring of life goals in a bidirectional manner and as a process of mutual feedback. From a pedagogical perspective, it is necessary to promote valuable goals and their integration into a Life Project, enabling a realistic view of the future and leading to personal self-realization.

It is essential to note that goals, as character traits of regularity, are not explicitly associated with emotionality by the authors. However, this is an area where research should focus, as the Emotional Selectivity Theory (EST) states that the importance and priority of goals depend on perceived time. When time limits are set, present-oriented goals with an emotional component are prioritized over future-oriented goals aimed at acquiring information and broadening horizons (Carstensen et al., 2003; English & Carstensen, 2016).

In the context of virtual education, other configurative elements and components, such as self-management, emerge. This involves the individual's capacity to manage their own intervention and act upon their contexts to achieve what is proposed in their Life Project. It includes elements that are assumed as contexts for the application of success (Suárez-Barros & Rojas-Otálora, 2016). This is associated with academic performance, and configuratively, it introduces new related categories: resources (capacities, skills, means); goals (tasks, objectives); meaningful learning and self-regulation, resource management, value of the social environment, and management and coping mechanisms for achieving proposed goals (D'Angelo-Hernández, 1999/2000; Rojas-Otálora, 2015; Suárez-Barros & Rojas-Otálora, 2016; Valencia & Giménez, 2014).

It can be observed that other elements consistently present in the Life Project as a human process include: on an individual level: life goals (short, medium, and long-term) (D'Angelo-Hernández, 2000; Franco-Silva & Pérez-Salazar, 2009; Suárez-Barros & Rojas-Otálora, 2016), values, needs, expectations, experiences, identity and self-perception of the individual, life purposes, subjectivities and realities, decision-making, self-determination and achievements (D'Angelo-Hernández, 1999/2000; Gómez-Urrutia & Royo-Urrizola, 2015; Meertens, 2000).

Thus, it is inferred that, according to the authors, the Life Project has elements inherently associated with the social condition, as the Life Project is considered a product of interpersonal relationships in specific, situated, real and everyday contexts. They also highlight the psychological condition, from essential elements such as needs/desires, motivations, experience, resources, coping mechanisms, experience, iden-

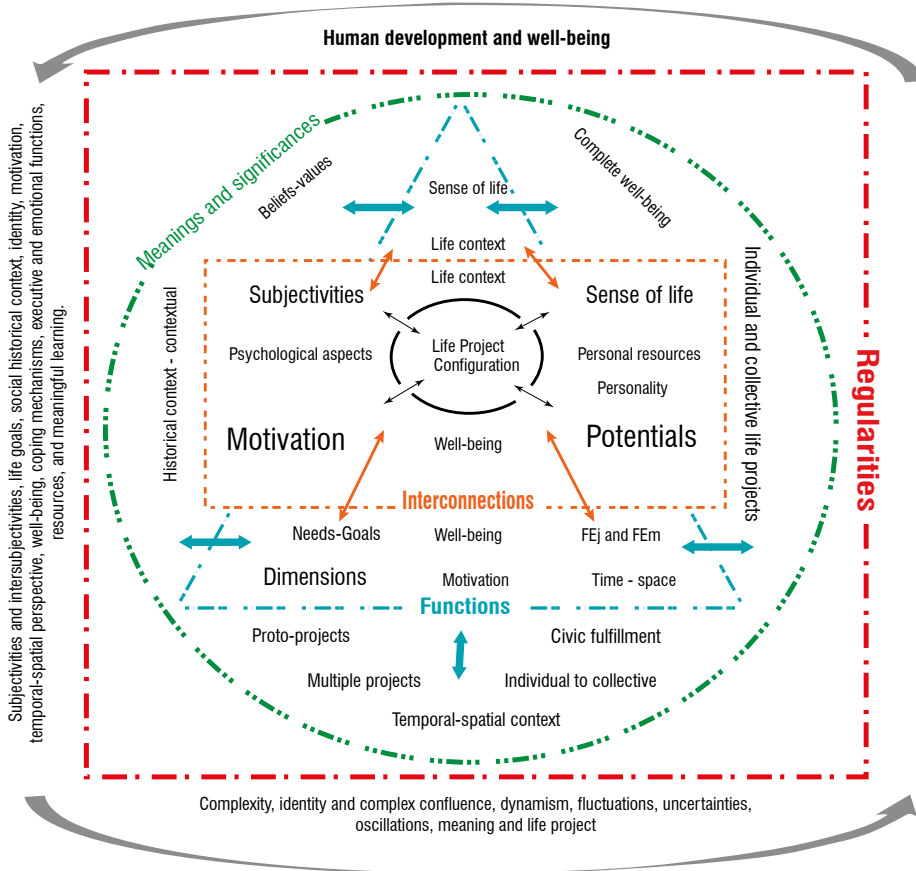
tity, perceptions, life purposes, opportunities, threats, human competencies, represented in strategies, objectives and goals in the short, medium and long term.

This, in the field of well-being, reaffirms the transversal and inseparable nature of the Life Project and the subjective, psychological and social well-being in a set of micro and macro configurations and interconnections, ranging from the individual (internal-external), as enabling or enhancing, with psychological aspects emerging from constant and permanent relationships with the environment. In other words, the Life Project, is an emergent, personal, singular expression with its own characteristics derived from the network of relationships. Achieving levels of social well-being would imply enhanced and balanced elements of subjective and psychological well-being.

Another regular element in the Life Project, especially for virtual students, is self-regulation, which is essential for either developing or stalling the Life Project. This aspect includes freedom, ideals, aspirations, expectations from the inner world (personal realities) and the course of life, and involves developing personal resources (means and qualities) to achieve goals, actions and achievements, drawing on philosophical, sociological and anthropological references that identify and differentiate it from any other (Suárez-Barros et al., 2018). This component is associated with self-acceptance, self-management, emotional control or mastery of the environment, nomia, personal realization or growth, determination and poiesis; identity, motivation (internal and external), life goals or purposes; time perspectives; fulfillment, well-being, and human development; empowerment, norms and institutionalization; success and performance.

Another regular element in this configuration is the life course (Elder & Giele, 2009), as this construct is a dynamic process integrating both individual and collective aspects throughout life and guiding the construction of techniques and instruments. Authors recognize it as a transversal element of the Life Project for an individual. Below is the graphical representation of the relationships between the character traits of the Life Project and their configurations and relationships.

**Image 2.** Graphical Representation of the Character Traits- Life Project Configuration.



**Note.** Essential elements representing the character traits of the Life Project. Analysis derived from literature review. Source: authors' elaboration (2021).

# CONCLUSIONS

In summary, it can be said that the configurational theory, when applied to psychology and especially to the concept of Life Project, is not explicitly addressed by any of the authors. While there are advancements in understanding the configurations of the process, there is still a need to develop theory concerning dimensions, links, and relational structures to fully comprehend the processes of individuals interacting in virtual environments.

Nevertheless, the previous analysis, based on character traits, has allowed for the mapping of components that characterize the Life Project when analyzed as a configuration, and these components are reaffirmed in virtual education.

Analyzing the Life Project from a configurational perspective and examining its character traits allows us to assess the current state of the field and see how it relates to other configurations such as well-being and virtuality.

It is found that the Life Project, as a central configuration of study, interconnects with macro-configurations (well-being, virtual education, social context, personality, temporality, goals, emotionality, personal success, academic performance). All of these can be studied independently through their own character traits and in connection with each other, revealing various and multiple dynamics. Additionally, the Life Project has its own micro-configurations (time, space, goals, management resources, self-regulation, emotion, etc.), whose internal dynamics shape the unique and emergent form of an individual's Life Project.

Through documentary review, the relationship between the Life Project and well-being is recognized. From a comprehensive model of well-being (subjective, psychological and social well-being), it is found that no author explicitly clarifies this link. However, hermeneutic analysis of conceptual and theoretical proposals shows that every Life Project emerges from lived experiences and materializes based on the balance or judgment each person makes regarding what they consider important.

This leads to the acceptance that throughout life (historical-contextual-experiential), there are positive and negative emotions derived from pleasurable or non-pleasurable emotional experiences faced in each life situation (essential elements of subjective well-being). Each period, stage, moment or experience is a subjective imprint that facilitates the emergence of the “psychological” and allows for the adoption of psychological well-being elements, such as self-acceptance, which is linked to the overall life satisfaction judgment and helps individuals feel good about themselves and adopt positive attitudes towards themselves.

This analysis and judgment about who a person is and how they accept themselves guide their relationships with others, enabling them to set goals that give meaning to their life and, autonomously, make their characteristics, convictions, ideologies, and plans visible, which helps them choose or create favorable, healthy, quality environments that meet their needs. However, it is not just about thinking of oneself; the Life Project should also consider the collective aspect and the pursuit of mastering one’s environment, addressing both personal needs and those of others, leading to personal growth. All these elements form a map of the interconnections of criteria and indicators of psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

“Thinking about others” from what they want, do or are, touches elements of their environment. The analysis reveals dimensions of social well-being (Keyes, 1998), as Life Projects, according to the reviewed theoretical framework, show the need to belong (social integration), to have, to be, to connect with others and to accept both the positive and negative aspects of oneself (social acceptance) while always seeking self-efficacy and contributing to society (social contribution). In the reviewed theoretical proposals, time management, especially in terms of future goal setting, reflects confidence in the future, in a better tomorrow and in a hopeful outlook on what is to come and what will be achieved. This demonstrates the inherent capacity of Life Projects to create conditions that enhance well-being (social actualization) and the constant pursuit of freedom, self-realization, understanding, and improving the dynamics and functioning of the world in which one lives (social coherence).

All these analyzed elements are distinctly reflected in virtual learning students. Suárez-Barros and Rojas-Otálora (2016) assure that students in this type of learning value autonomy and self-management in the Life project as personal, self-controlled action that shows how individuals review, manage and make available their resources to achieve their plans. This includes the forms, methods, tools and resources they should know and use to succeed.

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# HAPPINESS IN SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN<sup>11</sup>



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## ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to understand the meanings of happiness built by school-age children between the ages of 9 and 11, who are enrolled in public educational institutions in the cities of Bogota, Neiva and Pasto, Colombia. These meanings of happiness were studied based on:

- a. Self-referential experiences.
- b. Scenarios and practices.
- c. Criteria and arguments to assess happiness.

The study was framed within a qualitative paradigm perspective, with a life stories design and using interviews and focus groups as data collection techniques. Among the most significant findings is that concepts and expressions of happiness specifically arise from self-referential experiences, revealing the complexity with which happiness is understood. Scenarios where happiness is experienced include primarily the home, school, city, open spaces and virtual environments. Happiness practices can occur both alone and in the company of others. Finally, explanations and attributions related to happiness are divided between arguments that show



the reasons for being happy, as well as criteria and symbols that allow for the assessment of happiness. This reflects a complex structure of children's understandings of happiness, uncovering relationships between experiences, emotional bonds and providing a nuanced view from the children's perspective.

**Keywords:** meanings, happiness, emotional development, self-referential experiences.







## RESUMEN

En el presente capítulo busca comprender los significados que sobre felicidad construyen los niños escolarizados en edades entre 9 y 11 años, matriculados en instituciones educativas públicas, en las ciudades de Bogotá, Neiva y Pasto Colombia. Dichos significados de felicidad se estudiaron a partir de:

- a. Experiencias autorreferenciales.
- b. Escenarios y prácticas.
- c. Criterios y argumentos para evaluar la felicidad.

Se trabajó en el marco de la perspectiva paradigmática cualitativa, con un diseño de relatos de vida, utilizando como técnicas de recolección de información las entrevistas y grupos focales. Entre los resultados más relevantes se encuentra que las ideas de felicidad y las expresiones de felicidad tienen lugar específicamente de las experiencias autorreferenciales en las que se identifica la complejidad desde la que se comprende la felicidad. Los escenarios en los que se experimenta felicidad están principalmente el



hogar, el colegio, la ciudad, los espacios abiertos y virtuales y prácticas de felicidad se pueden dar entre las actividades solo y en compañía, y finalmente explicaciones y atribuciones en relación con la felicidad se dividen entre los argumentos que muestran las razones por las que se es feliz, además de los criterios y los símbolos que permiten valorar la felicidad dando cuenta de una estructura compleja de las comprensiones que los niños tienen acerca de la felicidad, develando relaciones entre las experiencias, los vínculos afectivos y que permite comprensiones complejas desde la mirada de los niños.

**Palabras clave:** significados, felicidad, desarrollo emocional, experiencias autorreferenciales.



# INTRODUCTION

Questions about what happiness is and how to achieve it have always been present in academic interest. It is not difficult to find various approaches to the topic of happiness in both general and scientific literature. Covey (2003, p. 29) points out that “happiness can be defined, at least in part, as the result of the desire and ability to sacrifice what we want now for what we ultimately want.” Dyer (1980, p. 8) argues that happiness is a natural condition of a person, which he supports with the experiences of young children. Even Aristotle addressed the topic of happiness, equating it with becoming blissed, and he proposed practicing virtue as the path to achieving it. (p. 13)

Despite these insights, never before has happiness been such an important and necessary object of research for psychology and pedagogy as it is today. For reasons that are still not fully clarified, the existence of “being happy” is not a constant in today’s societies.

In a more specific context, it is important to recognize that the discussion of happiness in Colombia has a unique complexity. On one hand, there are the psychosocial realities of the country marked by a history of armed social conflict, inequality and violence. On the other hand, reports from the World Database of Happiness show indicators of subjective well-being and happiness worldwide, with Colombia ranking among the top in the last decade. These contrasts invite deeper exploration into academic understandings of happiness, particularly in children, using their perspectives to guide reflections and processes aimed at emotional development.

In summary, it is essential for institutional efforts to include children’s own discourse on their happiness: how they understand it, the meanings they construct, how they explain and value it and their actual experiences of happiness within the cultural richness. This research is precisely directed towards that aim.

Thus, the proposed work is relevant and pertinent for both academia and educational institutions, as well as for participating children and their parents generates reflections and materials, such as booklets, that contribute to creating opportunities

for emotional development and increased happiness, based on the socio-cultural contexts of these children.

The research provides significant theoretical value, particularly in the field of positive psychology. The topic of happiness is relevant to psychology as it is part of a somewhat new area of research that diverges from the historical focus on illness, pathology or abnormality. According to Ardila (2010), “topics such as quality of life, subjective well-being, happiness and optimism are among the most important in early 21st-century psychology.” Historically, interest in children has focused on psychological disorders, learning disabilities, pathological aggression, antisocial behaviors and developmental deficits. This implies that this research represents a contemporary challenge, aiming to explore and analyze the positive aspects of children’s worlds. In this context, the research aims to understand the meanings of happiness constructed by school-aged children between 9 and 11 years old in the cities of Bogotá, Neiva, and Pasto, focusing on self-referential experiences, scenarios, practices, and symbols that children construct around happiness.

## METHODOLOGY

The research was framed within a qualitative paradigm perspective. This means that the object of study—namely, the meanings of happiness constructed by school-age children in the cities of Bogotá, Neiva and Pasto—was made understandable through the construction and intersubjective analysis of the practices, imaginaries and discourses of these children.

Regarding the methodological design, this study adopts a life stories approach, defined here as “the study of how a phenomenon is biographically constituted in the form of the individual” (Cornejo et al., 2008, p. 33).

The study sample consisted of 60 school-age children, aged 9 to 11, enrolled in public educational institutions in Bogotá, Neiva and Pasto. Data collection techniques were chosen for their relevance to the study and included qualitative interviews, incomplete stories and drawing. These methods aimed to deepen the understanding of self-referential experiences, practices, scenarios and arguments regarding happiness. Data analysis employed matrix analysis, which seeks to start from a deductive process to generate a proper inductive process, as required for qualitative research.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The inductive categories resulting from the research to understand happiness in school-age children were:

- a. Self-referential experiences.
- b. Scenarios and practices of happiness.
- c. Explanations and attributions related to happiness.
- d. These categories provide the basis for presenting the research findings.

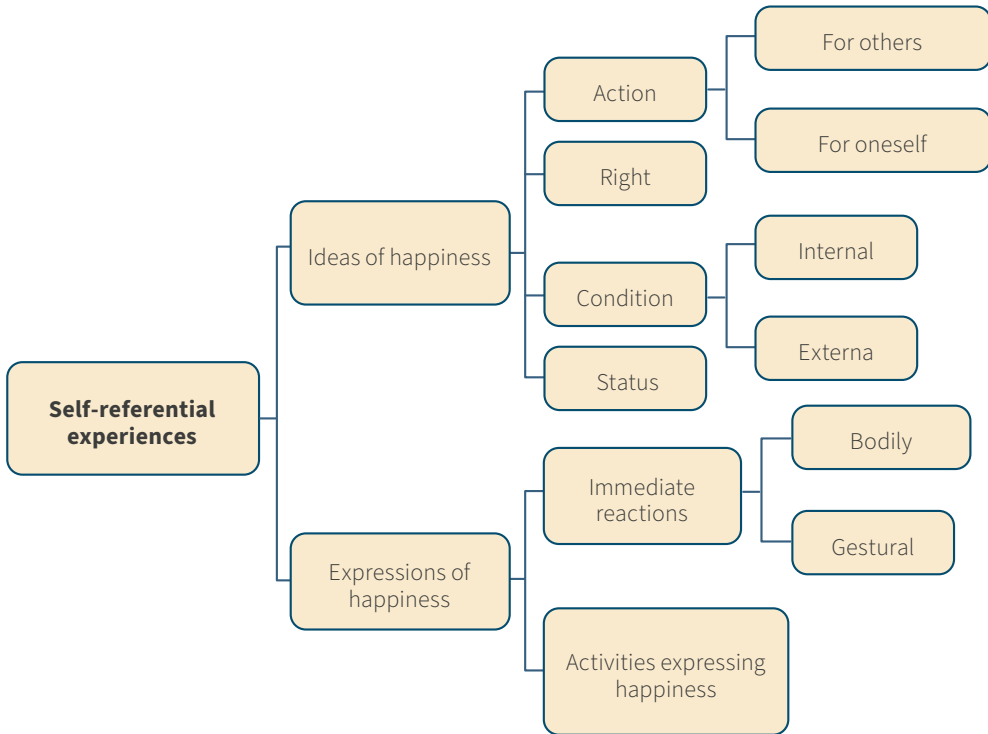
## SELF-REFERENTIAL EXPERIENCES

When referring to self-referential experiences, the aim is to present the fundamental ideas and ways in which children express happiness based on their own life experiences.

Therefore, priority is given to how children have experienced happiness.



**Figure 1.** *Categorical Map of Self-Referential Experiences.*



**Source:** Result of the research.

# IDEAS OF HAPPINESS

Regarding children's concepts of happiness, several aspects influence how they understand it. One of the most significant is their association of happiness as an internal

experience, often described as a feeling linked to positive emotion and expressed through phrases like “it feels in the heart and soul”, “it is a very nice thing you feel...” and “feeling good”.

Happiness is also understood as a concept referring to joy, peace and affection. It is recognized that everyone should have happiness, and it is also seen as freedom—understood as the ability to do, be and decide. This leads to the inference that happiness is not a simple matter but one with significant complexity. This is why it is found in children, as they recognize the difficulty in fully describing happiness.

Happiness is related to action, which can be for others or oneself; thus, it is neither selfish nor individualistic. For others, happiness is “being kind,” “sharing” and “expressing affection.” These are generally prosocial behaviors intended for others. When these actions are for oneself, they are expressions synonymous with happiness, such as laughing, smiling, jumping, playing, dancing and hugging.

Is happiness also presented as a right for everyone? And it is worth asking: Whose right is it? Whether it is a right for all, a right to what? For children, it means having a school, a family, a home and a life. What implications does assuming happiness as a right have? Firstly, recognizing an inclusive principle, and secondly, legitimizing the need for happiness and promoting conditions to experience it.

Happiness is also seen as a condition and, thus, a possibility. One can be happy or not, depending on certain conditions being met. The most important condition that enables happiness in children is being with those they love the most. These individuals are those with whom a significant emotional bond has been formed. Consequently, determining who a child loves the most depends on each child’s personal experience. For many, parents and siblings hold an important place, while for others, it may be grandparents, cousins or even friends and pets (like dogs). This highlights that happiness is not only generated by human companionship but also by pets.

Another important aspect of happiness is that, beyond companionship, happiness could also mean seeing others happy. This suggests that empathy processes are fundamental to being happy. Conversely, there are conditions that do not enable happiness, which can be internal or external. Internal conditions include the consequences of using illegal substances, the inability to process the grief of someone who has died or being worried about negative feelings like hatred or anger. External conditions include conflicts among people who interact with the child, such as fights between parents, other family members or community members.

Another external condition that can hinder happiness is the presence of war, which challenges adults to contribute to building a society that promotes well-being.

Finally, regarding ideas of happiness, there is the recognition of its temporality. Happiness is considered a state that occurs when one is not sad, thus being joyful, feeling good, feeling pleasant, having fun or experiencing beauty—whether appreciating beauty or feeling beautiful oneself, such as having a hairstyle, a type of clothing or being perceived as beautiful by others. This aspect involves both the aesthetic and social dimensions.

## EXPRESSIONS OF HAPPINESS

Expressions can manifest as either emotions or thoughts, representing the ways children display happiness. These expressions can be categorized into two types:

- a. Immediate reactions.
- b. Activities through which they express happiness.

Immediate reactions, which occur simultaneously with the experience of happiness, can be physical. These can be internal, meaning they are felt in various parts of the body and coincide with emotional excitement. For example, some children report that their heart beats fast, they feel “like something is moving in their stomach” or experience “tingling sensations” or “butterflies.” They might also experience changes in thermal sensations, feeling either warm or cold. On the other hand, immediate physical reactions can be external, where others can observe the expression of happiness. For instance, activities like dancing, participating in different events, moving their body, singing or exhibiting states like enthusiasm, energy or activity can be visible signs of happiness.

Immediate reactions can also be gestural. Gestures are a common way to express emotions or feelings, and children recognize this well. Laughing, laughing out loud and smiling are identified as different expressions related to happiness. Other signs



include having bright eyes or blushing, which are also ways of expressing happiness, provided they are distinguished from other associated signs.

Happiness can also be expressed through activities. The most prominent activity for expressing happiness is play, with soccer being a standout game mentioned by children. Another activity associated with expressing happiness is talking about personal experiences and emotions. Other activities include “dressing fashionably,” “telling jokes,” “inventing games” and “sharing religious experiences.”

## SCENARIOS AND PRACTICES OF HAPPINESS

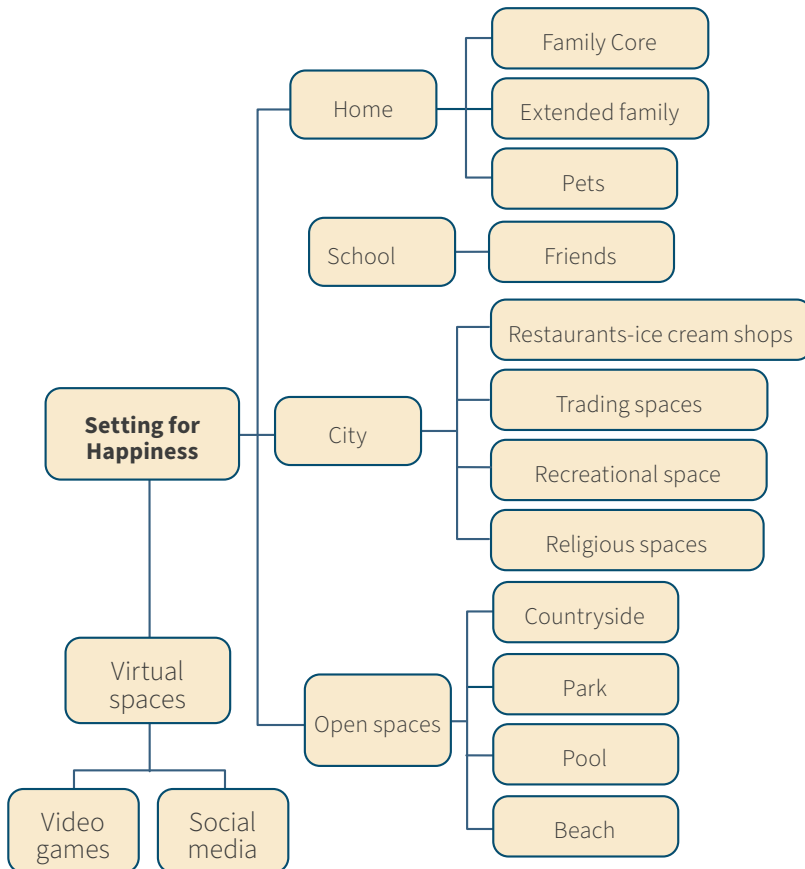
While the first inductive category focused on how happiness is experienced, the second inductive category aims to reveal where and what actions contribute to children’s happiness. Here are the findings related to scenarios and practices associated with happiness.

### SCENARIOS WHERE CHILDREN FEEL HAPPY

The scenarios in this subcategory are not directly linked to physical locations but refer to contexts. The most relevant scenario is the house or home, where children distinguish between the family nucleus and the extended family. Despite changing family dynamics and roles, the conventional family model of parents and children remains relevant in children’s perceptions. Consequently, scenarios involving both parents are highly significant, with happiness associated with activities such as playing, traveling, watching TV or simply sharing everyday life. For children of separated parents, one of the happiest scenarios is spending time and playing with the non-residential parent, often reflecting a desire for a family where both parents are present. In this context, the family nucleus—parents, siblings, grandparents and pets—plays a central role, ideally in playful situations.

Within the house/home subcategory, the extended family also holds an important place. Visiting grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles are scenarios where children feel very happy. As expected, school is a place where children feel happy, particularly when they are with friends. There is no significant reference to happiness in relationships with teachers, but satisfaction from academic achievements is noted. Other important scenarios include various city spaces, such as shopping malls, ice cream shops and restaurants. Dining in company is recognized as a happy situation. Other city scenarios that contribute to happiness include soccer schools, movie theaters, churches and simply walking the streets.

**Figure 2.** *Categorical Map of Happiness Scenarios.*



**Source:** Result of the research.

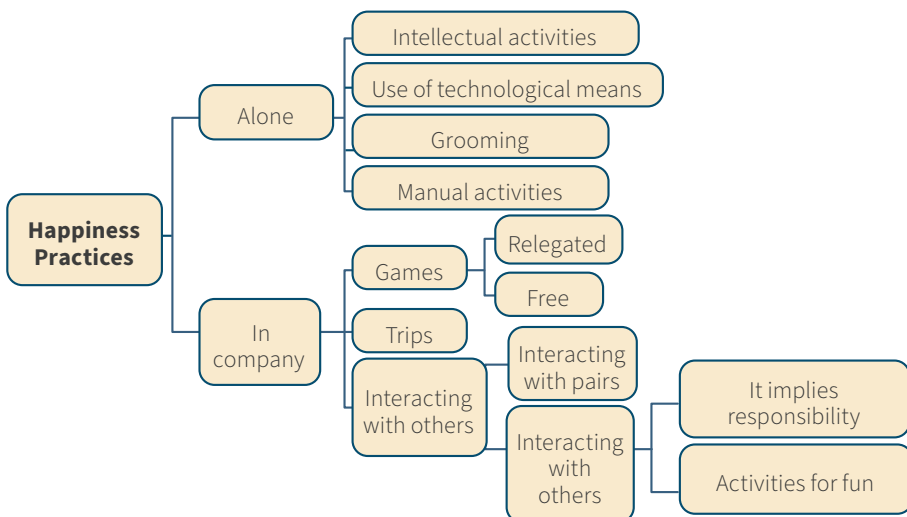
Other notable scenarios include open spaces, such as the countryside, where nature plays a central role. Streams or rivers, vegetation and animals are sources of tranquility and freedom. It's worth questioning what children might understand about being in a natural setting. Similarly, parks are significant, with green areas being essential, although playgrounds and amusement parks are also valued. Additionally, water-related scenarios such as swimming pools and beaches are recognized by children as happy experiences.

Among the identified scenarios—home, school, city and open spaces—virtual environments also emerge, although more subtly. These include Xbox games and internet use, particularly searching for videos and browsing or posting on Facebook.

## HAPPINESS PRACTICES

Regarding the question, “What practices make children happier from their perspective?” we can identify activities done alone and those done with others. Among solo activities, intellectual activities stand out. These might involve seeking information, solving problems in games or dilemmas or imagining scenarios.

**Figure 3.** *Categorical Map of Happiness Practices.*



**Source:** Result of the research.

Children can also engage in solo activities that make them happy, including the use of technology. This can involve playing video games, visiting websites, browsing and posting on Facebook or chatting with friends. Personal grooming activities, such as dressing fashionably and painting nails, also contribute to their happiness.

Other solo activities that bring joy to children include manual activities like coloring, drawing, and painting, as well as passive activities such as listening to music, watching television, and sleeping. While solo activities can certainly contribute to happiness, it is evident that opportunities for happiness expand significantly when children engage in activities with others. Among practices that make children happier, interacting with peers and adults stands out as particularly significant. To understand this, let's explore play as a fundamental practice related to happiness.

Children's games with others can be structured or unstructured. Structured games include competitive ones, such as soccer, skating or basketball championships, and non-competitive structured games, such as video games, chess, board games and casual soccer. Competitive sports are especially valued by children due to the excitement and the opportunity to win. Non-competitive structured games, on the other hand, are appreciated for their entertainment value and informality.

Free play, focused on enjoyment and gratification, is also highly valued. These activities are directly linked to the experience of engaging in them, such as playing with dogs, tickling, running around, playing in water, jumping or riding a bicycle.

Interactions with peers and adults also significantly contribute to children's happiness. Although the activities may vary, the key element is the contact with others. Among peers, activities that induce laughter and allow children to express themselves and feel accepted are key. This includes "teasing" or "joking around," which involve language games where children mock people or situations, as well as telling jokes. However, sharing personal stories is also becoming increasingly important. Children may seek a listening ear and approval. This includes telling adventures, venting worries or sharing their feelings and secrets with ease. This is often preferred with close friends or partners. It seems that the stage of preadolescence, along with the forthcoming changes of adolescence, significantly influences how children interpret their experiences and preferences. Lastly, helping peers is another reason for children to feel happy.

On the other hand, interactions with adults have their own characteristics but are equally important for happiness. That is why activities that involve fun, such as watching movies, eating out, having ice cream or exchanging gifts, are very rewarding. Moreover, participating in activities that require a certain level of responsibility with parents, such as doing school homework, helping with chores or assisting with household tasks or with teachers, such as learning, studying and researching, also contributes to children's happiness.

## EXPLANATIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS CHILDREN MAKE ABOUT HAPPINESS

Based on information gathered in the study, the following is presented.

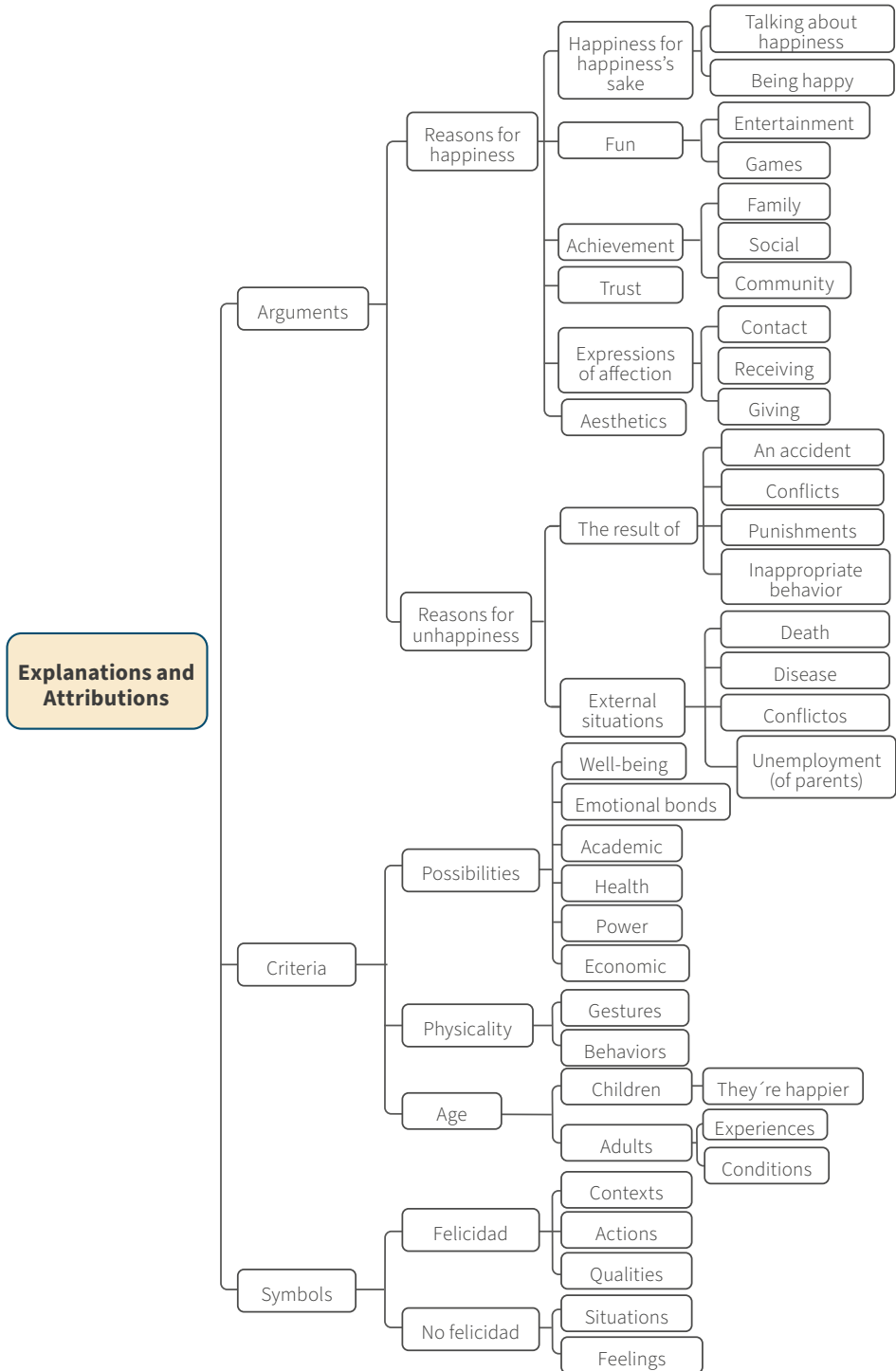
### ARGUMENTS CONSTRUCTED IN RELATION TO HAPPINESS

To understand the arguments children construct about happiness, it is necessary to start with contrasts; that is, arguments are developed to explain both happy and unhappy situations.

In exploring the arguments that explain happiness, several dimensions emerge. On one hand, there is happiness for the sake of happiness itself. In this context, it is explained that one can be happy because “we are always happy” or because “people can be happy.” However, it is also noted that discussing happiness “brings back happy moments and makes you feel happy” or simply encourages “us to be happier.” Thus, incorporating happiness into conversations allows individuals to experience or relive happy moments.



**Figure 4.** Categorical Map of Explanations and Attributions about Happiness.



Fuente: Producto de la investigación.

Happiness is also argued in terms of fun. Something enjoyable makes you happy because it provides entertainment, leading to laughter and “good times.” Play, especially when shared with friends or family, is inherently fun and contributes to happiness. Another significant argument is the achievement of goals as a source of happiness. Achievements can be personal in the sense that they hold fundamental value for the individual. For children, academic achievements are particularly noteworthy, such as learning, getting good grades, passing a school year or receiving a badge (known as “izar bandera” in Spanish). In addition, personal achievements in sports, such as winning championships or earning medals, also play a crucial role.

Family-related achievements can also explain why someone feels happy. For example, the joy of a parent getting a good job after a period of unemployment is a significant source of happiness. Social achievements, which involve recognition from peers and adults, also contribute to feelings of happiness.

Trust is another important factor in happiness. Trust means being able to share objects, situations and time with others, having no fears, or being able to confide secrets and know the other’s secrets. Happiness can also be explained through expressions of affection, which are determined by mutual contact, such as hugs, kisses, and caresses, as well as by receiving compliments, protection, and care. Additionally, giving—whether it’s expressing thanks, feeling grateful, or offering gifts and help—can also lead to happiness.

Aesthetic experiences provide another explanation for happiness. Feeling a sense of harmony and beauty, whether in a situation, with objects, people, or within oneself, can be a reason for happiness.

In contrast, there are reasons for unhappiness, which can be classified into consequences and external situations. Among the consequences, children might cite inappropriate behaviors for which they are responsible, such as failing a subject, disobeying rules, or losing their school supplies. Accidents, such as breaking a family vase, or conflicts with parents, siblings, or friends, as well as punishments like not being allowed to go out or have fun, also contribute to unhappiness. External situations that lead to unhappiness include well-defined issues such as:

- a. The death of a loved one, illness (whether personal or within the family), conflicts among family members, and unemployment or economic instability within the family.

La muerte de un ser querido, la enfermedad, propia y de la familia. Los conflictos, entre los padres y entre otros miembros de la familia y el desempleo de los padres o la inestabilidad económica de la familia.

## CRITERIA CHILDREN USE TO EVALUATE HAPPINESS

Determining whether someone can be happy or not involves specific criteria that allow for judgment and conclusion. For children, these criteria can be categorized into three main areas: the individual's situation, their physical state, and their age.

When referring to the possibilities of feeling happy, children evaluate:

- b.** Well-being Situation: This includes whether the person is never sad or feels like the happiest person in the world.
- c.** Social Relationships: Happiness is associated with having friends and family. Sharing time with them, having parents who stay together, or always being with one's father can enhance happiness.
- d.** Academic Criteria: Being very intelligent and excelling academically, such as passing the school year, is linked to happiness. It is related to having the necessary conditions to overcome academic challenges.
- e.** Power: The possibility of being happy can also be linked to having power, such as "being the king of the world."
- f.** Economic Possibilities: For children, having the financial means to enjoy oneself and "have everything one wants" is a criterion for happiness. This also includes having the means to help others, for example, "helping an aunt get a house."

One of the most relevant criteria for evaluating happiness is physicality. This includes gestures such as laughing, smiling, or even crying from joy, along with visible signs like bright eyes and flushed cheeks. Behavior also plays a role; it should align with



social expectations. For children, behaving well might be an indicator of happiness, but spontaneous reactions such as tickling others, shouting, jumping, running, or hugging are also considered. Additionally, proposals within their social group—ranging from making jokes to being playful with others—are indicators that help assess if someone feels happy.

Another important criterion for children to determine if someone is happy is age. They believe that expressions of happiness differ between children and adults, with the view that “children are happier than adults.” For children, being able to do what they want, being more curious, and having fewer problems make it easier to show happiness. In contrast, children perceive that among adults, such criteria are linked to their life experiences and that adults tend to complicate their lives more. They believe adults feel happiness internally but do not always show it. As for conditions, they believe that adults would feel happier when receiving a paycheck or good news.

## SYMBOLS OF HAPPINESS

Symbols are mental representations with specific meanings. Research has explored the symbols of happiness that children have developed, confirming and refining previously presented information. In this context, children’s symbols of happiness are initially categorized into contexts such as family, soccer, play, actions like smiling, helping, giving, congratulating, and qualities like love, bright colors, beauty, and noise. These situations suggest that symbols of happiness are associated with activity and celebration.

In contrast, symbols of unhappiness are associated with situations such as abandonment, scolding, punishment, and fighting. Feelings of unhappiness are symbolized by loneliness, guilt, loss (including death and material loss), anger, and both psychological and physical pain.

## DISCUSSION

According to Dyer (1980, p. 8), a significant author in the study of happiness, happiness is a natural condition of a person, supported by the experiences of young children. Although the term is widely used in everyday life with various interpretations,

academic research provides relevant understandings and explanations, placing the topic at the forefront of discussions in different disciplines. The research presented here is based on the assertion that “happiness is a concept encompassing subjective well-being and life satisfaction, thus including both emotional and cognitive dimensions of the individual” (Cuadra & Florenzano, 2003, p. 6). Happiness, therefore, is the result of an evaluative assessment by the individual regarding how they have lived. This framework integrates theories of optimal human development, positive mental functioning, and life cycle theories. Researchers like Vásquez highlight that recent studies have identified some fundamental components intrinsically linked to the concept of psychological well-being:

- a. Affection (positive and negative).
- b. Overall life satisfaction.
- c. Specific satisfaction in particular domains or areas (Gómez et al., 2009).

## SELF-REFERENTIAL EXPERIENCES AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Popular beliefs suggesting that children are inherently happy or happier than adults are challenged by this study. Children attribute meanings to a broad range of experiences, revealing a complex structure rooted in recognizing their emotions and relationships with others. This contrasts with studies showing that the range of happiness among children, adolescents, and adults is similar (Gómez et al., 2009). Children’s ideas about happiness reflect various dimensions, demonstrating the construction of concepts with valuable levels of complexity aligned with a eudaimonic view of happiness. This perspective is intriguing because it extends beyond pleasure to include life satisfaction elements related to cultural and social relationships.

# EUDAIMONIC SCENARIOS AND PRACTICES OF OF HAPPINESS

Positive psychology aims to shift focus from merely repairing life's worst aspects to building positive qualities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, as cited in Vásquez, 2009). The children in this study illustrate the opportunity and resourcefulness in finding happy contexts through scenarios and practices.

Vásquez and Hervás (2008) highlight children's need to:

- a. Maintain a view of the world and social environment as benevolent and safe.
- b. Preserve a self-image as good and worthy of respect (acceptance of oneself in both positive and negative aspects, emphasizing the positive).
- c. Believe that the world is predictable, controllable, and meaningful.
- d. Believe in one's ability to control the world and being motivated, goal-oriented, and continuously growing. This underscores the importance of perceived safe environments that offer opportunities to be, express thoughts and emotions openly, make choices, and build secure emotional bonds.

In this context, besides the relationship with their family, interactions with peers provide another undeniable source of well-being and happiness for children (Gómez et al., 2009). Play and activities in open spaces are enriched by experiences with family, friends, and even acquaintances.



# ARGUMENTS AND CRITERIA FOR HAPPINESS IN THE CONTEXT OF EMOTIONAL BONDS

Current studies identify various arguments and criteria children and adolescents use to understand happiness. For example, Höher et al. (2011) highlight relevant categories such as family, feelings, friendship, self-reference, activities, relationships, material needs satisfaction, and school. These categories align with the results of this study, but with greater detail in explaining happiness, including personal attribution and social perceptions influenced by social realities and contextual characteristics.

Lyubomirsky argues that activities leading to a state of flow are beneficial because they are inherently enjoyable and fulfilling. As such experiences are positive and gratifying, people naturally want to repeat them. Therefore, school experiences should be rewarding enough to make students eager to repeat them.

## CONCLUSIONS

The children participating in the study have developed meanings that reveal a complex framework. They interpret happiness through their experiences, identifying reasons for both happiness and unhappiness. They find happiness in the ability to simply be happy, as well as through achievements, self-confidence, and engaging in activities they consider fun according to criteria and symbols. On the other hand, they associate unhappiness with experiences of loss, punishment, or feeling responsible for adults' situations.

Criteria for evaluating happiness include:

- a. Well-being.
- b. Building emotional bonds.
- c. Academic achievements.
- d. Personal and family health.
- e. Feeling powerful.
- f. Meeting economic needs.

Additionally, bodily manifestations such as gestures and behaviors are considered criteria, as well as age—children believe they are happier than adults due to fewer problems and less boredom.

Symbols of happiness can be classified into contexts, actions, and qualities, while unhappiness is associated with situations and feelings. Consequently, positive emotions related to the past, such as gratitude, forgiveness, and appreciation, are vital to a happy existence, as are positive emotions related to the future, such as optimism, faith, and trust (Carter, 2011).

In school dynamics, children's happiness is linked to daily experiences with peers in academic and recreational activities, supported by a secure family environment. There is no significant correlation between happiness and the relationship with teachers, but with satisfaction with academic achievements. This contrasts with the limited scope of the school curriculum, highlighting the importance of “developing emotional, social, and intellectual skills, as these may be as equally or more important for success in life” (Fernández, O. & Luquez, P., & Leal, E. (2010, p.4).



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# WELL-BEING AND HAPPINESS IN EDUCATIONAL AND WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS



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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and reflect on the concepts of well-being and happiness within educational and workplace environments and their relationship with career counseling provided to students before entering university. It is approached from the theoretical perspective of positive psychology, considering the experiences of the Centro de Investigación, Diagnóstico y Desarrollo de Talentos (CIDDT) in Mexico with its users. The goal is to provide new guidelines for viewing career and professional counseling. Rather than focusing solely on cognitive intelligence and student interests—as has traditionally been the case—this approach emphasizes a more comprehensive view that includes all human strengths. It focuses on personal strengths, considering a range of positive attributes such as virtues, strengths, skills, gifts, talents, knowledge, experiences, and inherent positive emotions. It also examines how these internal factors positively impact academic and professional performance, contributing to the cultivation of continuous well-being and happiness.

**Keywords:** career counseling, happiness, subjective well-being, employment.

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## RESUMEN



El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar y reflexionar acerca del bienestar y felicidad en los ámbitos escolar y laboral, determinar la relación que hay entre la orientación vocacional que se brinda a estudiantes antes de ingresar a la universidad, se aborda desde la perspectiva teórica de la psicología positiva, tomando en cuenta la experiencia del Centro de Investigación, Diagnóstico y Desarrollo de Talentos (CIDDT) de México con sus usuarios, con la finalidad de brindar algunas pautas para mirar la orientación vocacional y profesional desde un punto de vista más actual, centrada no solo en la inteligencia cognitiva y las áreas de interés del estudiante como se ha venido haciendo desde siempre, sino considerando todas las fortalezas humanas. Este enfoque se centra en las fortalezas personales, es decir, toma en cuenta el cúmulo de características positivas como las virtudes, fortalezas, capacidades, dones, talentos, conocimientos, experiencias y emociones positivas inherentes a la persona, y cómo estos factores internos impactan positivamente en su desempeño en el ámbito académico y laboral, contribuyendo a generar estados constantes de bienestar y felicidad.

**Palabras clave:** orientación vocacional, felicidad, bienestar subjetivo, empleo.

# INTRODUCTION

Career counseling provided at school, whether it is of high or low quality, has a direct and immediate impact on the student's subjective well-being while they are pursuing their chosen field of study. In the short-term, it also has an impact on their workplace, affecting their productivity, well-being, and happiness as they perform their job functions.

If the individual's strengths align with the requirements of a degree program, and there is a match in interests, previous experience, and skills necessary for success in that field, the individual will develop commitment and engagement in professional activities. This alignment helps individuals experience "Flow"—a mental state of being completely absorbed and focused on an activity, which leads to feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction. Such flow and happiness are evident when job functions are performed with passion. Conversely, a lack of alignment can be counterproductive.

Historically, psychology entered the U.S. university system in the late 19th century in the form of a degree program and graduate diploma. However, its knowledge and practices were accepted in Europe and Latin America only until the 1940s (Buss, 1979). At that time, psychology's approach to the study of the mind and human behavior focused on weaknesses or disabilities, which were key elements in explaining mental pathology, learning delays, maintaining morale during wartime, and assessing individuals' suitability for work roles. (Di Domenico and Vilanova, 2000).

Since its emergence, career counseling, psychological counseling, clinical psychology, occupational psychology, industrial psychology, and educational psychology have been central topics in the curriculum design of Psychology programs in the United States from late 19th century (Di Doménico and Vilanova, 2000; Sexton and Hogan, 1992; Vilanova, 1990).

Initially, only psychologists were specialists in providing career counseling. However, over time, other professionals from related fields, such as educators, have joined this area. Educators interact daily with students, gaining firsthand knowledge of their in-

terests, needs, strengths, and abilities, including their aptitudes, skills, abilities, gifts, and talents, and limitations.

This chapter explores career counseling and its impact on the academic and workplace environments from the perspective of positive psychology. Historically, the foundations of this perspective trace back to Greek thought, Hellenistic and Roman philosophy, Egyptian wisdom, and Eastern philosophy (Fernández, 2008). However, it was not until the 1990s, with Martin Seligman leading the American Psychological Association (APA), that this perspective began to gain significant prominence. The aim was to study all facets of human well-being in depth.

This new approach focused on what is right with people from birth to death, analyzing what makes life worth living. In other words, it concentrated on what is considered as “good life” in relation to each individual’s developmental environment. This paradigm shift led to a wave of specialized research and publications on positive psychology while also redefining traditional psychology, allowing this field to offer a more comprehensive view of its subject matter from both perspectives.

Traditional psychology, under the disease model, views people as “imperfect and fragile beings, victims of harsh environments or poor genetics” (Park et al., 2013, p. 1). In contrast, the positive psychology model sees individuals as perfectible beings with strengths and capabilities either inherited genetically or developed in their environment, which can be further enhanced through their personal development and interaction with positive developmental environments.

A positive environment promotes well-being, security, and excellence and favors individuals’ development. These environments can be supportive families and positive relationships, positive schools and classrooms, positive work environments, and other close or direct environments with which individuals maintain strong interactions. These environments allow them to deploy their potential and balance the negative events they experience daily, contributing to a fulfilling life.

Together, both branches of psychology (traditional and positive) cover the study of both positive and negative life events. Both approaches complement each other, examining, analyzing, and reflecting on the psychology of the individual and how these factors determine behavior and underlying processes (thought, emotion, memory, etc.).

These naturally changing characteristics develop as part of human evolution to adapt to various environments, which is particularly useful for meeting societal demands: education, work, mental health, and necessary recreation to balance the ups and downs of life (Di Doménico & Vilanova, 2000).

Mental and emotional health are closely related to success in education, which in turn is tightly linked to the workplace, as the latter depends on the former two. Currently, job markets and human resources departments go beyond psychometric tests to assess whether a candidate is suitable for a position.

Psychological evaluations of candidates are more comprehensive, with psychometric tests providing employers or recruiters with additional insights into a candidate's personality, aptitudes, interpersonal skills, attitudes, and values. Overall, they seek to ensure that candidates possess the required job competencies and exhibit mental and emotional balance to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the company.

## THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE POSITIVE CAREER COUNSELING MODEL

For a long time, the field of psychology focused solely on the study of inherited or developed pathologies within the human species. This scientific approach resulted in a narrow disciplinary framework that led to the development of psychopathology or psychotherapy.

While this perspective has produced effective intervention models for many psychological issues, it is not enough to see only the problem. It is necessary to consider the psychological resources or tools that individuals possess to face adversity, adapt to various developmental environments, and identify and harness their strengths and talents to achieve happiness and success (Contreras & Esguerra, 2006; Dominguez & Ibarra, 2017; Vera, 2006).

Psychology's objectives were not always oriented toward the treatment of disorders, difficulties, suffering, pain, distress, sadness, and other negative personality traits or

moods. Before World War II, the field of psychology had a broader scope and was focused on contributing to a more productive and fulfilling human life, which included identifying and developing individual talents and intelligence. However, after World War II, a variety of factors led to a shift in focus. Psychology increasingly focused on treating mental health issues and alleviating suffering (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

In the last 40 years, psychology has increasingly revisited the study of positive perspectives to develop theories, methods, and strategies aimed at identifying and optimizing individuals' positive psychological traits and resources. Several authors have contributed to the development and theoretical foundation of positive psychology. Key contributors are summarized in the following table, compiled with information from Seligman (2017), Emmons & McCullough (2003), Universidad TecMilenio (2014), Moyano (2010), and Dominguez & Ibarra (2017).

**Table 1.** *Contributions to Positive Psychology*

Author	Contributions
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi	He has studied optimal experiences or flow, creativity, talent development, and well-being at work.
Christopher Peterson	He has researched strengths and virtues, as well as positive interpersonal relationships. Within the field of positive personal traits, he has studied optimism, which protects against the debilitating effects of negative events because it is associated with active problem-solving. He linked positive outlook with physical, psychological, and social well-being.
Edward Diener	He is known as the father of the study of happiness, subjective well-being, and life satisfaction. He has conducted applied research on quality of life and subjective well-being, focusing on what people think and how they feel about their lives.
Martin Seligman & Christopher Peterson	They have studied character strengths and virtues. Seligman proposed the PERMA model of well-being, which stands for: P (positive emotion), E (engagement), R (relationships), M (meaning), and A (accomplishment). He also proposed the study of positive aspects of human experience from three perspectives: positive experiences, psychological strengths, and characteristics of positive organizations.
George Vaillant	He conducted a study on people recovering from addictions and mental disorders, and the longest longitudinal research on adult development.



Author	Contributions
Barbara Fredrickson	She has studied the psychophysiology of positive emotions and their role in human flourishing. She has worked on the effects of positive emotions on people's lives, growth, flourishing, and personal development. She has contributed to the psychology of gratitude.
Massimini & Delle Fave	Optimal experience or flow, the most positive daily experience. The psychological selection procedure (activities, values, and personal interests) is strictly related to the quality of the subjective experience.
Myers	Positive personal traits: happiness. He has studied the predictors of subjective well-being, often measured as happiness and life satisfaction.
Ryan & Deci	Positive personal traits: self-determination.
Salovey, Rithman, Detweiler & Steward	Relationship between positive emotions and physical health. Psychological resources, positive illusions, and health.
Robert Emmons, Michael McCullough and collaborators (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Larson, Bono, Kimeldorf and Cohen)	They have researched the field of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life, contributing to the functions and psychological dynamics of gratitude.
Tal Ben-Shajjar	He conducts applied research. He created the "Positive Psychology" course at Harvard University. His approaches focus on identifying what works for people, couples, and organizations.

**Note.** Compiled by the author.

According to García (2016), people who think positively are happier, live more in the present (the here and now) rather than in past events (the past limits or conditions their capacity for action), and exhibit greater satisfaction with their experiences. They are more likely to live a more fulfilling and successful life, especially when they are academically prepared and make the most of the opportunities provided by education.



# MEXICAN CONTEXT OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND CAREER COUNSELING

Since the onset of the modern era, the primary focus of academic training has been on acquiring knowledge and developing skills from a utilitarian perspective, aiming to boost productivity, competitiveness, and profitability for the continuity of businesses. This approach, however, has often neglected the human dimension referred to as dignity—a concept that gained significant importance after World War II and was legally enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Specifically, the first paragraph of Article 23 of this Declaration states that “everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment” (United Nations Human Rights, 1948).

When contrasting these ideals with reality, studies in Mexico reveal that even in the first two decades of the 21st century, Mexican society has struggled to address the right to work, particularly for young university graduates.

Márquez (2011) analyzed various official sources on the employment status in Mexico and concluded that there is a mismatch between educational offerings and the demand for professionals in the labor market. This mismatch results in young professionals facing higher unemployment rates. The misalignment between market needs and academic offerings means that graduates are often employed in jobs for which they are not academically prepared, and companies hire professionals who do not meet the job profile requirements (Gracia, 2015; Varea, 2021).

A more recent study by Pérez (2018) found that unemployment among individuals aged 18 to 29 spans all educational levels (no schooling, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, normal school, technical training, undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degrees). However, it was evidenced that as a person’s educational level increases, so does their employability and income, with graduates with a professional degree having the lowest unemployment rates. Nonetheless, despite this seemingly positive statistic, it corresponds to the fact that 68.18% of professionals are employed in informal jobs.

Although this data may not be representative of the entire Mexican population, it raises questions about the quality of education received—whether it was adequate and relevant, whether students received proper career counseling to choose a profession aligned with their virtues, strengths, interests, passions, abilities, gifts and talents before entering university, whether they had the support of their institutions, such as access to a job board for alumni to successfully enter the labor market, or whether they had access to government support programs to find formal employment opportunities.

From the perspective of the economics of happiness, research provides a measure of well-being based on employees' subjective satisfaction. This outlook goes beyond the traditional approach of measuring overall well-being solely in terms of production and profit. It has been found that having a job is essential for personal happiness and mental health. Public policies should therefore be oriented towards achieving quality and well-paid employment (Ansa, 2016).

Recent research reveals that a significant percentage of workers globally are unhappy with their jobs. The Gallup Institute in the United States has been tracking employee satisfaction internationally through an evolving survey and has reached 25 million workers across 189 countries.

In October 2013, Gallup collected data from 230,000 full-time and part-time employees across 142 countries and discovered that only 13% of workers felt engaged in their jobs, experienced passion for their work, and had a genuine connection with their employer. These engaged employees tend to be more productive, innovative, and continuously drive their companies forward (Forbes, 2013).

Among Latin American countries surveyed, Mexico had a percentage close to the global average, with only 12% of workers completely satisfied with their jobs, 60% feeling frustrated and dissatisfied, and 28% hating their jobs. In contrast, Brazil, the largest economy in the region, reported the highest level of job satisfaction, with 27% of its workers feeling happy in their roles. However, 62% felt frustrated and dissatisfied, while 12% disliked their jobs, which translates into lower productivity (Forbes, 2013).

Another Gallup survey aimed at understanding the extent to which employees exert minimal effort to avoid being fired revealed that 71% of employees showed no commitment or involvement in their work or with their employers.

An exploratory study by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics in 2012 on subjective well-being in the Mexican population clearly showed that higher levels of education correlate with greater life satisfaction (INEGI, 2012). This underscores the importance of creating educational policies that promote professional education and enhance career counseling processes, incorporating positive psychology perspectives to prepare future employees with a more human-centered approach.

Addressing the employment issue is multifaceted and requires, on one hand, the design of specific public policies and, on the other hand, a strong commitment to meticulous and collaborative work among educational institutions, businesses, and government bodies to realize the right to employment for recent graduates.

From the perspective of educational institutions, one necessary action is to implement preventive strategies that help students secure quality employment—jobs that are enjoyable, dignified, and satisfying, leading them towards happiness and self-fulfillment both academically and professionally. This involves more focused career counseling based on their strengths, abilities, and talents before entering university.

On the other hand, it is crucial to address the relevance of curricula in university programs to modify study plans, aligning content and skill development with market needs.

This alignment is critical for the successful integration of graduates into the workforce. Often, the gap in knowledge and skills is bridged through in-company training. While this training can entail higher costs in talent acquisition, it has a direct positive impact on productivity, competitiveness, and profitability, both in the medium and long term.

Creating satisfactory working conditions is also essential, as outlined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This involves ensuring that employment is not only enjoyable for employees but also enables them to develop their potential and contribute to economic prosperity. However, achieving such positive work environments—where employees' virtues and strengths are recognized and valued and where they feel happy and fulfilled, remains a significant challenge. Most corporations are primarily focused on aligning human talent with the company's objectives to enhance productivity, competitiveness, innovation, and financial returns, rather than prioritizing the well-being and happiness of their staff.

According to Peterson & Seligman (2004), virtues and strengths are stable positive personality traits that can be expressed through behaviors, thoughts, or feelings. As protective factors, they help develop resilience in the face of adverse contexts and situations.

These psychological resources (strengths and virtues) help individuals cope with and resolve problems with greater mental flexibility, social adaptation, and enthusiasm, leading to positive outcomes for well-being, such as reduced stress, increased self-esteem, and psychological well-being (Campos, 2004; Porto et al., 2018).

In today's rapidly evolving educational and workplace environments, individuals and organizations face increasing competition and demands. This dynamic creates high levels of pressure and stress, contributing to what is often termed as the professional illness: stress, burnout syndrome, work addiction, among others, where emotional or psychological factors significantly impact academic and professional quality of life (Durán, 2010).

Stress or burnout can incapacitate students or employees. When experiencing stress, they may suffer from moderate to severe exhaustion, lose interest in their activities, avoid responsibilities, experience sleep disturbances, and persistent anxiety, which can lead to loss of control and influence behaviors such as drug addiction. These conditions adversely affect their performance and the achievement of personal and professional goals (Belkis et al., 2015; Oblitas-Guadalupe et al., 2017).

It is crucial to diagnose and train virtues, character strengths, and talents in both students and employees. These are coping tools that promote a healthier life and contribute to balance and psychological well-being. They can serve as means to counteract tension, nervousness, overwhelm, anxiety, and distress. Theoretical models of stress coping include the biological model, psychoanalytic model, stress processing model, transactional theory, among others (Urbano, 2019).

Talents are a type of personal strength that can protect individuals from psychosocial risk zones. These are outstanding skills where a person demonstrates high levels of competence, commitment, and engagement (as per the PERMA model of well-being). Talents are activities that an individual performs with great ease, dedication, and passion, and while they can be either genetically inherited or developed through practice, they consistently lead to states of flow—experiencing happiness while doing what one does best. As a tool for personal development, talents offer a pathway to discovering one's true purpose in life (Domínguez & Ibarra, 2017).

Additionally, techniques based on mindfulness and meditation training have proven highly effective in educational and workplace settings for improving health, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction (Domínguez et al., 2020; Oblitas-Guadalupe et al., 2017).

Another strategy educational institutions can implement to ensure dignified employment aligned with students' academic training is providing assistance in obtaining their first job. This is highly significant for students but can be challenging, particularly for those who have had their studies interrupted. Mexican youth face a harsh and unfair transition from the educational phase to working life, and it seems that the labor market "charges" them a price for entering by offering low wages in exchange for experience (Horbach, 2004).

In Mexico, many universities have job boards. By visiting the websites of these institutions, one can identify which ones include this tool to facilitate the integration of their graduates into the labor market. This platform allows building networks and forging strategic alliances between universities and the business sector to facilitate the early and effective incorporation of students into formal employment, starting with community service and subsequently with professional internships.

For example, public higher education institutions such as the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) have job boards organized by faculty, as do the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP), the Universidad Veracruzana (UV), the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos (UAEMEX), the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo (UAEH). Private universities include the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), the Universidad de las Américas-Puebla (UDLA), the Universidad Iberoamericana (IBERO), the Universidad del Valle de México (UVM), and the Universidad TecMilenio, to name a few.

Thus, when students complete their studies, they already possess some degree of work experience required by any company. Employers, aware of their knowledge, talents, skills, and the results obtained during their community service and internships, as well as their commitment and involvement in assigned tasks, find these graduates to be strong candidates for available positions.

# IMPACT OF CAREER COUNSELING ON ACADEMIC WELL-BEING

As discussed throughout this work, identifying students' strengths is crucial for aligning them with a suitable career path within the vast array of available professions. This process helps focus their efforts on areas where they excel and enjoy working, while also mitigating the risks associated with pursuing activities misaligned with their strengths. The goal is to guide students in building a life plan based on their positive attributes.

The value of providing career counseling to students before they enter university is immeasurable, as the decision made during this phase will influence their future satisfaction. It is vital to establish compelling and meaningful reasons to support their decisions.

Furthermore, it is essential that the admission and graduate profiles in the chosen degree program align with students' virtues, strengths, interests, passions, abilities, gifts, and talents. These conditions will help students flourish, find beauty and fulfillment in what they do, and achieve satisfaction and significance in the activities related to the degree program they wish to pursue to become a happy and productive professional capable of meeting their fundamental needs.

Given that students will spend four to six years studying their chosen field, making the right choice is crucial. Missteps can lead to persistent frustration, which often results in academic failure, dropping out, or, at best, changing degree programs due to a lack of capacity, talent, or commitment to the chosen field. This misalignment can lead to disinterest, demotivation, boredom, listlessness, annoyance, constant failures, and academic unhappiness, eroding their willpower and potential for achievement.

In contrast, when a student has a talent for a specific area and chooses a degree program aligned with their experiences, interests, motivations, virtues, strengths, abilities, gifts, and talents, they tend to achieve better academic performance and greater life satisfaction than those who do not. Successes at various stages of their academic

life build the foundation for self-empowerment, confidence, and future success, extending beyond education into the workplace.

Students who are happy with what they do are more motivated because their motivation is intrinsic, coming from their deepest desires. Intrinsic motivation lasts longer than extrinsic motivation, which originates from external factors such as family, friends, teachers, etc. However, research shows that students' motivation to pursue a specific profession is extrinsic (Angulo, 2008), meaning it does not come from their own concerns, needs, interests, or talents.

Those who find internal motivation achieve better results due to their higher commitment and engagement. They love what they do and would even do it without financial compensation. Thus, when individuals with specific virtues, strengths, and talents pursue a passion and are compensated for it, and their earnings cover their basic needs, they will repeat this behavior in a positive, virtuous cycle benefiting both themselves and their employers.

In his theory of human motivation, Abraham Maslow (1943) argues that human needs are divided into several categories: basic needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. These needs range from the most fundamental for survival—such as food, sleep, and rest—to those necessary for remaining in stable conditions. Safety needs, for example, include physical integrity, such as healthcare, housing rights, access to public services, and social security—factors that contribute to improving quality of life.

Social needs, or belongingness, include social acceptance and a sense of belonging, which refers to the satisfaction of being part of a group, business, institution, society, or culture. This category also encompasses affection, relating to relationships with a partner, family, and friends.

On the other hand, esteem needs, or recognition needs, are divided into two aspects: First, they are associated with self-respect, which involves positive feelings such as self-confidence, feeling competent, the ability to achieve goals, and a sense of freedom and independence. Second, they relate to the respect of others, encompassing the need to excel, gain recognition, reputation, and social status, as well as the pursuit of dignity, success, and prosperity, among other motivational factors.



The lack of these needs can lead to low self-esteem and negative thoughts, severely impacting a person's performance, quality of life, well-being, and happiness. Thus, self-esteem is a fundamental pillar for finding personal balance and achieving success.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization is the highest psychological need. Maslow describes it as the motivation for growth or the need to be and self-actualization. While one must address the lower needs to achieve self-actualization, it is not necessary to fully satisfy each level to reach it. Instead, achieving a balance at each level and making progress to higher levels is essential.

The term "self-actualization," first coined by Kurt Goldstein, refers to the desire or tendency to become what one is potentially capable of becoming, to grow into what one is meant to be (Maslow, 1943). A person with a talent for something enjoys and commits to their activity so deeply that they autonomously and willingly seek to improve their knowledge and skills, advancing in a spiral of ongoing development and growth, as it becomes a fundamental necessity of their being.

Although the need for self-actualization is at the top of Maslow's hierarchy, he suggests that even when all these needs are fully met, individuals may still experience new forms of discontent and unease, leading to the emergence of new needs. Maslow argues that as long as these new needs have not arisen, individuals will naturally engage in activities for which they are well-suited and that bring them genuine happiness. In this sense, a musician must make music and a poet must write poetry to achieve true personal fulfillment.

However, we would add that happiness can only be achieved if the activity allows the person to express their deepest desires and aspirations. By identifying and utilizing their existing strengths and positive traits, individuals can build authentic happiness based on their true vocation (Beck, 2003; Seligman, 2017).

Satisfying these motivational factors helps individuals connect with their inner essence. Discovering their virtues, strengths, and capabilities, and applying them to benefit society, gives meaning to their lives, enhances self-worth as individuals and professionals, and allows them to transcend their immediate world by contributing their talents beyond their own borders, leaving a lasting legacy. At this point, their talent belongs to the world. Self-transcendence is the highest end of self-actualization.

So far, we have discussed internal factors that foster individual happiness. However, humans are shaped by their social environments, which must be positive to develop their full potential. Favorable environments include supportive families, positive schools and classrooms, and encouraging workplaces.

## IIMPACT OF CAREER COUNSELING ON WORKPLACE WELL-BEING

As previously discussed, career counseling significantly affects not only academic paths but also workplace environments. Considering that we spend more than half of our lives working, it is ideal for this to be satisfying. Companies seek to hire the most talented, committed, and high-performing individuals. Ideally, this is only achievable if the workforce is composed of people who are academically trained and convinced of their vocation and naturally motivated to achieve high levels of performance and personal satisfaction in their jobs.

Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory acknowledges that intrinsic motivation promotes general well-being, productivity, job satisfaction, competence, and commitment. Jiménez et al. (2016) found that individuals who are employed in positions aligned with their educational training experience greater intrinsic satisfaction.

From this perspective, organizations are more likely to possess intellectual capital that meets their needs, while individuals find favorable conditions to deploy their full capabilities, achieving excellent job performance without sacrificing personal satisfaction. This alignment between professional training, virtues, strengths, and talents with job roles allows employees to realize their full potential.

Jiménez et al. (2016) define job satisfaction as the subjective well-being an employee experiences while performing their work activities. Such satisfaction leads to emotional responses that influence the employee's performance within the company. They identify key variables affected by job satisfaction: absenteeism (reduced absence from work), employee turnover (lower resignation rates and reduced staff turnover), and productivity (higher performance and efficiency).

A committed employee remains active, draws inner strength to persevere, engages in their activities, and experiences states of flow that translate into increased productivity, creativity, and innovation. Their achievements constantly maintain their curiosity, interest, and motivation. This model of a self-directed, self-motivated individual who loves what they do represents the ideal for anyone seeking employment. Simultaneously, it is the ideal employee that every organization wishes to have.

This modern concept of quality of life at work goes beyond the traditional view mentioned by Vallejo (2016), which focuses more on external factors managed directly and generally by the company across its entire workforce. The approach proposed here aims to balance the internal forces within the organization to achieve goals and objectives. It considers the natural drive (self-motivation) that employees bring to their work to fulfill the company's objectives.

When we combine the effort of self-directed employees with the organization's external motivational efforts aimed at guiding staff toward achieving the objectives outlined in their action plans, there is a dual reinforcement (internal and external) for accomplishing these goals. As a result, performance is likely to improve continuously, creating a constant virtuous cycle.

From this perspective, the concept of human motivation defined by Cavazos (2003) becomes more significant. Cavazos argues that effort driven by personal interest (intrinsic motivation) provides employees with ample reasons to perform their duties and achieve organizational goals. However, from the traditional viewpoint of human resource management, there is a risk of becoming trapped in a vicious cycle by relying solely on extrinsic motivation to keep employees consistently motivated. This approach often fails to sustain the desired levels of productivity and competitiveness that the company needs.

The following are forms of extrinsic motivation for employees: awards, incentives, and rewards, such as punctuality bonuses, employee of the month recognitions, productivity bonuses, extra holidays, overtime payments, trips, financial support for school supplies, uniforms, and scholarships for employees' children, among others. These remain necessary and valuable for both employees and the organization, as they enhance quality of life and foster greater commitment to the company.

According to Cavazos (2003), for a person to find happiness in their work, they must feel valued by their employer, experience job security and personal empowerment,

independence, a sense of survival, enhancement of personal and professional experience, the ability to express themselves, and feel useful and valued for their skills and abilities. Additionally, they should be able to strengthen their personal dignity, discover themselves and their capabilities, manage and use their time effectively, and seek a role within society. These two outlooks on staff management are entirely opposed. In the traditional perspective, to move in the desired direction, a leader must constantly push or pull their minimally motivated subordinates who do not enjoy their work.

In contrast, the second perspective involves an employee who is self-directed, excels in a role aligned with their virtues, strengths, capabilities, and talents, loves what they do, and is committed and engaged. This employee experiences states of flow, as described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and drives towards the company's objectives without needing their leader to pull them along. However, they still require positive work environments to continue growing.

Theoretically, human resource management in organizations has traditionally focused on providing training, development, and motivation to employees in order to align their competencies with job requirements, improve their performance, and retain staff (Chambers et al., 1998; Covey, 1996). However, if the recruitment and selection process filters for self-motivated candidates with talent and experience in the field, training should be tailored to the job's needs, development should aim to enhance their talent, motivation should focus on providing methods, tools, and materials to improve their work, and a positive work environment should be created. According to Robbins (2009), strategies that management can consider include better personnel selection and placement, training, realistic goal setting, job redesign, increased employee involvement, improved organizational communication, offering sabbaticals, and establishing corporate wellness programs (p. 679).

Research in this field indicates that training increases an employee's self-efficacy and reduces work-related stress. Employees perform better when they have clearly specified goals because greater control over activities results in less stress, leading to more motivation. Even if their tasks are highly challenging, with adequate and sufficient training, and feedback on their progress towards goals, they experience greater subjective well-being. This reduces uncertainty about their performance, frustration, role ambiguity, and thus, stress (Robbins, 2009).

As previously mentioned, employee engagement, suggested by Robbins, is naturally achieved by hiring autonomous and self-directed employees with talent and experience in the area. For an employee with these characteristics, these working conditions could positively impact not only their commitment and engagement with the company's goals and objectives but also their personal fulfillment by meeting all their needs, from physiological to self-actualization as outlined by Maslow, contributing to both personal and corporate well-being.

Corporate wellness programs, as mentioned by Robbins, should focus on maintaining employees' physical and mental balance. This approach allows organizations to be seen not just as facilitators of well-being but as entities that incorporate it into their corporate culture (Robbins, 2009). Building a culture of well-being leads to healthier outcomes because these employees experience less suffering and human indolence.

Johnette van Eeden, founder and CEO of Star Wellness, which provides wellness assessment and preventive care services for businesses, local governments, and school systems in the United States, notes that science has shown that a healthier workforce results in a more productive workforce. Benefits for companies include fewer lost hours due to employee absences, reduced workplace accidents, lower turnover, and higher morale. She concludes that wellness programs offer executives a way to control the rising costs of health care (Corporate Wellness Magazine, 2021).

## HOW TO MEASURE THE LEVEL OF HAPPINESS AT SCHOOL AND WORK

Living a fulfilling life means living a good life in all aspects of human existence. This is the greatest aspiration of any individual and society. A good life is equivalent to living happily, healthily, productively, and with a sense of meaning (Park et al., 2013).

A fulfilling life can be achieved through two perspectives in psychology: using the traditional perspective to address and alleviate personal problems, deficiencies, weaknesses, and internal conflicts; and employing the positive psychology approach, which focuses on psychological health, the ability to experience positive emotions and feelings, utilizing talents and strengths, maintaining positive relationships, and finding a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Observing and evaluating one's life in positive terms helps determine the level of life satisfaction an individual feels, thus revealing their level of subjective well-being (Moccia, 2016). Life satisfaction is closely linked to an individual's overall functioning.

To determine the level of happiness, we will adopt Diener's (1984) approach, which employs a concept easily understood from a psychological perspective: subjective well-being. The fundamental components of subjective well-being are a high level of personal satisfaction, a high level of positive feelings, and a low level of negative feelings (Park et al., 2013).

To make the mental and emotional state of an individual visible, it is suggested to maintain a log to record observations of events that generated satisfaction and feelings experienced throughout the day for later review. Create a table with three columns: the first titled "Personal Satisfaction," the second "Positive Emotions or Feelings," and the third "Negative Emotions or Feelings"; then fill in the table accordingly.

At the end of the day, calculate the total observations in each column. Using this information, weigh the personal experiences lived throughout the day by placing the total number of satisfying events on one side of the scale. Next, sum the total number of positive emotions felt that day—such as joy, satisfaction, pride, hope, happiness, delight, pleasure, or any positive sensation—and place this on the same positive side of the scale. On the other side of the scale, place the total number of negative feelings experienced during the day.

Finally, according to Diener's criteria, make the appropriate assessment: if there is a high number of personal satisfactions and a high number of positive feelings compared to a low number of negative feelings, it becomes evident that there are more positive terms or expressions of events and emotions on one side of the scale compared to negative feelings on the other. Therefore, this day had a positive balance in terms of happiness.

In contrast, if the number of negative feelings outweighs the positive, the balance of happiness and well-being would be negative. This would indicate lower life satisfaction, reduced subjective well-being, a less fulfilling life, and diminished overall fulfillment. Exercises like this help to reveal the well-being or discomfort underlying everyday behaviors.

This approach is particularly useful for determining whether a person enjoys their chosen degree program or current job, and whether it aligns with their interests, experiences, virtues, strengths, capabilities, gifts, and talents. It helps assess whether their life is directed towards building personal happiness or if they are repeating behavioral patterns that lead to a mundane existence.

The previous exercise can be applied specifically to the academic or workplace contexts, although not as broadly as initially presented. By tailoring the information to fit the particular schedules—whether academic or professional—one can assess the level of happiness within a school or workplace setting. Observations specific to each environment can be included, whether they relate to personal feelings or the conditions of the surroundings.

## CONCLUSIONS

Students experience greater happiness and better academic performance when their career counseling aligns with their virtues, strengths, interests, abilities, gifts, and talents.

Both students and self-employed, self-directed employees who align their work with their personal positive traits perform better in their activities because they are fueled by intrinsic motivation. One of the most important decisions in a student's life is finding their vocation, choosing a degree program based on their strengths and positive attributes, and showing passion for what they do. These steps are key to developing a fulfilling life and a successful career. Students who have received appropriate career counseling feel more enthusiastic and fulfilled about their future profession compared to those who lacked such counseling or who were misdirected.

Students with a talent for their chosen profession have better stress management and face academic challenges with greater positivity and success because their skills are within the flow zone (where challenge and ability are balanced). This provides them with continuous satisfaction and contributes to their subjective well-being.

Employees are happy at work when they consciously choose a job that aligns with their professional training, interests, abilities, gifts, and talents. They are more committed to organizational goals and objectives and experience higher life satisfaction.

Workplace happiness is enhanced when the primary motivation is intrinsic, complemented by extrinsic motivation provided by the employing organization.

Fair compensation, the right to legal or superior benefits, and positive work environments significantly enhance employee commitment and engagement. Such conditions lead to better performance and increased loyalty to the employer.

Happy employees discover themselves, know their strengths and weaknesses, recognize the limits of their education and academic development—knowledge, skills, and talents—and seek to autonomously and deliberately enhance them to improve their processes and performance.

Employees who enjoy their work find personal satisfaction in what they do and feel fulfilled when their employer values their virtues, strengths, gifts, abilities, skills, talents, and results.

Employees feel fortunate when they perceive that their efforts contribute to achieving the organization's goals and objectives. This fosters self-confidence, a feeling of empowerment, and the freedom to express their ideas, as they believe their participation is valuable for the continuous improvement of the company they work for.

Satisfied employees recognize the need to organize their tasks, prioritize, and use their time efficiently to achieve their goals. They are self-disciplined and independent, develop tolerance for failure, and manage frustration effectively.

Individuals in jobs that exceed their own capabilities experience higher levels of stress, frustration, worry, and anxiety.

Work is the area of life that allows individuals to develop their full potential by putting into practice their knowledge, skills, gifts, and talents to achieve self-actualization and transcendence in life. They put their abilities at the service of others and add value to their daily tasks in their professional development, employment, or entrepreneurship. A self-actualized person is a happy human being.



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# PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN SCHOOL- AGE CHILDREN: A PARTICIPATORY DIAGNOSIS BASED ON CAROL RYFF'S THEORETICAL MODEL<sup>17</sup>



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17 This project is based on the research titled "Mobilizaciones de las ciudades de Bogotá, Pasto and Neiva," approved by the UNAD with code SIGI ECSAH 005-07. The researchers involved were Zeneida Ceballos V, Constanza Abadía García, Nancy Esperanza Flechas, Mabel Chalá and Jhon Bustos.

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## ABSTRACT

- a) Objective: To analyze the characteristics of psychological well-being dimensions in children from Pasto, Colombia, using Carol Ryff's theoretical model.
- b) Method: This study adopts a qualitative perspective with an ethnographic method. It involved a group of approximately 30 children aged 9 to 11, their parents, and the teachers from the affiliated public school. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, workshops, and focus groups.
- c) Results: The findings reveal that Ryff's model of six dimensions, as perceived by the children, parents, and teachers, is closely linked to the establishment of emotional bonds with family members, extended family, or caregivers; interactions with peers, teachers, and school administrators.

Based on the findings, it is necessary to strengthen emotional bonds, promote positive aspects in each dimension, and prevent and address negative aspects in children, family, and school settings to enhance the psychological well-being of children comprehensively. This implied



the need to design and implement a psycho-educational program based on the concept of psychological well-being in school-age children in Pasto.

**Keywords:** psychological well-being, participatory diagnosis.





## RESUMEN

- a) **Objetivo:** analizar las características de las dimensiones de bienestar psicológico en niños de las ciudades de Pasto Colombia, a partir del modelo teórico de Carol Ryff.
- b) **Método:** este estudio se enmarca en una perspectiva cualitativa con un método etnográfico, se trabajó con un grupo conformado por aproximadamente 30 niños de 9 a 11 años, con sus padres de familia y docentes de la institución pública vinculada. Las técnicas de recolección de información fueron: entrevista en profundidad, taller y grupo focal.
- c) **Resultados:** se evidencia que el modelo de Ryff de las seis dimensiones desde la perspectiva de los niños, la mirada de los padres y los docentes de cómo observan a los niños en cada dimensión, se encuentra relacionada al establecimiento de los vínculos afectivos con los miembros de la familia de origen, la familia extensa o cuidadores; las interacciones con los pares, docentes y miembros directivos del colegio.



Conclusión: con base en los resultados hallados se hace necesario fortalecer los vínculos afectivos, promover los aspectos positivos en cada dimensión y prevenir y atender los aspectos negativos en los niños, los escenarios familiares y escolares para favorecer el bienestar psicológico de los niños de manera integral. Esto implicó la necesidad de diseñar e implementar un programa psicoeducativo fundamentado en el concepto de bienestar psicológico en niños escolares de Pasto.

**Palabras clave:** bienestar psicológico, diagnóstico participativo.



# PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that gains relevance within the framework of positive psychology and is studied from various theoretical perspectives.

This participatory diagnosis is grounded in Carol Ryff's perspectives, who, by seeking a balance among different viewpoints, implemented a multidimensional model under a eudaimonic outlook to justify psychological well-being. Ryff and Keyes (1995) make an important distinction "between psychological well-being and subjective well-being, noting that life satisfaction can be an indicator of psychological well-being" (Ballesteros et al., 2006, p. 241). They further highlight that "psychological well-being has focused on the development of capacities and personal growth, both conceived as major indicators of positive functioning" (Díaz et al., 2006, p. 572). This aspect helps individuals face challenges and perform positively across personal, family, social, and academic areas.

Ryff describes a detailed description of the six dimensions based on her research:

**Self-Acceptance:** Defined as a central characteristic of mental health, as well as a feature of self-actualization, optimal functioning, and maturity. Life theories also emphasize acceptance of oneself and one's past life. Thus, adopting positive attitudes towards oneself emerges as a central feature of positive psychological functioning.

**Positive Relationships with Others:** The ability to love is seen as a core component of mental health. Self-actualizers are described as having strong feelings of empathy and affection for all human beings, the capacity for love, deeper friendships, and a more complete identification with others. Theories of adult development also stress the achieve-

ment of close connections with others (intimacy) and the guidance and direction of others (generativity).

Thus, these conceptions of psychological well-being repeatedly emphasize the importance of positive relationships with others.

**Autonomy:** Individuation involves a liberation from conventional norms, where the individual no longer clings to collective fears, beliefs, and societal laws. Life developmentalists also see the inward-turning process in recent years as giving individuals a sense of freedom from the norms that govern daily life.

**Mastery of the Environment:** This refers to an individual's ability to navigate and creatively change their world through physical or mental activities. It is the individuals' capacity to choose or create environments suitable to their psychic conditions.

**Purpose in Life:** It involves a sense of direction and intentionality. Life development theories refer to various changing purposes or goals in life, such as being productive and creative or achieving emotional integration in later life. Therefore, positively functioning individuals have goals, intentions, and a sense of direction, all of which contribute to the feeling that life is meaningful.

**Personal Growth:** The need for self-actualization and realizing one's potential is central to clinical perspectives in personal growth. Openness to experience. Life theories also explicitly emphasize continuous growth and the confrontation of new challenges or tasks at different life stages. Thus, continuous personal growth and self-actualization are prominent themes in these theories. (Ryff 1989, p. 1071)

Psychological well-being is a relatively unexplored topic in children, but it can be optimized as part of life education. This statement is noteworthy given that educational contexts often view themselves as centers for cognitive learning. Recently, there has been a push towards a more holistic education, taking into account the psychosocial and cultural dimensions of students. Moreover, psychological well-being encompasses various contexts where an individual performs as "they behave differently in different contexts, yet teaching, practice, and psychological research often overlook

this contextual-cultural reference” (Castro & Díaz, 2002, p.2). There are numerous and significant reasons that make schools a unique place to implement programs or projects focused on children’s emotional and affective dimensions, considering the roles of family, teachers, and peers. Hence, addressing psychological well-being in these settings is essential, as “research suggests that the quality of these early social relationships has a significant influence on the development of self-esteem, emotional stability, and the ability to interact satisfactorily with others during adolescence and adulthood” (Morison, as cited in Jaramillo et al., 2006).

Psychology is called upon to expand the theoretical understanding of psychological well-being and, more importantly, the subjective constructs that mediate its experience. Pedagogy faces the challenge of developing effective ways to foster children’s development. Bernal et al. (2009) state that “there is considerable debate about how to interpret the changes taking place in children’s development” (p. 285). Family, social, economic, and cultural transformations bring new experiences and new challenges for educational institutions in addressing apathy, lack of emotional control, absence of boundaries, and violence in the classroom.

A significant change has been the increasing integration of women into the workplace and the advocacy for their rights across various social settings. “Within the family, this meant a gradual redistribution of gender roles, along with birth control and a consequent decrease in the number of children families had” (Florenzano, as cited in Bernal et al., 2009, p. 286).

“Another significant change was the increase in marital breakups leading to parental separation or divorce and the partial disintegration of the family unit” (Hayes, as cited in Bernal et al., 2009, p. 286). This situation influences dynamics and the creation of new roles among family members. “As a result, new types of families have emerged” (Arriagada et al., as cited in Bernal et al., 2009, p. 286). This diversification has impacted, among other things, children’s emotional and affective development and academic performance.

Therefore, it is necessary to investigate family types, socioeconomic aspects, living conditions, socio-affective relationships, customs, cultural context, and access to and ownership of information technologies. Weisner (2015) suggests that “well-being is currently considered a complex and broad concept that must be analyzed from a multicultural and multidisciplinary perspective, (...) and is necessarily linked to culture and society” (Tonon et al., 2017, p. 167).

Considering these aspects, according to Morales et al. (2014), psychological well-being is the “degree to which an individual judge their life as a whole in favorable and satisfying terms.” According to Veenhoven (1996), “It is characterized by three elements: its subjective nature (...), its global dimension, as it includes the evaluation of all areas of life, and positive appreciation, which goes beyond the mere absence of negative factors.” (p. 217).

Thus, this study on psychological well-being, focused on school-age children, is relevant due to the ontological stance of active subjects who have much to contribute to the six dimensions within the family and school context.

## PARTICIPATORY DIAGNOSIS

According to Castro et al. (2007), “participatory diagnosis is a methodological tool” and “constitutes a democratic opportunity for the entire community to participate” (Subsecretaría General de Gobierno, 2012, p. 2). In the educational process, recognizing the realities and contexts of its members is increasingly relevant, contributing to the understanding of phenomena and theoretical and methodological aspects necessary for future interventions.

Oporto (2009) emphasizes the need to clarify each term related to participatory diagnosis, citing Azzerboni et al. (2003), who understand participation as “a process rather than a state; members of the educational community should have more involvement in decision-making related to institutional progress, while always considering the difference in roles” (p. 2).

Authors such as Pérez and Ochoa (2017, p. 180) conceive participation “as the power individuals have to engage in a real and genuine way in social situations that concern them.” The active participation of children has increased due to the recognition that school-age children think, question, and reflect on themselves, their family, their world, their educational process, etc. Thus, “child participation places children and adolescents as social subjects capable of expressing their opinions and making decisions on matters of their interest” (Van Dijk et al., as cited in Pérez & Ochoa, 2017, p. 186).



The value of participatory processes lies in the diverse perspectives of various actors—children, parents, and teachers—who, despite engaging individually, contribute to representative constructions that enhance collective action. According to Novella et al. (2014, p. 18), “child participation is a personal and collective experience that allows involvement in social projects, promoting psychoeducational development and the formation of values.”

Another significant aspect is diagnosis as a platform to give voice to children and members of the educational community about their issues, strengths, and potential, thereby positively impacting reflections and interactions.

Carvajal (as cited in Tulcán, 2018) explains that a “diagnosis involves examining the community’s logic based on the capacity for participation, decision-making, and reflection of the actors in accordance with the deficiencies, potentials, strengths, and possibilities for development and resources” (p. 50). It is essential to move beyond the notion that a “good diagnosis” is one that gathers much information, implying the use of many tools. Tools are selected based on their relevance and strategic importance (Aguilar et al., 2002).

According to Castro et al. (2007), diagnosis prompts reflection on relevant institutional issues and induces a reflective process that can lead to awareness of certain problems, and consequently to the construction or articulation of a problem to address. Carvajal (as cited in Tulcán, 2018, p. 50) defines diagnosis as “a pedagogical tool that serves to teach about the local reality in educational institutions and for the community to appropriate the information resulting from the study.”

Aguilar et al. (2002) state, “There are many proposals for conducting participatory diagnoses, with the common denominator being the participation of the target population” (p. 5).

The methodological principles for participatory diagnosis according to Aguilar et al. (2002), are:

1. Participatory diagnosis is not an end in itself but part of a larger process that extends beyond problem-solving. Failure to recognize its potential would undermine the intentionality of the process.
2. Participatory diagnoses do not fully determine the situation of interest, as situations are complex and cannot encompass all dimensions and interrelations.

3. It is essential to consider the diagnosis as part of a broader, dynamic process that is continually evolving. New elements and reflections may emerge during planning that could lead to modifications in the interpretations of the diagnosis.

Different conceptions of diagnosis are applicable to various fields. This research is approached from the educational community outlook, which differs from other fields, such as the medical field, due to its ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations.

Participatory diagnosis with children involves separate groups including parents or guardians or other family members such as grandmothers, aunts, or stepmothers, as well as homeroom teachers and teachers of various subjects. As García (2014, p. 319) states, “an aspect to consider is the inclusion of the family and the school, as they are the main agents of socialization of the child, contributing to creating an environment conducive to change.” According to Ojeda and Zúñiga (2020), participatory diagnoses include the viewpoints of all actors involved in the problematic situation, regardless of their level of power. Economic, material, information, intellectual, influence, or leadership resources are not considered; instead, it involves integrating different perspectives and diverse perceptions for the joint construction of the diagnosis.

Therefore, participatory diagnosis is a research strategy that allows for the systematic understanding and analysis of a situation using methodologies suited to qualitative research within the educational context. It involves “the construction of knowledge through the intervention and differentiated opinions of those involved in the situation” (Aguilar et al., 2002, p. 16).

García (2014) asserts that after completing the participatory diagnosis, by giving voice to children and parents regarding perceived problems, and recognizing issues identified by teachers and researchers, “the knowledge must be returned to the population so that actors can analyze it and prioritize the elements they wish to change, (...) - Fals Borda (1980) refers to this process as systematic feedback” (p. 317)

Based on this definition, the diagnostic process aimed at uncovering meanings and interpretations of psychological well-being dimensions is described. This process opens a space for dialogue and reflection on Carol Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being. Meetings were held with children, teachers, and parents to share the results of the participatory diagnosis. A report was also prepared for the school's

leadership. Following the feedback of results, the development and implementation of a program to mitigate negative realities, address deficiencies, and promote positive realities and psychoactive potentials within the public institution community of Pasto began. It is noteworthy that this participatory diagnosis has been a fundamental experience, extending beyond the research exercise and demonstrating effectiveness for educational intervention.

The participatory diagnosis within the investigative framework of the project “Psycho-Affective Mobilizations Derived from the Implementation of a Psychoeducational Program Based on the Concept of Psychological Well-Being in School-Age Children from Pasto” aimed to analyze the characteristics of psychological well-being dimensions in school-age children in Pasto, based on Carol Ryff’s theoretical model.

## METHOD

This qualitative research was conducted using an ethnographic method. The unit of analysis comprised children aged 9 to 11 years from an educational institution located in Pasto. The study group included 30 fifth-grade students, along with their parents and teachers.

Information was gathered through in-depth interviews with teachers, focus groups with students, and workshops with parents. All techniques addressed the same deductive categories to facilitate data triangulation. It was crucial to adapt the distribution of techniques to the needs and particularities of the population involved. The field diary was the common instrument for organizing information.

This research is part of a process that began with a study on the meanings of happiness in this same population. In this second research phase, the following procedure was established:

**Phase 1:** Theoretical Framework.

**Phase 2:** Approach and Agreements with the Community.

**Phase 3:** Instrument Development.

**Phase 4:** Fieldwork.

**Phase 5:** Analysis and Interpretation of Data.

The data analysis involved a matrix analysis exercise, which began with:

- a. Transcription of the information.
- b. Organization and coding of the data.
- c. Extraction of propositions.
- d. Triangulation of information by source and subject.

The research adhered to ethical guidelines as per Resolution 8430 of 1993 from the Ministry of Health and Law 1090, which regulates the practice of psychology and establishes the Deontological and Bioethical Code. Initially, agreements were made with the educational institution to obtain the necessary authorization. Additionally, an informed consent process was conducted, with signatures from the participating subjects, including teachers, parents, and children. This research, deemed minimal risk, was approved by the Research Committee of the School of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities (ECSAH in Spanish) and the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD) and funded through the SIGI (Research Management System) call.

Finally, participants' personal information was safeguarded; therefore, no personal names are used in any sections of the final research report or this article. The research procedures are rigorous enough to meet the standards of scientific work.

## RESULTS

The participatory diagnosis presented below is part of the research project "Psycho-Affective Mobilizations Derived from the Implementation of a Psychoeducational Program Based on the Concept of Psychological Well-Being in School-Age Children from Pasto." The general objective is to recognize these psycho-affective mobilizations based on the concept of psychological well-being in school-age children. The research employs an ethnographic method, emphasizing participation and reflection

as fundamental components. A participatory diagnostic process with the educational community was proposed, recognizing that while the study subjects are children, family and school dynamics must be considered for a deeper understanding. Various qualitative techniques were used to explore the deductive categories.

## RESULTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY DIAGNOSIS WITH CHILDREN

Based on the information analysis exercise, relevant information from the children is presented, followed by information from teachers and parents.

### SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Children generally acknowledge their limitations and mistakes, though they find it easier to recognize their strengths rather than their flaws. They tend to feel more satisfied with themselves in activities such as sports or peer interactions. In contrast, several children struggle to express themselves fluently about their shortcomings, with some remaining silent about issues they disagree with due to fear of retaliation from peers, adults, or parents.

### AUTONOMY

It is evident that educational institutions create opportunities for voluntary participation, allowing children to make decisions about events based on their personal interests. This motivates them as they feel valued and enjoy the sense of unity in organizing events such as student representative elections, leadership roles, and activities promoting social skills, democracy, and leadership. They also participate in recreational activities like parties, outings, sports tournaments, and commemorations of special dates such as Children's Day and Women's Day. Activities promoting gender equity are performed. Schools have welfare committees, such as: social, snack, and environmental committees. Children can choose to engage in various free

activities, such as the library, watching YouTube videos, or playing sports on soccer fields. Some children, however, express that disorganized groups hinder activity development and that opportunities to participate are insufficient. There are children who do not participate in any activities.

## POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

It was found that best friends usually meet at school, where relationships are satisfying and enjoyable moments are shared. Although there are disagreements, which are generally managed positively, there are more pleasant moments. It is worth noting that special skills valued by peers and adults enhance social acceptance.

According to children's experiences, relationships among students have various aspects. Some report physical and psychological bullying among classmates, often occurring when a child is not part of the aggressor's group. There are also several situations of low tolerance for differences, leading to tensions among groups of children within the same grade and between different grades. Those with more difficulties in interpersonal relationships are often from targeted groups.

Overall, the student-teacher relationship is considered good, although there are instances of confrontation and verbal aggression.

Notably, in some cases, children's narratives about their relationships do not mention interactions with teachers, leading to questions about whether they view the teacher as a distant authority figure.

## MASTERY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Regarding leadership roles, most children view being a leader as a desire or aspiration rather than a regular activity. Specifically, children report enjoying leadership in play activities or alternative group activities. Mastery of the environment is facilitated when children receive social recognition, identify with their surroundings, and are acknowledged for their skills.

One way to demonstrate mastery of the environment is through the ability to intervene and influence conflict resolution or to assume proactive leadership roles.

Regarding the first aspect, it was found that in situations of peer conflicts, children are divided into two groups: those who like to mediate and help resolve conflicts and those who prefer not to intervene or who have faced conflicts without participating. The desire to engage in conflict resolution processes is evident, although children intervene mainly if the parties involved are friends.

Additionally, dialogue is recognized as a strategy for conflict resolution among peers, but there is no evidence of its effective application. Confusion between mediation and authority suggests that current strategies may not be effective.

Finally, concerning the preference for school spaces, children favor places they consider their own, such as their classrooms, play areas, and libraries. Appropriate spaces depend on the possibilities and proposals from the children as groups. There is a demand for more and better open spaces for sports and recreational activities, as the school currently has unpleasant, limited physical spaces with insufficient resources for play and recreation.

## **PURPOSE IN LIFE**

In this category, children recognize the importance of academic education as a foundation for their desired degree program. For example, girls express a future interest in studying medicine, psychology, law, or veterinary science, while boys often aspire to become professional soccer players. Children's thoughts are oriented toward what they hope to be in the distant future, with expectations of recognition, fame, and money, although they lack real opportunities to pursue these dreams. Some children view studying as an obligation, which may lead to a lack of clarity or motivation regarding their purpose in life.

## **PERSONAL GROWTH**

Some children exhibit a lack of tolerance for physical contact or unintentional encounters with peers, leading to problematic situations. Most children believe that their parents and siblings, who are always attentive to their academic and family activities, provide the most support and understanding, making them feel secure. Many children receive support from their immediate family, especially mothers, as well as

from grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. They believe that close family members are better at recognizing their qualities and values.

In many households, the mother is seen as the primary source of values such as respect, responsibility, cooperation, hard work, kindness, and solidarity. This perception is particularly common among children living with their mothers in the absence of their fathers.

Children consider studying, helping with household chores, and being respectful as actions influenced by their parents and, to some extent, their teachers.

It is noteworthy that some children feel capable of pursuing their dreams, yet their daily lives are more focused on meeting others' expectations. Some children perceive personal growth as the responsibility of school counseling, with insufficient emphasis on the family's role in this dimension.

## RESULTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY DIAGNOSIS WITH TEACHERS

**Self-Acceptance:** Teachers understand that a child's self-acceptance is linked to recognition during success and assertiveness in moments of failure or error. This understanding, however, can contrast with daily teaching practices, where student achievements are not always clearly acknowledged, and fraternal correction is not consistently achieved.

**Autonomy:** Teachers observe that children are increasingly faced with significant decisions at a younger age—such as whether to use psychoactive substances, join gangs, or obey the authority—without having had the experience of making and facing smaller decisions. The educational institution offers very few opportunities for children to make decisions.

**Positive Relations with Others:** The school environment is inherently prone to conflict due to the high volume of interactions. Although teachers do not perceive that confrontations and difficulties exceed what could be considered normal, there are specific difficulties related to certain students. As school is a place prone to conflict, the focus should be on resolving conflicts effectively rather than preventing them.



**Mastery of the Environment:** Teachers base their observations solely on behavior within the school setting. They generally view the children's mastery of their school environment as appropriate, provided there is proper supervision. When children display disruptive behaviors, teachers, in collaboration with parents, often gain insight into family dynamics and problem-solving approaches, which are typically not positive.

**Personal Growth:** Teachers aim to help children with personal discovery through their interactions. They express concern when a child does not engage with school activities, has low grades, or exhibits sadness or aggression. However, the limited time available and the responsibility to follow the curriculum constrain their ability to address these issues comprehensively. Formal responsibilities are often delegated to counselors, who also face time limitations.

## RESULTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY DIAGNOSIS WITH PARENTS

**Self-Acceptance:** Parents, to varying degrees, promote their child's self-acceptance through praise, recognition, and expressions of affection. However, this may not always be frequent or sufficient for significant achievement. Parents recognize the need for affection but are often busy with work or delegate childcare to grandparents, aunts, or older cousins. There is a need for a program that clarifies the importance of recognition from oneself and others in the development of self-acceptance and self-love, helping parents contribute more meaningfully to their children's well-being.

**Autonomy:** Parents view autonomy as a right acquired after children demonstrate mature and responsible behavior, rather than as a process that can foster such behavior. They often do not encourage activities that allow children to make everyday decisions necessary for personal autonomy, considering them too young. Parents sometimes impose their views, limiting the child's autonomy, and rarely acknowledge or promote the child's achievements. Consequently, opportunities for building autonomy are limited. It is necessary to help parents identify opportunities for children to see themselves as independent and responsible for their decisions and behavior.

**Positive Relationships with Others:** Parents rarely identify relational difficulties with their children or between their children and others. They generally believe they have a good relationship with their children, whether or not this aligns with the child's actual experience. It is valuable for parents to reflect on the child's perspective on these relationships. Parents acknowledge that they are role models in their children's relationships, and sometimes their relational styles are not positive, affecting the child's trust and relationships with peers, leading to interpersonal conflicts.

Parents may need to know how children feel about their relationship with them.

**Mastery of the Environment:** Parents consider their children's mastery of different environments to be good. They recognize that occasional inappropriate behaviors may occur but find them within expected limits for the child's age. A noted weakness is that the environments accessible to the children are not very numerous or frequently visited.

**Personal Growth:** Parents' discourse does not show an attitude that promotes or encourages personal growth, as defined by Ryff. They hold an optimistic view of their children in new experiences but often use external control methods, limiting the child's development of their own abilities and personal growth.

**Purpose in Life: Parents and Teachers Premise:** Both parents and teachers agree on the lack of structured ideas that children have regarding their purpose in life. Both groups identify that children express diverse, often contradictory interests that change frequently without substantial explanation. They believe that media influences the children's sense of purpose and direction in life.

## DISCUSSION

Exploring the dimensions of psychological well-being through the lens of Carol Ryff's framework reveals valuable insights into how children perceive their own well-being compared to the perspectives of adults—specifically parents and teachers. The following reflections and contrasts are drawn from the research findings.

To address autonomy, Bernal et al. (2009, p. 285) highlight the “notable precocity with which today's children think and express themselves about topics previously re-

served for adults reserved for adults.” The research confirms that children can choose environments for leisure activities and explore various multimedia information, primarily accessed through the internet and social media due to their widespread availability. However, within school contexts, opportunities for children to propose and make decisions remain limited, constrained by institutional structures and a strong adherence to traditional educational practices.

Regarding self-acceptance, which Ryff (1989) identifies as a central criterion for well-being and a core aspect of mental health, the focus is on accepting oneself and one’s past life. For children, who are approaching developmental changes related to preadolescence, self-acceptance involves significant self-reflection. Findings indicate that children generally acknowledge their limitations and mistakes but find it easier to recognize their qualities, particularly in specific skills like sports and social acceptance by peers. However, self-acceptance related to their core self is less clearly referenced, and many children remain silent about these aspects. Since self-acceptance is linked to self-esteem, accepting oneself—including weaknesses—and considering oneself capable of addressing or at least embracing these aspects reflects positive self-esteem (Perpiñán, 2013). It is evident that while children’s self-acceptance processes align with their developmental stage, they require attention from both educational and emotional processes in family and school settings. “During childhood, caregivers influence emotional development by providing appropriate emotional stimuli, reinforcing and encouraging emotional expression, and responding to subtle changes in children’s expressions” (Richaud de Minzi et al., 2011, p. 332).

Regarding positive relationships, Ryff (1989) asserts that the capacity to love is a central component of mental health. Findings confirm that children derive significant well-being from positive relationships within both family and school environments. Positive relationships are primarily associated with interactions with “best friends.”

In contrast, significant negative experiences arise from instances of physical and psychological maltreatment, leading to polarizations and exclusions within peer groups. While Bisquerra (2013) notes that personal well-being is constructed from individual characteristics (autonomy) and environmental conditions, this is worth reconsidering in childhood and early adolescence when personality and self-environment interactions are still developing. Perpiñán (2013) emphasizes that “children have a great capacity to connect, not only with their parents but also with other family members or people they interact with. Educators are privileged reference figures” (p. 69). Despite generally good teacher-student relationships, instances of confrontation and verbal aggression indicate that strong bonds have not been fully established, and

necessary assertiveness for harmonious interaction is lacking. Family relationships are considered the most significant source of well-being, though discrepancies in relational styles and adherence to norms are apparent, potentially influenced by family diversification due to work and frequent marital breakdowns. This diversification likely affects parent-child relationships and the various educational experiences children encounter. Today's families are more democratic, giving children greater involvement in decision-making, thereby fostering judgment and autonomy from an early age (Beck, as cited in Bernal et al., 2009).

Regarding mastery of the environment, several elements are identifiable, including leadership and the influence of the environment, and how spaces facilitate a sense of well-being.

The ability to influence one's environment is considered a key component of self-esteem and well-being. Findings show that gratifying situations occur when children can assist in solving others' problems, reflecting an altruistic sense and common mediation processes. This suggests that mastery of the environment is linked to interpersonal intelligence, defined as "the potential to understand and effectively interact with others' intentions, motivations, emotions, and desires" (Escamilla, 2014, p. 83).

Facilitating well-being in childhood and adolescence is a social responsibility that extends beyond meeting basic needs, which must always be attended to.

Thus, the influence of interpersonal relationships on well-being is particularly evident in children and adolescents. Conversely, while the educational institution plays a fundamental role in their lives, it does not impact their well-being as significantly as expected, warranting a detailed analysis (Hernangómez et al., 2009, p. 159) [Quote translated from its original in Spanish]

When examining spaces, limitations are identified in the conditions of physical environments, including workspace layout and recreational areas. Children themselves point out constraints in the environments for academic activities and the use of materials.

As for purpose in life, children recognize the importance of studying and having an academic background; however, it is perceived as a distant goal, which contrasts with aspirations for recognition, fame, and money, particularly in sports like soccer. Current processes do not show substantial efforts toward building the desired future,

likely due to developmental stages where fantasy influences such processes. In general, “on the personal level, life goals or projects can be seen as guiding and determining the vital values of each individual, synthesizing their needs and aspirations” (Páramo et al., 2012, p. 10).

It is found that the processes of purpose in life are unclear. The transition from primary to secondary education, with changes in settings and contexts, reveals that children are not well-prepared, viewing the future as distant and focusing only on the present.

Finally, regarding personal growth, defined as “the interest in developing potential, growing as a person, and maximizing one’s own abilities” (Zubieta et al., 2012, p. 9), two key aspects emerge: the individuals who best support personal growth and the activities children believe contribute to their growth.

In this context, the family emerges as the primary source of well-being for children, with parents and siblings providing crucial support to their personal processes. The mother’s extended family also plays a significant role in supporting and accompanying child’s life. The school does not appear as a significant figure in the child’s personal growth. “There is no significant reference to happiness in the relationship with teachers, but rather, satisfaction from academic achievements” (Ceballos, 2015, p. 307). The challenge for teachers is to understand why, despite the school being the second most important environment for children after the family and having a commitment to their education, it does not appear as a relevant factor in their lives. This situation is concerning because it indicates that the school is overlooking socio-emotional objectives (Hernangómez et al., 2009).

In terms of activities, it is found that studying, helping with household chores, being respectful with actions, assuming responsibilities, and feeling a sense of belonging contribute significantly to their sense of personal growth. Likewise, affirming their dreams also contributes to their growth. However, when it comes to school, personal growth is often delegated to the academic counseling department, as if this department were solely accountable for it.

Therefore, the responsibility for personal growth should not be delegated to a specific department or individual but should be a collective commitment of the entire educational community—teachers, parents, administrators, and surrounding community members—to contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals.

It is evident that teachers need to establish warm, supportive relationships with students, encourage them to learn from their mistakes instead of penalizing them for errors, highlight their strengths, and help them address academic deficiencies while consistently recognizing effort and achievement (Fernández et al., 2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

Children's well-being is undoubtedly a multidimensional process closely aligned with Carol Ryff's model. While all dimensions are considered fundamental, from the children's perspective, the most relevant are positive relationships, autonomy, and self-acceptance. For parents and teachers, positive relationships, autonomy, and personal growth are currently seen as most crucial due to the complexities of family and educational contexts.

To address children's well-being, it is essential to first listen to their expectations and needs. Therefore, incorporating the children's perspectives is vital when discussing psychological well-being.

There is a need to harmonize the viewpoints of parents and teachers with those of the children, recognizing the shared responsibility in the development processes, particularly in promoting children's well-being. As Veenhoven (1996) would affirm, the bonds between people favor the establishment of social support networks, reducing the likelihood of psychological disorders such as stress.

The participatory diagnosis unveiled the characteristics of psychological well-being dimensions among children, parents, and teachers in the public institution.

This led to the development and implementation of a psychoeducational program based on these well-being dimensions for school-age children in Pasto. The goal is to foster practices that promote the psycho-emotional development of children and create positive and healthy family and educational environments. This approach also shifts focus from deficit-oriented policies and interventions to a positive perspective

that integrates elements that favorably impact development, contributing to the comprehensiveness of social programs by addressing more than just negative factors affecting people's lives (Alfaro et al., 2015, p. 1).

In conclusion, it is important to continue conducting research starting with participatory diagnostics as a foundation for psychosocial intervention studies that selectively address current needs, demands, and dynamic changes, ultimately improving quality of life through holistic development, which will be reflected in the psychological well-being of children.

Finally, it is essential to prioritize psychological well-being processes within formal and informal educational processes.

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# EMPLOYEE'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING FLOURISHES

“The goal is for 51% of the world's population to be  
'flourishing' by 2051,”  
Seligman (2011)



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## ABSTRACT

The topic of psychological well-being is a central area of discussion across various disciplines concerning individuals' mental health (Cabrera, 2019). This research delves into this construct from the perspective of positive and organizational psychology, aiming to contribute to this globally relevant issue. The study analyzes the influence of a psychological well-being program on employees within a Higher Education Institution (HEI) using a pre-experimental quantitative approach, with 58 participants selected under the inclusion and exclusion criteria set by the researchers. To carry out this research, a population-adapted version of the "Florece" program, designed and validated by Cabrera (2019), was implemented. It focused more specifically on the organizational context, which was entitled "La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador." The initial measurement of psychological well-being revealed that 72.4% of participants had moderate to high levels of well-being. This figure significantly increased



( $p < 0.01$ ) following the program's implementation, with 63.8% of participants reaching high levels and 27.6% achieving very high levels of well-being.

Finally, regarding the dimensions of this construct, it was found that those with the most statistical significance after implementing the program were personal growth, mastery of the environment, and purpose in life, which rose to high and very high levels compared to initial results. This highlights the program's impact and contributes to promoting and preventing mental health.

**Keywords:** psychological well-being, dimensions of psychological well-being, Bloom-Program, – the path of the mind: bloom, towards the psychological well-being of the worker –, workers.





## RESUMEN

El tema del bienestar psicológico, para diferentes disciplinas es un eje importante de discusión a favor de la salud mental de las personas, Cabrera (2019), esta investigación profundizó en este constructo desde un panorama de la psicología positiva y organizacional, a fin de aportar a este tema de gran relevancia mundial, a través del análisis de la influencia de un programa de bienestar psicológico en una población trabajadora de una Institución de Educación Superior (IES), por medio de un estudio cuantitativo de tipo pre-experimental, contando con 58 participantes seleccionados bajo los criterios de inclusión y exclusión dados por las investigadoras. Para ejecutar este proceso investigativo se realizó una adaptación poblacional del programa de base “florece” diseñado y validado por Cabrera (2019), el cual se enfocó de manera más concreta en el contexto organizacional el cual se denominó, “la senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador”; al realizar la medición inicial del bienestar psicológico se encontró que el 72,4 % de los participantes tenían un nivel



moderado a alto, resultado que incrementó significativamente ( $p.<0,01$ ) con la implementación del programa a un 63,8 % nivel alto y 27,6 % nivel muy alto.

Finalmente, con respecto a las dimensiones de este constructo se encontró que las que tuvieron mayor significancia estadística con la implementación del programa fueron crecimiento personal, dominio del entorno y propósito de vida, subiendo a niveles altos y muy altos con respecto a los resultados iniciales, permitiendo reconocer el impacto del programa y así aportar a la promoción y prevención de la salud mental.

**Palabras clave:** bienestar psicológico, dimensiones de bienestar psicológico, Programa-florece, – la senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador –, trabajadores.





# INTRODUCTION

Psychological well-being is considered one of the key factors defining people's quality of life in any context. A high level of well-being is seen as a sign of a satisfying life. When well-being is lacking, the repercussions are significant, often leading to mental issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress. Seligman (as cited in Cabrera-Gómez et al., 2019) defines psychological well-being as the ability of individuals to create enabling conditions that allow them to live a fulfilling life. This theory suggests that well-being leads to personal growth, as mentioned by the author in his "flourishing" theory.

In this order of ideas, it is crucial to explore this topic, as there is a lack of studies focused on promoting and preventing the psychological well-being among workers. Likewise, the importance of intervening in this construct is highlighted by authors such as Seligman (2011), who identified the need to address this construct through positive psychology to create enabling conditions and tools that allow people to lead a life worth living.

Therefore, the current research aims to analyze the influence of the "Florece" program adapted to the population as "La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador," which focuses on improving psychological well-being based on the theory of flourishing among a group of employees at a private higher education institution. This program was adapted to Carol Ryff's multidimensional model of psychological well-being by Dr. Claudia Carolina Cabrera Gómez in 2019 and applied to the working population in this study. This program includes the dimensions of self-acceptance, styles of thought, personal growth, strengths, Mastery of the environment, beliefs, autonomy, cognitive adjustment, positive-relationships, positive emotions, purpose in life, and values. It is also important to mention that this study is part of the original research titled "Influencia del programa virtual: florece en el nivel de bienestar psicológico de un grupo de jóvenes estudiantes de una institución superior de San Juan de Pasto, Nariño, Colombia."

Similarly, in the working context, some studies, such as the one by Bolaños et al. (2019), highlight the importance and necessity of working on this construct. The research entitled “Nivel de calidad de los procesos de gestión humana” included an assessment of the job well-being of 764 workers within the same context as this research. It was found that the job well-being process scored 25.3%, indicating a low level compared to other evaluated processes (Bolaños et al., 2019). This suggests that individual differences in the workplace play a crucial role in achieving optimal psychological well-being, as factors such as job position, culture, expectations, and life projections significantly influence one's conception of well-being.

In accordance with the above, this research applied a quantitative, pre-experimental methodology with a sample of 58 employees from a private institution in the municipality of San Juan de Pasto. Likewise, a scale assessing psychological well-being was used to collect the information. Its original name is Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SPWB), Ryff's *Escala de Bienestar Psicológico* (EBP in Spanish), which was adapted to Spanish by Van Dierendonck (2006) and underwent a cross-cultural adaptation by Cabrera (2019).

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a quantitative, empirical, and analytical approach with an explanatory design, and a pre-experimental framework. The study involved a sample of 58 workers selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria established by the researchers. The inclusion criteria were:

- a.** Serving in an administrative or teaching role at Universidad Mariana.
- b.** Being between 18 and 60 years of age.
- c.** Having a minimum tenure of three months at the institution.
- d.** Agreeing to and signing the conditions outlined in the informed consent.

The exclusion criteria were:

- a. Not serving in an administrative or teaching role at Universidad Mariana.
- b. Being under 18 or over 60 years of age.
- c. Having less than three months of tenure at the institution.

To analyze the program's impact, pretest and posttest measurements were conducted and applied before and after the program's implementation, "La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador."

The evaluation instrument used was the Scales of Psychological Well-Being (SPWB), originally developed by Ryff and adapted into Spanish by Van Dierendonck (2006). A cross-cultural adaptation of the scale was made by Cabrera (2019). The scale was rated according to the ranges and levels specified by its creators: (0.01-1) very low; (1.01-2) low; (2.01-3) moderate to low; (3.01-4) moderate to high; (4.01-5) high; and (5.01-6) very high. Likewise, informed consent was obtained from participants to ensure that both the participant and researcher could proceed with the study.

The program implemented in this research was a population-specific adaptation of the "Florece" program for adult university students, created by Cabrera (2019), who applied the program to a university student population in San Juan de Pasto, Colombia. This program was designed based on a cross-sectional positive psychology approach, including Appreciative Inquiry by Cooperrider, Seligman's flourishing theory, and cognitive-behavioral strategies from Ellis and Beck.

In line with this, the current study adapted the "Florece" program to the population, renaming it "La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador." The adapted program was reviewed by expert judges who endorsed its adaptation and subsequent implementation. Two computer programs were used for the information analysis: Microsoft Excel for tabulation and table generation and SPSS program version 25 for raw numerical data analysis. Likewise, the interpretation of some central tendency measurements, such as mode and mean, was used for the descriptive data, according to the psychological well-being levels represented in the sample results. In this regard, to determine the degree of significance between the pretest and posttest results that belonged to non-parametric statistics, the Wilcoxon test was used, which determines that the variables with significance levels below 0.05 rejected the null hypothesis.

# RESULTS

After applying the SPWB scale: Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1998), adapted by Cabrera (2019) and virtualized from pretest and posttest data, the level obtained was identified for each dimension of psychological well-being of a group of employees from Universidad Mariana who enrolled in the course proposed for the development of the program “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador.” This group was distributed among professors and administrative staff, from which the following results regarding psychological well-being and its dimensions were obtained.

## DIMENSIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

**Table 1.** *Self-Acceptance*

Level	Pretest frequency	Pretest %	Mean of the range	Posttest frequency	Posttest %	Mean of the range	Mean difference
Moderate to low	5	8.6%	2.76	2	3.4%	2.60	0.16
Moderate to high	25	43.1%	3.73	4	6.9%	3.75	0.02
High	27	46.6%	4.51	26	44.8%	4.74	0.23
Very high	1	1.7%	5.60	26	44.8%	5.48	0.12

**Note.** Author's elaboration.

Regarding the self-acceptance dimension, Table 1 shows the results before and after implementing the program “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador,” where it is possible to visualize significant changes in frequencies. At the moderate to high level, a mean of 2.76 was obtained in the pretest,

and in the posttest, a mean of 2.60, indicating a significant difference of 0.16. Similarly, at the very high level, the pretest obtained a mean of 5.60, and in the posttest, a mean of 5.48, marking a considerable difference of 0.12 with respect to the means of the range. These data indicate that the implemented program had a positive impact on this dimension, which, according to Ryff, (as cited in Cabrera, 2019), refers to individuals “having a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledging and accepting multiple aspects of themselves, including qualities and flaws; feeling positive about past life” (p. 14).

**Table 2.** *Purpose in Life*

Level	Pretest frequency	Pretest %	Mean of the range	Posttest frequency	Posttest %	Mean of the range	Mean difference
Moderate to low	5	8.6%	2.80	2	3.4%	2.67	0.13
Moderate to high	29	50.0%	3.86	5	8.6%	3.93	0.07
High	24	41.4%	4.43	21	36.2%	4.78	0.35
Very high				30	51.7%	5.67	5.67

**Note.** Author's elaboration.

Table 2 evidences that the population under study, concerning the dimension of purpose in life, shows greater changes in frequencies at the moderate to high level, where the mean before implementing the program was 3.86 and 3.93 after, marking a difference of 0.07. Likewise, it was possible to identify that the very high level in the pretest obtained a mean of 0.35, data which is significantly modified in the posttest, where a mean of 5.67 was obtained, resulting in a difference of 5.67. These data allow identifying the positive impact of the implemented program on this dimension, which Ryff defines as the fulfillment of goals and objectives that individuals set for themselves to achieve their life purposes and goals based on their present and past experiences (Cabrera, 2019).

**Table 3.** *Autonomy*

Level	Pretest frequency	Pretest %	Mean of the range	Posttest frequency	Posttest %	Mean of the range	Mean difference
Moderate to low	12	20.7%	2.83	3	5.2%	2.79	0.04
Moderate to high	43	74.1%	3.46	32	55.2%	3.71	0.25
High	3	5.2%	4.17	22	37.9%	4.35	0.18
Very high				1	1.7%	5.13	5.13

**Note.** Author's elaboration.

With respect to Table 3, it can be observed that the results obtained from the people who decided to participate in the implementation of the program show a trend at the moderate to high level, with a mean of 3.46 in the pretest and 3.71 in the posttest, showing a significant difference of 0.25. This is followed by the moderate to low level, with a mean of 2.83 in the pretest and 2.79 in the posttest, recognizing a significant difference of 0.04. Finally, the high level showed a mean of 4.17 in the pretest and 4.35 in the posttest, highlighting a significant difference of 0.18. These data allow identifying the positive impact of the implemented program on this dimension, which can be understood as the degree of independence achieved by individuals, enabling them to cope with social pressures that drive them to behave in specific ways, generating self-regulation strategies, as well as self-assessment for personal purposes (Ryff, as cited in Cabrera, 2019).



**Table 4.** *Mastery of the Environment*

Level	Pretest frequency	Pretest %	Mean of the range	Posttest frequency	Posttest %	Mean of the range	Mean difference
Moderate to low	2	3.4%	2.83				2.83
Moderate to high	35	60.3%	3.71	4	6.9%	3.58	0.13
High	21	36.2%	4.42	29	50.0%	4.75	0.33
Very high				25	43.1%	5.51	5.51

**Note.** Author's elaboration.

Table 4 describes the results obtained in the pretest and posttest regarding the dimension of mastery of the environment. Initially, it can be observed that the sample shows a tendency towards a moderate to high level, with a mean of 3.71 in the pretest and 3.58 in the posttest, indicating a significant difference of 0.13. Additionally, the high level obtained a mean of 4.42 in the pretest and 4.75 in the posttest, marking a significant difference of 0.33. Positive changes were also found in the very high level, which initially presented a mean of 0 that increased to 5.51 after the program implementation, indicating a significant difference of 5.51.

This reflects that the implemented program brought positive changes to the participants with respect to this dimension, where individuals with mastery of the environment can control and dominate their environment by using tools and opportunities presented by the context while not neglecting their own needs and values (Ryff, as cited in Cabrera, 2019).



**Table 5.** *Positive Relationships*

Level	Pretest frequency	Pretest %	Mean of the range	Posttest frequency	Posttest %	Mean of the range	Mean difference
Moderate to low	5	8.6%	2.73	1	1.7%	2.50	0.23
Moderate to high	9	15.5%	3.78	8	13.8%	3.67	0.11
High	33	56.9%	4.63	26	44.8%	4.85	0.22
Very high	11	19.0%	5.33	23	39.7%	5.57	0.24

**Note.** Author's elaboration.

Regarding the positive relationship dimension, Table 5 shows that the majority of the population in the pretest evaluation was at a high level with a mean of 4.63, increasing to 4.85 in the posttest, showing a difference of 0.22. Following this, the very high level scored a mean of 5.33 in the pretest and 5.57 in the posttest, indicating a significant difference of 0.24. This indicates that the implemented program brought positive changes to participants in this dimension, where individuals in this research replication experience warm, satisfying, and trustworthy relationships with those around them and are characterized by a strong interest in the well-being of others, stemming from strong empathy, enabling them to understand better human relationships (Ryff, as cited in Cabrera, 2019).

**Table 6.** *Personal Growth*

Level	Pretest frequency	Pretest %	Mean of the range	Posttest frequency	Posttest %	Mean of the range	Mean difference
Moderate to high	53	91.4%	3.75	6	10.3%	3.62	0.13
High	5	8.6%	4.14	20	34.5%	4.76	0.62
Very high				32	55.2%	5.46	5.46

**Note.** Author's elaboration.



Table 6 evidences that the trend of the sample regarding the pretest and posttest is at a moderate to high level in the pretest, with a mean of 3.75 and a mean of 3.62 in the posttest, marking a significant difference of 0.13. Similarly, the high level in the pretest obtained a mean of 4.14 and 4.76 in the posttest, with a significant difference of 0.62. Finally, the very high level results in the pretest presented a mean of 0, significantly changing in the posttest, with a mean of 5.46. This denotes a significant difference of 5.46. These data allow identifying the impact of the implemented program on the personal growth dimension, which is understood as the continuous development of the individual, strengthening their abilities to achieve their goals or objectives in order to fulfill their life project (Ryff, as cited in Cabrera, 2019).

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

**Table 7.** *Levels of Psychological Well-Being*

Level	Pretest frequency	Pretest %	Mean of the range	Posttest frequency	Posttest %	Mean of the range	Mean difference
Moderate to high	42	72.4%	3.80	5	8.6%	3.57	0.23
High	16	27.6%	4.12	37	63.8%	4.68	0.56
Very high				16	27.6%	5.27	5.27

**Note.** Author's elaboration.

Regarding the construct of psychological well-being, Table 7 shows the results before and after implementing the program “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador,” where greater changes in frequencies can be observed. At the moderate to high level, a mean of 3.80 was obtained in the pretest and a mean of 3.57 in the posttest, indicating a significant difference of 0.23. Likewise, at the high level, the pretest obtained a mean of 4.12 and 4.68 in the posttest, marking a significant difference of 0.56 with respect to the means of the range. Finally, at the very high level, the pretest obtained a mean of 0, which changed to a mean of 5.27 in the posttest, marking a significant difference of 5.27. These data allow recognizing that the implemented program had a positive impact on the psychological well-being of the participants in this study, which can be interpreted as the participants gen-

erating a construction of positive aspects that allow them to obtain satisfaction and a sense of self-actualization at a personal level (Peterson and Seligman, as cited in Barahona et al., 2013).

## ADAPTATION OF THE FLORECE PROGRAM

For this research, it was necessary to make a contextual adaptation of the program to be implemented, which is based on the literature review of the “Florece” program for adult university students, created by Cabrera (2019), who applied her program to a university student population in the city of San Juan de Pasto, Colombia. This program had a statistical significance of (051) in the results of psychological well-being. The program was designed under a cross-sectional approach of positive psychology, which is Coperrider’s appreciative inquiry of the hand of Seligman’s theory of flourishing and some cognitive behavioral strategies such as those of Ellis and Beck.

Consistent with this, for the present research replication, a population adaptation of the “Florece” program was made entitled “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador.” This program was carried out as a 16-week virtual course, where participants worked on six modules of each studied dimension. Each module lasted one week in this research replication, for a total of six weeks. The remaining two weeks were divided into the implementation to perform the course introduction, feedback, and closing. Finally, eight chapters within the primer were obtained, eight videos authored by the researchers, seven guided destinations, and six self-records, condensed into a construction of a graphical representation of well-being (*eudografía* in Spanish). In contrast to the “Florece” program, which lasted 16 weeks with participants working on six virtual modules for each dimension studied, each module lasted two weeks for a total of 12 weeks. The remaining four weeks were divided into the course initiation, induction, and closing. Finally, six book chapters, six videos (website), six audios (website), six guided destinations, and six self-records were obtained.

With regard to the components of the primer, the modules were developed as follows:

Initially, the development of the first and second weeks was carried out using resources similar to those implemented by Cabrera (2019) in her “Florece” program, including audio, literature review, videos, and an additional activity to create a graphical representation of psychological well-being – *eudagrafía* finally. The difference with this research replication lies in the methodology during the program’s implementation since the “Florece” program had set times for the execution of each proposed activity, while in “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador,” participants, being part of an organizational context, had flexible hours to complete the activities at times that fit their schedules without interfering with their daily tasks. This allowed for greater willingness and motivation in completing the activities. Herrero (2015) notes that having flexible schedules for performing activities gives individuals autonomy and motivation to complete them, thus achieving a balance between personal and work life. Another important aspect to mention is that the approach to each module’s topic was conveyed through videos, where the essence of a medieval journey was the basis for their creation. Authors such as Huang and Aaker (2019) mention that using metaphors in the learning process makes what has been learned to be acquired with greater commitment and motivation, leading to longer retention due to the internalization achieved during the activity execution process.

Similarly, tutorials and activities similar to those in the “Florece” program were considered in the general development of the proposed activities. However, in “La senda de la mente,” tutorials and accompaniment on the phone, through the virtual platform, with reflective forums, and by email allowed the participants under study to have more information, interest, and consistency in the performance of the activities.

## STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROGRAM

For the verification of the hypotheses, the asymptotic significance of psychological well-being and each of the dimensions, according to the pretest and posttest, is presented below. Since the results *obtained are* not normal, they are subject to the non-parametric statistics as follows:

**Table 8.** *Wilcoxon Test for Psychological Well-Being and Its Dimensions*

Variable	Asymptotic significance (bilateral test)
Psychological Well-Being	0.001
Self-Acceptance	0.002
Purpose in Life	0.001
Autonomy	0.001
Mastery of the Environment	0.007
Positive Relationships	0.003
Personal Growth	0.007

**Note.** Author's elaboration.

Once the Wilcoxon test was applied to compare the differences between the means of the pretest and posttest ranges on the dimensions of the psychological well-being construct, Table 8 shows that all present a significance value below 0.05. Therefore, the working hypothesis can be confirmed: there is an influence of the program “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador” on a group of employees from the Universidad Mariana, and the null hypothesis can be rejected: there is no influence of the program “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador” on a group of employees from the Universidad Mariana, which means that the differences that present the values of the means of the ranges of each dimension are significant, indicating that the program “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador” generated an impact on the participants increasing their well-being levels.

## DISCUSSION

In this regard, it is identified that in the pretest psychological well-being results obtained in this research replication, 72.45% of the evaluated population were classified in a moderate-high level, which is opposite to the results found by Carrillo and Coronel (2017), where 75% of the evaluated elderly population were initially in a low level. This difference could be due to the sociodemographic variable (age) of the investigated population by Carrillo and Coronel, which possibly influenced these re-

sults, as this population was between 60 and 85 years old, contrary to the population evaluated in the present study, who were between 30 and 50 years old. The results suggest that younger age is associated with higher psychological well-being, which aligns with what was mentioned by Mayordomo et al., (2016), who argue that as individuals experience evolutionary changes, their perception of psychological well-being diminishes. These changes could be due to new experiences that individuals must assimilate and adapt to over the years. Other authors, such as Romero et al., (2007), mention that various sociodemographic factors, including age, can influence individuals' decisions, goals, and purposes during their life cycle, contributing to psychological well-being.

Now, regarding the psychological well-being dimensions evaluated in this research, it was found that the self-acceptance dimension in the pretest results of the evaluated population was at a high level, with a mean in the range of 4.51. These results are similar to those of Cabrera (2019) and López et al., (2015), whose initial results were at a high level with a mean in the range of 4.15 and 4.10, respectively. Based on these data, it is found that the degree of self-acceptance of the participants under study is probably due to their context. Resines (as cited in Iragorri and Romberg, 2012) mentions that self-conception is directly learned from the context, based on the assessment constructed from behavior and how others' opinions are perceived regarding oneself. Although they have different roles, the study participants are part of an academic context where they are in continuous learning, possibly having some tools that allow them to recognize and accept their abilities and weaknesses and to set and achieve proposed goals and objectives.

In turn, the dimension of purpose in life, in the pretest results, shows that most participants were at moderate to high levels, with a mean in the range of 3.86. In contrast, Cabrera's (2019) study showed that the experimental group initially had a high level of purpose in life, with a mean of the range of 4.47. Similarly, in the study by López et al., (2015), which implemented a psychological well-being program and identified its relation to academic performance, their pretest results indicated that students initially were at a high level with a mean in the range of 4.10. According to this information, it can be inferred that these results are due to participants being at a stage in their lives where they are continuously training and fulfilling objectives and goals. Some authors suggest that "meaning is to belong and be at the service of something considered more important than the self, such as a doctor's mission to save a life, an artist's mission to create beauty, or a psychologist's mission to promote mental health" (Seligman, 2011, p. 97). This applies to the study populations of the three re-

search studies, where individuals aim to complete a professional career, meet job demands, etc., which involves setting and achieving goals that strengthen both their knowledge and personal growth, stability, and competitiveness.

Similarly, in the autonomy dimension, participants in this study were initially categorized at a moderate to a high level with a mean in the range of 3.46, similar to Cabrera's (2019) results in her research, where the experimental group was at a high level of autonomy with a mean of the range of 4.05 before the "Florece" program implementation. This level may be due to both research being carried out within the same context, Higher Education Institution (IES in Spanish), which promotes autonomy among its members as part of its aesthetic and affective principles. Promoting autonomy involves providing the necessary time and space to find responses and suggested solutions to solve environmental problems.

In line with the above, the study by Niño and Peña (2019) on working and studying individuals found that most participants had a medium level of autonomy, possibly influenced by their context and the people around them. In comparison, the present study's participants, also from a working context, showed a moderate to high level of autonomy, similar to Niño and Peña's findings.

For these participants in an organizational context, the need to act to benefit psychological well-being is performed to acquire tools for greater independence throughout their life cycle development. As mentioned by Ryff (as cited in Cabrera, 2019), this construct encompasses the degree of independence an individual acquires throughout their life cycle development; it is basically how they resist different social pressures they face daily to think and act differently. An autonomous person can self-evaluate and be aware of their desires and actions, unlike someone with low autonomy who remains alert to others' actions and intentions.

Advancing on the subject regarding the dimension of mastery the environment, the participants in the present research study initially exhibited a moderate to high level with a mean in the range of 3.71. The results obtained in the present study are different from those reflected by Cabrera (2019), who initially obtained a high level with a mean in the range of 4.32 in its population in this dimension. These results differ from those postulated by González-Villalobos and Marrero (2017), who mention that individuals with an active routine at the work and study level will always have greater mastery of the environment, resulting in increased happiness and life satisfaction. Likewise, the pretest results contradict those mentioned by Mayordomo et al., (2016),

who found that older individuals achieve greater mastery of the environment than those transitioning from youth to adulthood. This may be attributed to the sociodemographic characteristics (such as current performance or age) of the population in the present research replication, as the participants are employees aged between 30 to 50 years. In contrast, Cabrera's (2019) study participants are students aged 19 to 30 years.

Continuing with the discussion, the pretest results showed that the majority of individuals in the present research were initially at a high level, with a mean in the range of 4.63 in the positive relationship dimension. These results differ from those Cabrera (2019) reported in her research, where university students scored a moderate to high level with a mean in the range of 3.87 before the program's implementation. The differences in these results may be because this study's population is within a work context where it is easy for them to develop potential and skills aimed at healthy work environments. As Palma-Candia et al., (2016) mention, individuals who actively participate in their surrounding context can have good relationships and give meaning and control to their lives, generating belonging, motivators, and direction in their activities within a context.

Finally, the population evaluated in the present study was at a moderate to high level in the pretest, with a mean in the range of 3.75 in the personal growth dimension. In comparison, Cabrera's (2019) research indicated that the pretest results showed that participants were initially at a high level with a mean in the range of 4.89. The results of this research are probably attributed to the employees' conception of their work environment, which does not fully meet some of their personal expectations in relation to job expectations, as referred to by Montoya et al., (2008) in their research, who identified that the motivation, perception, and actions taken by the organization in favor of the well-being of employees influence their professional and personal growth.

Continuing with the previously established order, the third specific objective was addressed. It was found that the studied population showed changes in their frequencies and means regarding psychological well-being. The frequency obtained in the pretest was at a moderate-high level, with a mean in the range of 3.80, reaching two dominant frequencies in the posttest, one at high levels, with a mean in the range of 4.68, and another at a very high level with a mean in the range of 5.27. These results are similar to those reported by Cabrera (2019) in her research, where the population achieved a high level with a mean in the range of 4.29 before the program's implementation, data that after the implementation remained at the same level but increased to a mean of 4.56. This suggests that the program implemented in the

present research replication led to more significant changes in its population, as evidenced by the posttest evaluation reaching a very high level, in contrast to Cabrera's (2019) program, possibly due to differences in the life cycles of the populations studied. Therefore, it can be concluded that adults learn more subjectively, with motivation playing a crucial role, turning what is learned into personal improvement rather than an academic achievement goal (Cuenca, 2011). As some authors mentioned, "the perception of an internal locus of causality regarding an activity will tend to enhance intrinsic motivation for that activity" (Ryan; Cornell; and Ceci, as cited in Cuenca, 2011, p. 241).

At this point in the present research replication, it is possible to identify that personal growth is the dimension that had the most significant changes, going from a moderate-high level with a mean in the range of 3.75 in the pretest to a very high level with a mean in the range of 5.46 in the posttest. This indicates that the participants have greater tools to achieve their goals and fulfill a life project. According to authors such as Aron and Milicic (as cited in Jiménez, 2015), personal growth is defined as the continuous development of capacities, skills, knowledge, and potentials throughout the life cycle, enabling individuals to set and achieve their proposed projects or goals. These changes are similar to those found in Cabrera's (2019) research, where after implementing the "Florece" program, the dimension that showed the most significant changes was also personal growth. In the pretest, it obtained a high level with a mean in the range of 4.89, increasing to a very high level of 5.11. The data referenced from both studies may be due to the fact that the personal growth dimension is a determinant of increased psychological well-being. Authors such as Coral et al., (2019) mention that individuals with a perception of personal growth experience continuous development; they see themselves growing and expanding, are open to new experiences, have a sense of realizing their potential, and see improvement in themselves and their behavior over time.

Considering the above, it can be said that the results may be attributed to the link between personal growth and character strengths in the implemented activities. These activities possibly enabled participants to discover their virtues and focus them on building projects aimed at improving their lives in the different environments they developed. Barrantes-Brais and Ureña-Bonilla (2015) mention that working on strengths, capacities, and weaknesses, as well as on ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, among other aspects, will help strengthen and improve performance, allowing individuals to achieve optimal development in any context they find themselves in, and therefore greater personal growth.



In this regard, career counseling is another aspect that probably influenced the results obtained regarding this dimension. Participants in the present research replication may have previous professional training that may meet their personal expectations. In Jiménez's (2015) study, a population of teachers experience an increase in the personal growth dimension after receiving career counseling. The findings in this research are supported by the theory of Arón and Milicic (as cited in Jiménez, 2015), who mention that in order to achieve optimal personal growth, individuals must have career guidance before choosing a professional career, thus ensuring the quality of work and employees. This would be understood as a prevention action for mental health.

To keep advancing in the subject, the results obtained after the program's implementation showed that mastery of the environment was another dimension with positive changes. This changed from a moderate to a high level with a mean in the range of 3.71 to a distribution of the highest frequencies in the high levels with a mean in the range of 4.75 and very high with a mean in the range of 5.51. This indicates that most participants of this research replication may have a sense of mastery and competence in managing their environment. They control a complex set of external activities, make effective use of surrounding opportunities, and are able to choose or create contexts appropriate to personal needs and values after the program's implementation. Muratori et al., (2015) mention that individuals capable of achieving mastery of the environment can manage and control a complex set of external activities, making appropriate use of available resources in certain circumstances, allowing them to build new contexts.

The previously mentioned results moderately relate to those obtained by Cabrera (2019), where university students achieved a high level with a mean in the range of 4.32 in the pretest and a high level with a mean in the range of 4.57 in the posttest. Although the levels remained the same, there was a change. Compared to the present research results, it can be inferred that the implementation of a behavioral assessment in activities corresponding to this dimension allowed participants not only to analyze and build their beliefs, as Cabrera's program did in 2019, but also to complement these activities with the simulation and practice of a particular situation. This allowed participants to prepare to face similar situations in their daily lives. This is referred to by Caballo (as cited in Vera-Villarroel et al., 2015), who states that behavioral assessment enables a person to anticipate behaviors in their daily life situations.

On the other hand, it was found that the pretest and posttest results regarding the dimension of purpose in life also showed changes, going from a moderate to a high level with a mean in the range of 3.86 to a higher frequency in the high level with a mean in the range of 4.78 and very high with a mean in the range of 5.67 in the posttest. In contrast, Cabrera's (2019) study found that this dimension maintained its high level, but the mean varied from 4.47 to 4.81. These results suggest that most participants in the present study increased their vision of goals and possibly generated a sense of direction after the program's implementation, giving value to past and present experiences. Cabrera (2019) mentions that self-determination, goal achievement, life purpose, potential actualization, existential challenges, and self-actualization are essential aspects for the individual's well-being.

Based on the above, it can be said that the results of the present study, compared to those of Cabrera, are likely due to the life cycle experienced by the participants. The research subjects of Cabrera's 2019 study, being students, are in a training process that will later serve as the basis for setting goals throughout their lives. In contrast, the majority of the population in the present research replication is characterized as part of an organization performing functions related to their prior professional training, which allows this population to fulfill and strengthen their previously set goals. As Avellar de Aquino et al., (2017, p. 377) mention, "If, on the one hand, the young person is about to build their life project, the young adult is stabilizing professionally and forming a family." Similarly, from the perspective of logotherapy, these authors argue that having meaning in life is a necessary condition that occurs in life cycles, even in old age, so it can be assumed that the ontological perception of time plays a relevant role in this evaluation.

Likewise, it was found that the self-acceptance dimension left most of the investigated population in the posttest at high levels, with a mean in the range of 4.74 and very high levels, with a mean in the range of 5.48. These results varied given that in the initial pretest evaluation of this dimension, its highest frequency was found only at the high level, with a mean in the range of 4.51. These results indicate that after the program's implementation, most participants feel more satisfied with themselves, accepting the positive and negative aspects of who they are, as they feel secure and put themselves before people and the context that surrounds them (Cabrera, 2019). Considering the obtained data, Meléndez's (2011) study is brought up, where he evaluated a population of employees to verify whether there is a relationship between self-esteem and its dimensions with job performance. His results found that the dimension of self-acceptance is related to individuals' performance within their work context, meaning that as

self-acceptance increases, job performance also increases. This study is important to reference in the present research replication since it is possible that the participants who increased their levels of self-acceptance after the program's implementation may currently perform better within their organizational context.

That said, it is important to mention authors such as Castro and Resines (as cited in Iragorri and Romberg, 2012), who state that individuals with high self-esteem, self-image, and self-concept in the work environment are often characterized by overcoming problems and personal difficulties. They also have the ability to build character and strengthen their personality, creativity, and innovation necessary for different activities, assuming responsibilities with commitment and optimism. Moreover, these authors mention that individuals with these characteristics find it easier to relate to different colleagues in the workplace, demonstrating acceptance and respect for others considering individual differences. Failure to meet this can lead to low self-esteem in the employee, affecting their performance in all aspects of their life.

Advancing on the topic, the autonomy dimension is brought up. It initially obtained a moderate to high level with a mean in the range of 3.46. After the program's application, the highest frequencies were distributed in the moderate to high levels with a mean in the range of 3.71 and high with a mean in the range of 4.35. These results indicate that the participants in this research replication may have better skills to self-evaluate and develop in their work environment, generating a degree of independence and resilience when facing challenging situations or contexts. Ryff (as cited in Cabrera, 2019) refers to this. The previously mentioned results tend to increase, as seen in Cabrera's (2019) study, where it is identified that although the pretest and posttest levels were *high*, the mean increased from 4.05 to 4.24 after the program's implementation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the study participants, with the program's application, are more capable of being autonomous within their work context and potentially developing competencies that benefit organizational development. This is not only at a general or organizational level but also at a personal level since they are able to fulfill organizational purposes and contribute to achieving their personal goals. Faya et al., (2018) refer to it as follows:

“Autonomy is a construct that could be improved by increasing the employee's ability to influence their work context, for example, by distributing their time, method, speed, and work pace, scheduling their activities at their convenience. Aspects like these enhance their organizational performance and the company's productivity and prevent stress and absenteeism” (p. 100).

Continuing with the discussion of the third specific objective, the positive relationship dimension is discussed. It showed that the study participants initially were at a high level with a mean in the range of 4.63, with their highest frequencies in the posttest at the high level with a mean in the range of 4.85 and very high 5.57. This indicates that some participants currently have warmer interpersonal relationships with people around them, and they likely have the ability to generate more empathy and communication with people they know or want to start relationships based on trust and loyalty. In comparison with the data from Cabrera's (2019) study, it was identified that the population changed from a moderate to a high level with a mean in the range of 3.87 to a high level with a mean in the range of 4.16 after the program's implementation.

The results obtained may be attributed to the characteristics of the mentioned populations. In Cabrera's 2019 study, most participants are still in a developmental process within their life cycle, making it more challenging for them to strengthen good relationships compared to the population in this research replication. Lacunza and Contini (2016) mention that individuals in developmental stages within their life cycle, especially adolescents, find it difficult to generate safe and stable interpersonal connections, as they are in a process where it is more of a challenge and competition among peers rather than a process of cooperation and partnerships. In contrast, participants in the present study,

being part of an organizational context, likely have interpersonal relationships linked to collaboration and trust, resulting in more positive experiences. As Tan and Lin (as cited in Gallardo et al., 2010) refer, those capable of achieving this will be more comfortable within their work context, allowing them to experience positive emotions and affinity in their interactions with others.

Finally, to address the general objective of this study, we consider the points mentioned during this discussion and the significance values obtained from the Wilcoxon **statistical** test, which provide evidence of the effectiveness of the program, "La senda de la mente, florece hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador," on a group of employees at Universidad Mariana. The values corresponding to each dimension of psychological well-being showed a significance of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ). These results exceed those presented by Cabrera (2019) in her study, as she obtained significance values above the threshold established **by the** Wilcoxon test to determine the impact of a variable. This was mainly observed in the dimensions of self-acceptance ( $p > 0.200$ ), autonomy ( $p > 0.262$ ), and mastery of the environment ( $p > 0.414$ ). This difference may be attributed to the implementation of recommendations from Cabrera's (2019) study guide and the accompaniment strategies used in the present study, such as

initial training on the platform and the development of each module of the course, as well as the support provided through the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This ensured that each participant knew how to access the information and complete proposed activities, as providing support in task development tends to generate autonomy, the development of habits, study routines, and greater interest and motivation, consistent with the Montessori approach.

Similarly, it is identified that the statistical significance result of the psychological well-being construct obtained in the population after implementing the program was less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.001$ ), which allows rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the working hypothesis. This recognizes the implemented program's positive and significant influence on the participants' psychological well-being in this research replication. These results were more favorable than those obtained by Cabrera (2019) in her study since these in the *Wilcoxon* test for psychological well-being were

higher than 0.05 ( $p > 0.051$ ), indicating that the program implemented in the present study had a greater influence on the psychological well-being of the study population. This may be attributed to the cross-cultural adaptation of the "Florece" program guide aimed at students to the program "La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador," focusing on the working population. The function of this program is understood as a factor that promotes psychological well-being since this probably became a motivational aspect for this population that allowed them to acquire tools and resources that positively influenced their level of psychological well-being. Cabrera (2019) states that implementing programs aimed at improving individuals' well-being contributes to the promotion and prevention of physical and mental health.

Finally, it is important to mention the research by López et al., (2015), which focused on implementing a psychological well-being program in high school students. They obtained a significant influence of less than 0.05 in the *Wilcoxon test* ( $p < 0.45$ ), supporting the results obtained in the present study and highlighting the positive impact on the well-being of the study population.

This event can be attributed to the constant support provided to participants in both studies and the opportunity for each person to adjust the program's development to their availability. This allowed participants to carry out activities with a greater degree of autonomy and intrinsic motivation in order to create a balance between two spheres: work or academic and personal (Herrero, 2015).

# CONCLUSIONS

The study identified that the target population had a moderate level of well-being. These results suggest that while employees did not exhibit low levels of well-being, there is a need to increase this construct.

A cross-cultural adaptation of the base program “Florece” was carried out, which was entitled “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador.”

Upon completing the implementation of the program discussed in this study, participants significantly increased their level of psychological well-being, according to the Wilcoxon statistic ( $p < 0.001$ ) between the pretest and posttest results. This allowed the researchers to initially reject the null hypothesis and accept the working hypothesis of this research, indicating that the program “La senda de la mente: florece, hacia el bienestar psicológico del trabajador” did influence the psychological well-being of the employees of the Universidad Mariana.

The implemented program had a more significant influence on the dimensions of personal growth ( $p < 0.07$ ), mastery of the environment ( $p < 0.07$ ), and purpose in life ( $p < 0.01$ ), rising to high and very high levels compared to the initial results. Although their changes were not as significant, it was noted that the dimensions of autonomy, self-acceptance, and positive relationships also experienced changes. This suggests that, despite being part of an organizational context, participants can still engage in actions that foster independence.

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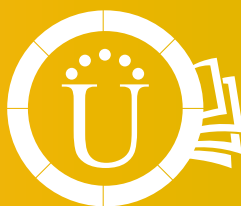
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