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Cross-cultural Differences in Children's Conceptualizations of Happiness at School

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Abstract

Children's happiness at school has been mainly investigated from a quantitative perspective, largely overlooking what children understand by happiness and whether their conceptualizations are shaped by culture. Hence, in the present study, using a quantification of qualitative data, we investigated whether English (n = 421, M = 10.63 years, 223 girls) and Spanish (n = 223, M = 11.13 years, 112 girls) children reported different conceptualizations of happiness at school. Results showed that English children defined happiness at school as experiencing autonomy, non-violence, and having a positive relationship with teachers. On the other hand, Spanish children mentioned more harmony and having leisure time, as compared to English children. Finally, compared to boys, girls mentioned more in their definitions emotional support, having a positive relationship with teachers, and experiencing competence. The obtained findings are discussed in light of previous well-being literature taking into account the role of culture and the school context in both countries.

Keywords: children; happiness; conceptualizations; cross-cultural differences; gender differences.

Cross-cultural Differences in Children's Conceptualizations of Happiness at School

Most research on happiness has relied on western conceptualizations (Oishi, Graham, Kesebir, & Costa, 2013), distinguishing between hedonic (i.e., experience of positive affect, decreased negative affect, and high life satisfaction; (Diener, 1984; Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002) and eudaimonic approaches (i.e., psychological well-being comprising meaning, personal growth, and self-actualization; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989). However, these scientific definitions of happiness may not necessarily correspond to people's lay theories (Joshanloo, 2014; Keyes, 2006; Sen, 1992). In fact, many researchers have argued the need to use qualitative methods to better understand what people mean by happiness given that quantitative measures may not necessarily capture this (e.g., Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011) or may assume adult-centric perspectives in the case of children and adolescents (e.g., Ben-Arieh, 2010; Casas, Bello, González, & Aligué, 2013). Additionally, researchers have claimed the need to conduct domain-specific studies (e.g., family, school; van de Wetering, van Exel, & Brouwer, 2010) and consider the role of culture (e.g., Lu & Gilmour, 2004) as this can shape people's conceptualizations of happiness. Given the importance that lay conceptualisations of happiness at school can have for academic achievement (López-Pérez & Fernández-Castilla, 2018) and satisfaction of students' psychological needs (López-Pérez & Zuffianò, 2020), in the current study, we evaluated whether cross-cultural differences were observed in children's conceptualisations of happiness at school in English and Spanish children.

Conceptualizations of Happiness

People's conceptualizations of happiness are highly influenced by culture (Lu, 2001), since culture promotes a shared set of values, beliefs, behaviours, and norms (Matsumoto, 2000). Previous research looking at the link between culture and happiness

has focused on the continuum collectivism-individualism (e.g., Diener & Diener, 1995). Individualism is typically associated with the western view of independent self, in which the individual gives priority to the fulfillment of personal goals; on the other hand, collectivism is linked with eastern societies in which the self is understood as interdependent, as the person gives priority to the attainment of group goals (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). Given the differences between individualism and collectivism, researchers theorized that given that collectivism is associated with external sense of control (Triandis, 1995), it might be more likely for those societies to develop luck-based conceptualizations of happiness compared to individualistic societies (Oishi, Graham, Kesebir, Costa Galinha, 2013). Furthermore, collectivistic societies were expected to mention family more in their conceptualisations, given that tight family links are characteristic of those societies (Chiasson, Dubé, & Blondin, 1996). In order to test whether some of these differences emerged, one of the first studies conducted compared adult participants from El Salvador (collectivist) to participants from Canada and United States (US) (individualists). Results showed that although all groups mentioned family, participants from Canada and the US referred more to enjoyment and power whereas participants from El Salvador mentioned more religious values (Chiasson et al, 1996). In another study, American undergraduates (individualist) mentioned more achievement, self-autonomy, and positive evaluations of the self, whereas Chinese undergraduates (collectivist) defined happiness as harmony, self-cultivation, and positive evaluations of the others (Lu & Gilmour, 2004). Similar differences were observed when comparing again other cultures, such that German university students (individualistic) described happiness in terms of autonomy and pleasure, whereas black South African university students (collectivistic) emphasised social harmony and family relationships.

Delle Fave et al. (2011) conducted one of the first studies with large and more representative sample sizes from Australia, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and South Africa showing that regardless of possible differences, harmony was one of the most mentioned categories. In a subsequent study, cross-cultural differences were identified depending on the values endorsed in each country (Argentina, Brazil, Croatia, Hungary, India, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, and United States). In detail, countries which support traditional values defined happiness in psychological terms (e.g., harmony, positive feelings, autonomy), whereas countries which endorse self-expression values defined happiness as related to relationships and work issues.

General Happiness Conceptualizations in Children

Overall, previous research with adults showed clear cross-cultural differences in the way happiness was defined with some of the conceptualisations differing between individualist and collectivist societies. Despite this, research looking at children's conceptualizations has been considerably sparser and has not considered the role that culture could have in their conceptualisations. Giacomoni, Souza, and Houtz (2014) investigated Brazilian children's (5 to 12 years of age) conceptualizations of happiness. In detail, whereas younger children defined happiness as leisure, older children emphasised positive feelings, no violence, and friends. Gender differences were also identified such that girls mentioned more positive feelings, whereas boys highlighted leisure in their definitions. Another study looking at Spanish children (9-11 year-olds) and adolescents (12 to 16-year-olds) found that children defined happiness in terms of positive feelings, as compared to adolescents who mentioned more achievement (López-Pérez, Sanchez, & Gummerum, 2016). Although previous research with adults (young vs. elderly) confirmed that happiness conceptualizations differed with age

(Mogilner, Kamvar, & Aaker, 2011), the study conducted with children and adolescents confirmed this may be also true for early developmental stages, highlighting the importance of looking at children's views on happiness. Another study conducted by Fattore, Mason, and Watson (2016) with Australian 8- to 15-year-olds identified the themes of self and identity, agency and autonomy and safety and security. Within those themes, close relationships with family and friends and duty of care and compassion were significantly highlighted. Although this study was exploratory in nature and without any aim to explore gender or age differences, followed a three-stage approach from data collection, to checking if the themes identified were correct, to exploring in depth one of the themes of significance for each participant. Overall, these studies showed that earlier developmental groups already hold lay theories about happiness.

Happiness at School and Conceptualizations in the School Domain

Children's happiness at school has been extensively investigated given that schools are one of the most influential contexts for children's development (e.g., Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). Most of the studies conducted with quantitative questionnaires have explored the potential link between happiness and academic achievement finding a cross-lagged relationship between both constructs (e.g., Quinn & Duckworth, 2007; Stiglbauer, Gnambs, Gamsjäger, & Batinic, 2013). This interest in children's happiness was also reflected in policy-led research. For example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, OECD, 2015, 2018) has used students' life satisfaction as a proxy to infer students' wellbeing at school. This report has shown that on average students' life satisfaction has declined between 0.3 to 1 point between 2015 and 2018. Similarly, the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HSBC) survey conducted by the Wold Health Organisation (2017/2018) showed that compared with 2014, adolescents reported a decline in school satisfaction. Furthermore,

children compared to adolescents reported liking school more and experiencing less school pressure. This decline pattern was also captured by UNICEF's Report Card Series (2007, 2013, 2020). Importantly, Report Cards 11 (2013) and 7 (2007) already pointed the need to include children in the evaluation of happiness as they detected important discrepancies between questionnaire's scores and children's own reports.

The need highlighted by organisations such as UNICEF has led to some sparse research looking at what children and adolescents understand by being happy at school. One study that investigated Spanish children's and adolescents' conceptualizations of happiness at school showed that whereas children (9-10-year-olds) defined happiness as being with friends, adolescents (15-16-year-olds) conceptualized happiness at school as helping. Furthermore, some of adolescents' conceptualizations of happiness at school (e.g., learning) were linked to higher self-reported happiness and academic achievement (López-Pérez & Fernández-Castilla, 2018). Another study with English children (9-11-year-olds) and adolescents (12-14-year-olds) showed that adolescents mentioned more than children positive feelings, harmony, teachers, and emotional support. Furthermore, girls mentioned more emotional support than boys in their conceptualizations (López-Pérez & Zuffianò, 2020).

Happiness at School: The context of England and Spain

International policy-led studies have highlighted significant differences in students' well-being between both countries. The PISA reports (OECD, 2015, 2018) found that almost a quarter of English children were not satisfied with their life, as compared to 11% of Spanish children. This dissatisfaction increased with age in both countries (PISA report, OECD, 2018). UNICEF's Reports 11 (2013) and 16 (2020) showed that Spanish children reported higher levels of mental well-being than English children. Report 7 (UNICEF, 2007) highlighted an important discrepancy between self-

reports and subjective indicators (i.e., considering children's points of view through open-ended responses) as the score of both countries improved when considering the latter; especially for Spain placing it in the third place for well-being.

Data collected in both countries separately also suggests higher school satisfaction in Spain (Casas, Bello,González, & Aligué, 2013) as compared to England (The Good Childhood Report by The Children's Society 2020). In fact, the satisfaction with school has significantly decreased in England as compared to the previous year (The Good Childhood Report by The Children's Society, 2020). This report suggest that one of the factors linked to such drop is the increased experience of failure experienced at school by English students as compared to students from other countries, such as Spain.

When aiming to understand the differences in well-being at school between the two countries, we need to look at two contextual variables. First, in terms of culture, England has been described as a more individualistic country compared to Spain, which is considered relatively collectivist as compared to other European countries (Goodwin & Plaza, 2000; Gouveia, Clemente, & Espinosa, 2003; Minkov et al., 2017). Second, in terms of the education system, England places more emphasis on performance as the system relies heavily on assessments, which can also have an impact on schools' rankings on the league tables (OECD, 2014). Such school rankings do not exist in the Spanish education system (Gil, 2005). On the other hand, England has a more structured pastoral care with a network of people in charge of it, whereas in Spain this is assumed by a single tutor with the only specialized professional being a counselor who can work with a group of schools (García-Moya, Moreno, & Brooks, 2019). These two contextual variables may not work independently, as cultural dimensions can indeed play a big role in the educational system (e.g., Yamauchi, 1998).

For example, individualist cultures may tend to promote students' individual achievement, whereas collectivist cultures may promote students' cooperation and collaboration (e.g., Niehoff, Turnley, Yen, & Sheu, 2010). On the other hand, expressions of negative emotions or individual opinions might not be so reinforced in collectivist classrooms (Yamauchi, 1998). Hence, it is important to consider the role that culture can play when looking at possible differences within the school setting and the factors associated with it.

The Present Research

Previous research on school well-being has shown important differences in the quantitative scores of English and Spanish children (PISA report, OECD, 2018; UNICEF's Reports, 2013). This difference has also been captured with interviews (UNICEF's Reports, 2020). However, no previous research (to the best of our knowledge) has looked at the potential differences in children's understanding of happiness at school comparing these two countries. We argue looking at conceptualizations is important as (1) it places children at the centre of the evaluation process (Ben-Arieh, 2010; Casas et al., 2013); (2) it provides information that cannot be captured through questionnaires (Delle Fave et al., 2011; UNICEF's Report Card 11, 2013); (3) and finally, it can shed light into how children strive for happiness in that specific context, given the close link between lay theories/conceptualizations and behaviours (Diener, 2009; Furnham & Cheng, 2000).

Given the possible differences between the two countries in their levels of individualism and based on previous findings, we evaluated if English children may mention more conceptualizations linked to autonomy and positive feelings; on the other hand, we also tested if Spanish children may mention more conceptualizations linked to social relationships, as these were highlighted by individualistic and collectivistic

cultures with adults in previous research, respectively (e.g., Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Pflug, 2009). Finally, given that evidence on gender differences in children's conceptualizations is mixed (Giacomoni et al., 2014; López-Pérez et al., 2016), we explored whether these differences emerged in the study.

Method

Participants

Six-hundred and forty-four children took part in this study: 421 (223 girls, *M* = 10.63 years, *SD* = 1.15, age range 9-12 years; 97% Caucasian, 2% Asian, 1% Black) were British and 223 (112 females, *M* = 11.13 years, *SD* = .84, age range 9-12 years; 90% Caucasian, 7% Latin American, 3% Asian) were Spanish. Participants were recruited at different primary schools in a large city in England and a large city in Spain.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from the school principals and teachers. Only children who assented and obtained their parents' consent were included in the study. Testing was conducted at the schools. Children in both countries were asked to indicate their date of birth and their gender, as well as a personal code in case their parents or children themselves wanted to withdraw from the study at any time. After that, they were told that the aim of the study was to know their opinion about being happy at school. To that aim, they were asked to define what it means to be happy in the school in their own words. Writing about what it means happiness has been successfully used before to investigate children's beliefs about general happiness (e.g., Giacomoni et al., 2014; López-Pérez et al., 2016) and happiness at school (López-Pérez & Fernández-Castilla, 2018). There was no maximum word limit and children had ten minutes to complete this in line with previous studies, and also to ensure this could be done even by children who presented learning difficulties (e.g., dyslexia), as the average time it takes children to

complete the task is 5 minutes approximately. If children were unmotivated to write, they were prompted by the researcher to think what happiness meant for them and encourage them. This was only applicable in few cases.

Coding of Happiness Conceptualizations

Coding of the qualitative responses of children's conceptualizations of happiness at school was conducted by four researchers for each sample. The research team is formed by researchers from both countries who can speak both English and Spanish, to ensure that identified themes within the same category are comparable in both countries. Responses were coded using QDA-Miner Lite software (Provalis Research, https://provalisresearch.com/products/qualitative-data-analysis-software/freeware/) using an iterative process in which themes were generated and then refined based on multiple revisions of transcripts. The first step consisted in open coding wherein two investigators proposed an initial set of possible themes based on their independent review of 40 responses. In the second step, another two investigators reviewed the initial themes to test their fit with the data and to decide whether additional themes were needed. A preliminary coding manual (see Appendix A) was then created with definitions and examples in both samples. To ensure that the conceptualizations could be comparable researchers agreed on using the same labels to describe similar phenomenon in both samples. After that, two investigators (one of each previous coding wave, from each country) coded the 421 responses in the English sample and 223 responses in the Spanish sample based on the coding manual. As part of their training, coders coded twenty randomly selected answers and then met to discuss to reach consensus. Inter-rater agreement for the different categories identified was above 80%, ranging from 75% to 95%, with Kappas above .82. Children's responses could fall in more than one category, mentioning therefore multiple conceptualizations. When a

response could potentially fall in two categories, the response was coded according to the main theme. For example, the conceptualization as "Happiness means to receive support from friends", the main theme is receiving emotional support, since the categories friends refers to have positive relationships with peers. Hence, the main conceptualization would be coded as emotional support rather than using two coding categories.

Data Analysis Plan

Children's coded conceptualizations were quantified by being assigned a binary value. If a conceptualization was mentioned it received a value of 1 and if it was not mentioned it received a value of 0. To investigate whether participants showed differences in their frequencies of opting for particular content categories of happiness at school depending on culture and gender we computed a set of log-linear analyses (see Wickens, 1989). First, the automatic model search of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23.0) saturated hierarchical log-linear (hi-log-linear) procedure was run to find the most parsimonious final model. A final model having a p-value greater than .05 was considered to be fitting the data (Wickens, 1989). The model fit (χ^2) of the hi-log-linear procedure is presented in the text. To estimate single parameters (z values), a log-linear model was computed.

Results

The coding of children's responses led to thirteen different conceptualizations in both countries, that is, thirteen overlapping themes. No contrary themes were identified. There were no differences between countries in the number of conceptualizations mentioned by English (M = 2.29, SD = 1.40) and Spanish children (M = 2.30, SD = 1.14), $t(642) = .076$, $p = .94$, $d = .006$. The analysis showed that - for both Spanish and English children - the most reported conceptualizations were "Friends" (61% and 57%)

and "Positive feelings" (42% and 39%, respectively). However, whereas Spanish children also mentioned "Leisure" (29%) and "Emotional support" (23%), English children reported "Learning" (33%), and "Teachers" (23%) (Table 1). However, for the total number of categories, girls mentioned more conceptualizations than boys $t(642) = -4.87$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -.38$.

[1]For the conceptualisations of "Harmony" and "Leisure", the hi-log-linear analyses produced the final model of Harmony × Country ($\chi^2 = 6.824$, df = 1, $p = .009$) and Leisure × Country ($\chi^2 = 6.169$, df = 1, $p = .013$). The log-linear analysis showed that Spanish children mentioned these conceptualisations significantly more than English children. There were no other significant interactions (Table 2).

For the concept categories "Non-violence", "Autonomy" and "Learning", the hi-log-linear analyses produced the final model of Non-violence × Country ($\chi^2 = 5.306$, df = 1, $p = .021$); Autonomy × Country ($\chi^2 = 11.994$, df = 1, $p = .001$); and Learning × Country ($\chi^2 = 11.114$, df = 1, $p = .001$). The log-linear analysis showed that English children mentioned these conceptualisations significantly more than Spanish children. There was no other significant interaction (Table 2).

For the concept category 'Competence', the hi-log-linear analysis produced the final model of Competence × Sex ($\chi^2 = 8.489$, df = 1, $p = .004$). The analysis also showed that girls mentioned this conceptualisation significantly more than boys. There was no other significant interaction (Table 2).

For the concept category "Teachers", the hi-log-linear analyses produced the final model of Teachers × Country ($\chi^2 = 7.292$, df = 1, $p = .007$) and Teachers × Sex ($\chi^2 = 9.791$, df = 1, $p = .002$), the log-linear analysis showed that English children

[1] We also re-ran our analyses while including the variable "school" in the analyses and the results were virtually identical. Additionally, we did not find any significant interaction between school and each conceptualization.

mentioned this conceptualisation significantly more often than Spanish children. Furthermore, girls mentioned this conceptualisation significantly more than boys. There was no other significant interaction (Table 2).

For the concept category "Emotional support", the hi-log-linear analyses produced the final model of Emotional support × Country (χ^2 = 5.968, df = 1, p = .015) and Emotional support × Sex (χ^2 = 3.881, df = 1, p = .049). The log-linear analysis showed that Spanish children mentioned this conceptualisation significantly more often than English children. Furthermore, girls mentioned this conception significantly more than boys. There was no other significant interaction (Table 2).

For the concept categories of 'Positive feelings', 'Friends', 'Good grades', 'Moral actions' and 'Purpose' the hi-loglinear analysis did not produce a significant interaction and only the main effect of the category and country were significant (Table 2).

Discussion

Previous reports identified important differences in the quantitative levels of well-being in general and at school in England and Spain (e.g., PISA, 2018). At the same time, part of this research highlighted the importance of considering qualitative reports, given that these changed the classification of well-being in both countries. Hence, this highlights significant discrepancies in the well-being rankings depending on the assessment methods used to evaluate well-being in children (e.g., UNICEF's card report 11, 2020). Given that children's conceptualizations can put them at the centre of the evaluation process (Ben-Arieh, 2010) and can capture additional elements not considered in questionnaires (e.g., Delle Fave et al., 2011), they were used in this research to evaluate possible similarities and differences in English and Spanish children's conceptualizations of happiness at school.

Our results showed some cultural and gender differences in children's definitions. Spanish children defined happiness at school as experiencing harmony more compared to British children. Despite this difference, the frequency in both samples was low, showing that this concept was not particularly prominent in both samples. The obtained difference could be potentially explained by the importance placed in social harmony by collectivistic cultures (Hook, Worthington Jr., & Utsey, 2009; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This difference mirrors previous findings with adults from collectivistic countries who emphasise harmony in their definitions (Lu & Gilmour, 2004). Given that this conceptualization was not dominant in children from both samples future research should evaluate if this is only applicable to the school context or also features in children's general conceptualizations of happiness. Furthermore, Spanish children defined happiness at school as receiving emotional support to a greater extent than British children. This is in line with previous research that has shown the importance that collectivistic countries place in intimacy and providing and receiving emotional support (e.g., Burleson, 2003). This result might also be in line with important differences in the educational system, given that pastoral care is less structured and organised in Spain than in the UK (García-Moya et al., 2019), which may lead students to emphasise the importance of receiving such support.

Finally, Spanish children also mentioned more in their definitions happiness as participating in leisure activities. Previous literature has highlighted the importance of taking part in structured leisure activities for children's wellbeing (Fletcher, Nickerson, & Wright, 2003; Trainor, Delfabbro, Anderson, & Wiefield, 2012). Possible cultural differences may be due to the fact that school leisure activities in Spain highly emphasise the social nature of those activities in the school context (Fraguela, Lorenzo,

& Garrote, 2011), which might be congruent with the values highlighted in a relatively collectivistic society.

On the other hand, as expected, English children emphasized more the importance of autonomy within the school context. This is in line with the literature on cross-cultural differences in adults' general happiness, in which individualistic cultures emphasise the importance of autonomy for the experience of happiness (Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Plufg, 2009). Despite this, it is important to acknowledge that autonomy may not necessarily correspond to individualism (Devine, Camfield, & Gough, 2008); hence, future research should compare clearly collectivist samples with individualist samples to test whether autonomy is more dominant in individualist cultures. English children also mentioned more happiness at school as learning and having a positive relationship with teachers, as compared to Spanish children. We believe this may be due to differences in the school context. Although in the UK there is an emphasis in the evaluation process as evidenced in their school rankings (OECD, 2014), in the primary school context there is a strong focus in the learning process, which may explain why this conceptualization was more salient in English children's conceptualizations. Finally, English children defined happiness at school as experiencing non-violence to a greater extent compared to Spanish children. This may be due to the fact that bullying at school is more prevalent in the England (approximately 17% of children have been bullied at some point) compared to Spain (approximately 9%; see also Garaigordobil & Oñederra, 2015; UK Department for Education, 2018).

It is also important to highlight that children did not differ in the rest of the conceptualizations and in both samples the conceptualization of "friends" was particularly relevant. We cannot infer from these results whether children in both samples perceived friends in the same way but having positive relationships with their

peers was definitely something that both samples highlighted for experiencing well-being at school. This is not surprising given that recent reports have highlighted the important role of friends in the school for experiencing well-being in that context (e.g., The Good Childhood Report, 2020).

Finally, there were gender differences in some of the conceptualizations. Girls mentioned more in their definitions having a positive relationship with teachers and receiving and providing emotional support. This may be due to the fact that girls place more importance on intimacy and social relationships, as compared to boys (Williams, Connolly, & Segal, 2001). Girls also mentioned more feeling competent in order to be happy at school. This result is in line with previous research which has linked higher perception of competence with higher enjoyment at school for girls as compared to boys (Shen et al., 2018).

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study is the first to evaluate possible cross-cultural differences in children's conceptualizations of happiness at school, it is not without limitations. First, we have only compared two countries, which limited the ability to generalize the obtained findings to other cultures. Hence, future research should follow a similar approach to other studies conducted with adults (e.g., Delle Fave et al., 2011), which have compared multiple countries and have evaluated some cultural domains and values which may help to better contextualize the findings. When making those comparisons it is important to ensure that conceptualizations identified with the same label are truly comparable, to avoid issues of translation and different meanings. Second, given that happiness is domain-specific (van de Wetering, van Exel, & Brouwer, 2010), future research should consider studying cross-cultural differences in general happiness and happiness in regards to the family context to be able to compare whether the results are

similar to the ones obtained in the school context. Finally, the present study only used a quantification of qualitative data. Given the important discrepancies that have been pointed out in previous reports (e.g., UNICEF'S card reports, 2013 and 2020), future research should consider using a mixed method approach to investigate whether certain children's conceptualizations may be linked to higher reported happiness or other variables relevant for the school environment, depending on the culture (López-Pérez & Fernández-Castilla, 2018).

Conclusions

Previous quantitative research pointed out that English children experienced lower levels of happiness at school than Spanish children (e.g., The Good Childhood Report, 2020). In order to understand these possible differences, it is important to ask children what being happy in the context of school means for them. Studying children's conceptualizations can deepen our understanding of how they aim to strive for happiness in that context. The obtained results showed that the sample of English children and Spanish children who participated in our study emphasized different elements in their definitions, suggesting that different elements (e.g., learning, leisure) might be more relevant in each sample. Although these findings are largely exploratory in nature they can signal distinct educational philosophies and practices in those countries as well. Hence, future evaluations aimed at understanding children's well-being at schools across different countries should consider not only overall satisfaction quantitative scores but children's views, as this can help us to widen current assessment methods, improve school practices and change the consistent decrease reported in children's wellbeing in the last few years.

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Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Concept Categories by Country and Gender

	Spanish Sample			English Sample		
	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total
Positive feelings	42 (19%)	52 (23%)	94 (42%)	73 (17%)	92 (22%)	165 (39%)
Harmony	7 (3%)	7 (3%)	14 (6%)	4 (1%)	5 (1%)	9 (2%)
Leisure	32 (14%)	32 (14%)	64 (29%)	39 (9%)	45 (11%)	84 (20%)
Friends	62 (28%)	74 (33%)	136 (61%)	108 (26%)	134 (32%)	242 (57%)
Good grades	7 (3%)	8 (4%)	15 (7%)	9 (2%)	9 (2%)	18 (4%)
Non violence	3 (1%)	9 (4%)	12 (5%)	18 (4%)	27 (6%)	45 (10%)
Moral actions	11 (5%)	13 (6%)	24 (11%)	16 (4%)	24 (6%)	40 (10%)
Purpose	4 (2%)	3 (1%)	7 (3%)	2 (0%)	4 (1%)	6 (1%)
Autonomy	0 (0%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	8 (2%)	13 (3%)	21 (5%)
Competence	6 (3%)	13 (6%)	19 (9%)	11 (3%)	27 (6%)	38 (9%)
Teachers	13 (6%)	18 (8%)	31 (14%)	32 (8%)	64 (15%)	96 (23%)
Emotional support	23 (10%)	28 (13%)	51 (23%)	23 (5%)	41 (10%)	64 (15%)

Learning	20 (9%)	25 (11%)	45 (20%)	56 (13%)	81 (19%)	37 (33%)

Note. Percentages sum over 100% as children could report more than one conceptualization.

Table 2

Results of Hi-log-linear and Log-Linear Analyses

Hi-loglinear Harmony	df	Partial Chi Squared	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Harmony × Country × Gender	4	1.515	.824	-.567
Harmony × Country	1	6.824	.009	-2.563
Harmony × Gender	1	.007	.931	.027
Harmony	1	694.324	.000	-14.974
Hi-loglinear Positive Feelings				
Positive Feelings × Country × Gender	5	4.558	.472	-.620
Positive Feelings × Country	1	.591	.442	-.696
Positive Feelings × Gender	1	2.288	.130	1.606
Positive Feelings	1	24.812	.000	7.430
Hi-loglinear Leisure	df	Partial Chi Squared	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Leisure × Country × Gender	4	1.507	.825	.108
Leisure × Country	1	6.169	.013	-2.518
Leisure × Gender	1	.005	.946	.043
Leisure	1	198.476	.000	-11.957

Hi-loglinear Friends	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Friends × Country × Gender	5	6.000	.306	-.594
Friends × Country	1	.830	.362	-.900
Friends × Gender	1	3.407	.065	1.930
Friends	1	19.578	.000	4.380
Hi-loglinear Good Grades	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Good Grades × Country × Gender	5	3.355	.645	-.751
Good Grades × Country	1	1.733	.188	-1.319
Good Grades × Gender	1	.001	.981	.012
Good Grades	1	632.396	.000	-15.936
Hi-loglinear Non-violence	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Non violence × Country × Gender	4	5.751	.219	-.982
Non violence × Country	1	5.306	.021	2.277
Non violence × Gender	1	2.970	.085	1.934
Non violence	1	507.565	.000	5.699
Hi-loglinear Moral actions	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)

Moral actions × Country × Sex	5	2.798	.731	-.393
Moral actions × Country	1	.284	.594	-.486
Moral actions × Gender	1	.988	.320	1.029
Moral actions	1	475.827	.000	-15.943
Hi-loglinear Purpose				
Purpose × Country × Gender	5	4.164	.526	-.417
Purpose × Country	1	2.059	.151	-1.427
Purpose × Gender	1	.030	.863	.148
Purpose	1	765.566	.000	-13.594
Hi-loglinear Autonomy	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Autonomy × Country × Gender	4	3.589	.465	-.657
Autonomy × Country	1	11.994	.001	2.407
Autonomy × Gender	1	1.097	.295	1.216
Autonomy	1	700.961	.000	-8.151
Hi-loglinear Competence	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Competence × Country × Gender	3	.461	.927	.058

Competence × Country	1	.020	.888	.053
Competence × Gender	1	8.489	.004	2.615
Competence	1	507.565	.000	-15.455
Hi-loglinear Teachers	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Teachers × Country × Gender	2	.746	.689	.345
Teachers × Country	1	7.292	.007	2.629
Teachers × Gender	1	9.791	.002	2.885
Teachers	1	253.277	.000	-13.471
Hi-loglinear Emotional Support	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Country × Gender × Emotional support	4	5.853	.210	.019
Emotional support × Country	1	5.968	.015	-2.396
Emotional support × Gender	1	3.881	.049	1.848
Emotional support	1	288.418	.000	-13.979
Hi-loglinear Learning	df	Partial Chi Square-d	p-value	z-value (log-linear)
Learning × Country × Gender	2	.232	.890	-.003
Learning × Country	1	11.114	.001	3.279

Learning × Gender	1	3.679	.055	1.871
Learning	1	125.898	.000	-10.750

Note. Chi-squares for Gender was χ^2 *(1)* = 1.05, p = .306 and Country was χ^2 *(1)* = 61.87, p < .001. The main effect of category refers to the difference in the frequencies (mentioned vs. non-mentioned).

Appendix A

Content Categories identified in the Qualitative Analyses	Examples
Positive feelings: the experience of joy or contentment	"When I'm happy at school I have lots more confidence and an excited for what comes next."
Harmony: being tuned with the world, inner peace	"I feel happy at school when people around me are welcoming, friendly, and humorous and have a nice attitude around me. When I'm happy, all my worries are washed away in seconds."
Leisure: taking part in fun activities such as sports, dancing or day trips	"I think for me to be happy at school it means […], we have some of sports clubs or long breaks, and not having too much homework."
Friends: making or being with friends	"I feel loved by my friends which makes my time at school amazing and cheerful."
Good grades: achieving good grades	"been happy at school means that I can concentrate more and get high grades because of it"
Non-violence: the lack of quarrels/not being bullied/not being called names	"sometimes it is hard to fit in or being happy at school because there are a lot of people there that can hurt your feelings and body"
Moral actions: social desirable actions such as helping or respecting others	"I think you need to have a good work ethic but to be resilient when things aren't exactly perfect for you"
Purpose: happiness as the supreme goal in life	"feeling that I had improved gives me purpose to try hard in school"
Autonomy: freedom to be oneself	"to be happy at school you should make your own choices without somebody forcing you to make a decision that you don't believe in or don't want to"
Competence: sense of being capable to achieve what it is asked in the school	"Happy in school is not wanting to hide before certain lessons, is being able to share and contrast opinions. It is the developing skills and it is leaving school knowing that you haven't wasted a day of your life."
Teachers: having a positive relationship	"I feel happy about school because all the

with teacher/s, head teacher, and school staff	teachers are nice and I see it as the most strict teachers want you to succeed the most"
Emotional support: being supported and endorsed in the school	"happy at school means you have lots of friends and teachers who support you when you are feeling sad so you always have someone you can trust and rely on to comfort you."
Learning: having the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and participating in new activities	"for me being happy at school is very important because I know if I were to be unhappy, I would find it difficult to concentrate and learn."