The eudaimonic component of satisfaction with life and psychological well-being in Spanish cultures

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Abstract

Background: In the study of well-being there are two partially overlapping traditions that have been developed in parallel. Subjective well-being (SWB) has been associated with the hedonistic approach of well-being, and psychological well-being (PWB) with the eudaimonistic one. However, satisfaction with life, the most common SWB indicator, is not strictly a hedonic concept and contains many eudaimonic components. The objective of this research is to examine whether a Eudaimonic Well-being G-Factor of Satisfaction with Life (SWLS) and Psychological Well-being Scales (PWBS) emerges. **Method:** 400 people from the general population of Colombia (Study 1) and 401 from Spain (Study 2), recruited via advertisement, voluntarily participated and filled in a booklet containing, in order of appearance, the PWBS and the SWLS. **Results:** According to our hypothesis, parallel analysis, eigenvalues, scree plot graphs and exploratory factor analysis (Study 1) suggested the existence of a one-factor structure. Confirmatory factor analysis (Study 2) indicated that this one-factor model provided excellent data fit. Results of a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis confirmed cross-cultural factor invariance. **Conclusions:** These results question the view that the satisfaction with life indicator is uniquely hedonic and point to the need for a greater integration between hedonic and eudaimonic traditions.

Keywords: Hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, psychological well-being, subjective well-being, life satisfaction.

Resumen

El componente eudaimónico de la satisfacción con la vida y el bienestar psicológico en culturas hispanas. **Antecedentes:** en el estudio del bienestar existen dos tradiciones parcialmente solapadas que se han desarrollado en paralelo. El bienestar subjetivo (BS) se ha asociado tradicionalmente con la aproximación hedonista y el bienestar psicológico (BP) con la eudaimonista. Sin embargo, la satisfacción con la vida, el indicador más empleado de BS, incluye componentes claramente eudaimónicos. El objetivo de esta investigación es analizar si emerge un Factor G-Bienestar Eudaimónico de la Escala de Satisfacción con la Vida (ESV) y las Escalas de Bienestar Psicológico de Ryff (EBP). **Método:** 400 personas de población general de Colombia (estudio 1) y 401 de España (estudio 2) completaron, en este orden, las EBP y las ESV. **Resultados:** el Análisis Paralelo de Horn y el Análisis Factorial Exploratorio (estudio 1) indicaron la existencia de una estructura de un factor. El Análisis Factorial Confirmatorio (estudio 2) demostró que el modelo de un factor se ajustaba de forma excelente a los datos. Mediante un análisis factorial confirmatorio multi-grupo se confirmó la invarianza factorial transcultural. **Conclusiones:** estos resultados cuestionan que la satisfacción con la vida sea un indicador únicamente hedónico y señalan la necesidad de que se produzca una mayor integración entre la tradición hedónica y eudaimónica.

Palabras clave: bienestar hedónico, bienestar eudaimónico, bienestar subjetivo, bienestar psicológico, satisfacción con la vida.

Are you happy as a Negro? Physicians, 97%, college students, 91%; preachers, 77%; teachers, 73%; laborers, 61%; lawyers, 40%; musicians, 40%, and housewives, 8% (Beckham, 1929). Those of higher socioeconomic levels seemed to avow more happiness (Wilson, 1967, p. 297).

In the scientific study of well-being in the field of psychology, there are currently two different (though partly overlapping) traditions (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The first one can generically be referred to as hedonism (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999) and defends the position that well-being consists primarily of pleasure or happiness. The second tradition postulates that well-being is not only happiness but the development of human potential. This second view has been called eudaimonism (Waterman, 1993) because it tries to include the belief that well-being is the achievement or realization of the true nature or "daemon". These two traditions – hedonism and eudaimonism – are originally based on different philosophical perspectives of human nature and on different conceptions of the subject dating back to classical Greece. Despite the theoretical and epistemological distance between the two traditions, they share important elements that have been underestimated (e.g., Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). The main one is that happiness, satisfaction with life, positive or negative affect, pleasure or displeasure do not occur in a vacuum but as a result of the interaction among sociodemographic factors and personality traits (Keyes et al., 2002), the quality of the society in which people live (such as economic prosperity, social equality, respect for human rights and civil liberties, access to the different levels of education; Veenhoven, 1994), and "the cognitive and motivational processes

that serve to maintain or enhance both enduring happiness and transient mood" (Lyubomirsky, 2001, p. 240).

John Locke offers a complete summary of the hedonistic tradition, according to which "things are good or evil only in reference to pleasure or pain" (Locke, 1997, p. 214). The position of this philosopher goes back to the Greek philosophers Aristippus of Cyrene and Epicurus of Samos, and to their most enthusiastic disciple, the Roman Lucretius Carus. According to a brief description of the Epicurean philosophy (Hirschberger, 1958), the things we like and which give us pleasure, we call good; those we dislike and that cause us discomfort, we call bad. The explicit and continued mentions of pleasure and pain in the framework of moral theory have served as a basis to the proposal of hedonic well-being: pleasure and happiness are built on the guiding principles of human action and, although they do not directly raise moral issues, they end up raising them indirectly.

The psychological conceptualizations that have adopted the hedonic perspective for the study of well-being can be framed within a broader conception of hedonism including the preference for the pleasures of both body and mind (Kahneman et al., 1999; Kubovy, 1999). In fact, the prevailing view among hedonic psychologists is that well-being is subjective happiness built on the experience of pleasure versus displeasure, including judgments about good and bad elements of life (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

To evaluate hedonic well-being, most psychology researchers have used the construct of subjective well-being (SWB; Diener et al., 1999). SWB consist of three components: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect (Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996; Diener et al., 1999). Although initially, the core point of attention was focused on affective components (positive and negative affects) (Pavot & Diener, 1993), currently, much of the research in this tradition tends to evaluate only the cognitive component through the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Pavot & Diener, 1993, 2008). Life satisfaction, despite being the most evaluated component, is, according to many authors, the less representative of hedonic well-being, as it clearly includes eudaimonic elements (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Many philosophers have criticized throughout history the notion that the pursuit of pleasure is, in itself, the main measure of well-being. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (2011, p. 1856) adopts a different approach to the Epicurean philosophers: "it seems to be clear that neither is pleasure the good nor is all pleasure desirable". For him, the guiding principle of human activity is based on virtue (the happy life is thought to be virtuous). In fact, the prevailing concept of happiness in the medieval Aristotelian tradition presupposes a finalist vision of nature, according to which, to every natural species corresponds a *telos*, an ultimate end in which it reaches its plenitude (Yarza, 2001). This term therefore designates a state of life satisfaction, although permanent and non-temporary.

Analytic philosophers also point in the same direction. Tatarkiewitz (1976) performed a comprehensive analysis of the different meanings that the term *happiness* can take. According to him, these meanings can be grouped in a classic sense (happiness as a synthesis of life satisfaction and personal growth; eudaimonic tradition) and in a modern sense (which reduces happiness to satisfaction with the present moment; hedonic tradition). Elisabeth Telfer (1980), in a relevant work about the distinction between *happiness* and *eudaimonia*, notes that the first term, in its most common meaning in contemporary English, has a clearly hedonistic

aspect. However, *eudaimonia* includes a sense of life satisfaction, personal growth, and flourishing.

Although many philosophers have linked eudaimonia to life satisfaction, tradition in the field of scientific psychology has focused primarily on personal growth and actualization of one's own potential. Even though there are several factors that could explain this conceptual limitation, the influence of humanistic psychology has been crucial. An interesting exception is the proposal made by Bernice Neugarten, who used the term *vital satisfaction* to indicate that having a positive image about oneself or finding meaning in life are necessary conditions for well-being (Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961). Accordingly, to evaluate the eudaimonia, the construct of psychological well-being (PWB) proposed by Carol Ryff (1989a) is usually employed. To measure this construct, the instrument most commonly used is the Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWBS; Ryff 1989b) that includes six different dimensions: autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relations, control of the environment, purpose in life, and personal growth.

Today, the hedonic-eudaimonic components of life satisfaction continue to be debated and discussed among psychologists. For example, people are often more satisfied with their lives when they are engaged in meaningful pursuits and virtuous activities (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008). However, due to the theoretical attachment of researchers to one of the two traditions (hedonic or eudaimonic), very few studies have empirically tested a combined measurement of SWB and PWB. Some exceptions are the works of Keyes et al., (2002), Linley, Maltby, Wood, Osborne, and Hurling (2010), Huta, and Ryan (2010) or Díaz, Blanco, and Durán (2011). Keyes and colleagues (2002) proposed a structure in which SWB and PWB were two different factors (correlated or independent). Díaz and colleagues (2011) extended this approach by adding Social Well-being (SWB, PWB and Social Well-being as related or oblique factors). On the other hand, Linley and colleagues (2010) studied the emergence of a G-factor of SWB and PWB and, although their results did not confirm this proposal, they did not examine any model where satisfaction with life loaded on PWB. In all these works, however, some conceptual difference between the two traditions has remained, thus ignoring the eudaimonic component of life satisfaction or dissolving it by including affects and life satisfaction in the same factor.

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to examine the factorial structure of the two main measures for the assessment of subjective well-being (SWLS) and psychological well-being (PWBS). Given the important eudaimonic component of the SWLS, a single general factor, the *Eudaimonic Well-being G-Factor*, could emerge. In order to achieve this aim, two studies were conducted. In the first one, exploratory analyses were piloted using Colombian population. In the second one, confirmatory studies were conducted, using Spanish population. This methodological design allows us to further test the cross-cultural factor invariance of well-being measures across Hispanic Cultures.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Four-hundred people from the general population of Columbia, recruited via advertisements on campus, voluntarily participated

without compensation. Six-hundred and seventy-six applications to participate were received, from which 410 were selected using a simple random sampling method. Ten of the selected participants failed to complete the study. Of the selected participants, 256 were men (64%) and 144 were women (36%). Participants ages ranged from 18 to 64 years old, with a mean age of 24.89 years ($SD = 10.63$).

Procedure

This study was part of a research project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and was approved by the ethics committee of the coordinating university (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid). Participants were told that they would participate in a study about personality traits, beliefs, and attitudes. They were placed in individual lab cubicles and after being told that all collected information was confidential and anonymous, they signed an informed consent. Each participant filled out a booklet containing, in order of appearance, the PWBS and the SWLS.

Instruments

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). To measure life satisfaction, the Diener, et al. scale (1985), validated in Spanish by Atienza, Pons, Balaguer, and García-Merita (2000) was used. This scale consists of five items, using a 5-point scale, ranging from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree, and has been shown in different studies to have good psychometric properties (e.g., Pavot & Diener, 1993; Rodríguez-Carvajal, Díaz, Moreno-Jiménez, Blanco, & van Dierendonck, 2010; Schnettler, Denegri, Miranda, Sepúlveda, Mora, & Lobos, 2014). The unidimensional structure of the scale has been confirmed in different studies conducted with Spanish populations (e.g. Atienza et al., 2000).

Psychological Well-being Scales (PWBS). To measure psychological well-being, participants responded to the version of the Psychological Well-being Scales proposed by Díaz, and colleagues (2006). The instrument consists of six scales (autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relations, control of the environment, purpose in life and personal growth). This measure has 39 items (4-6 items per scale) to which participants responded using a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Although different structures of PWB have been proposed (three dimension, four dimension or five dimension models), the six-dimensional structure, with or without a second order general factor, is the one that has received more empirical support (e.g., Díaz et al., 2006; van Dierendonck, 2004; van Dierendonck, Díaz, Rodríguez-Carvajal, Blanco, & Moreno-Jiménez, 2008).

Data analysis

In Study 1, we conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to delineate the structure of well-being scales. Data dimensionality was first analyzed using principal components factor parallel analysis (PA). SPSS syntax developed by O'Connor (2000) was used to calculate the mean and the 95th percentile for each of the eigenvalues of the 100 randomly generated data sets. The random data eigenvalues were compared to the real-data eigenvalues that are obtained from a Principal Component Analysis (PCA), in which the number of factors extracted equals the number of scales (n = 7). To complement this approach, we examined eigenvalues

and scree plot graphs. Following the criterion established by the PA of the number of factors to be extracted, an EFA using SPSS 22 (estimation method: principal axis) was conducted.

Results

The results of PA are indicated in Table 1. As it can be seen, only the first eigenvalue of the real datasets exceeded random values. Results strongly suggest there is only one factor underlying the data. Eigenvalues and scree plot graphs (see Figure 1) produced results consistent with the PA.

As shown in Table 2, in the EFA all the well-being scales showed loadings greater than .40. This factor explained 47.84% of the variance. Table 3 lists the means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and Pearson's correlations.

Study 2

Method

Participants

Four-hundred and one people from the general population of Spain, recruited via advertisements on campus, voluntarily participated without compensation. Five-hundred and forty-five applications to

Table 1
Parallel analysis

Study 1. Colombian sample

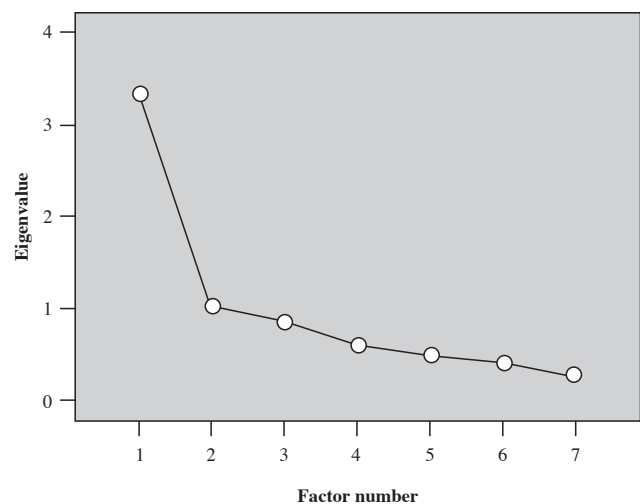| Eigenvalues	Random means	Random percentile	Real data
1	1.19	1.26	3.35
2	1.11	1.17	1.02
3	1.05	1.09	.86
4	.99	1.03	.60
5	.94	.98	.49
6	.89	.93	.41
7	.82	.88	.26

Scree plot

Figure 1. Scree plot for Study 1 (Colombian sample)

participate were received, from which 410 were selected using a simple random sampling method. Of the selected participants 9 failed to complete the study. The sample consisted of 228 men (56,9%) and 173 women (43,1%). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 76 years old, with a mean age of 33.89 years (*SD* = 13.62).

Procedure

The procedure was identical to Study 1.

Instruments

Satisfaction with Life Scale and Psychological Well-being Scales identical to those used in Study 1, were used.

Data analysis

To confirm the unidimensional structure model (EFA, Study 1) a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; estimation method: maximum likelihood) using the statistical program AMOS 22 was conducted. Four models were examined. The one factor model (Model 1) had the SWLS and PWBS loading on the same factor. The two-factor model had the SWLS (unidimensional) and PWBS (six-dimensional structure) loading on separate oblique (Model 2) or orthogonal factors (Model 3). Finally, Model 4 postulates two-factors (SWLS-unidimensional and PWBS-six-dimensional) with a second-order factor called General Well-being.

Results

As indicated in Table 4, the fit of the different theoretical models was measured using the following indicators: Chi square

(χ^2), Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and Standardized Root Mean-Square Residual (SRMR). The lower the values of χ^2, AIC, and SRMR and the higher the values of CFI and IFI, the better the model fits to the data. As a general rule, it can be said that the CFI and IFI values greater than 0.95 and values of the SRMR less than 0.08 indicate relatively good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). As shown in Table 4, Model 1 fit the data better than Models 2, 3 and 4. In fact, Model 1 fit the data better than the others models, and the computed adjustment indicators suggest excellent fit. The standardized estimates, standard errors, and level of significance for the well-being scales of this model are presented in Table 5. Table 6 lists the means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha, and Pearson's correlations.

Table 2
Exploratory factor analysis of well-being scales

Study 1. Colombian sample	
Scales	
SWLS	.47
Self-acceptance	.81
Positive relations	.56
Autonomy	.50
Enviromental mastery	.77
Personal growth	.45
Purpose in life	.77

Note: Presented is the factorial matrix of a principal axis extraction. All loadings above .40

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and Pearson's correlations

Study 1. Colombian sample									
	Mean	**SD**	**Alpha**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1. SWLS	2.56	.88	.81						
2. Self-acceptance	4.51	.79	.71	.55					
3. Positive relations	4.60	.98	.75	.27	.45				
4. Autonomy	4.41	.76	.65	.20	.45	.37			
5. Enviromental mastery	4.68	.74	.65	.38	.52	.37	.43		
6. Personal growth	5.08	.75	.64	.21	.29	.22	.26	.42	
7. Purpose in life	5.04	.75	.74	.35	.60	.36	.37	.61	.44

* All correlations *p*<.01

Table 4
Fit indices of confirmatory factor analysis (maximum likelihood estimation) of well-being scales

Model	χ^2	df	AIC	CFI	IFI	SRMR
One factor	88.85	18	124.85	.96	.96	.04
Two oblique factors*	99.09	17	137.09	.95	.95	.05
Two orthogonal factors	354.57	18	388.57	.79	.79	.26
Two factors, second order factor called *General Well-being***	104.61	17	140.61	.94	.94	.05

* Estimated correlation between factors .77
** Second order factor loadings SWLS .90 PWBS .85

Table 5
Standardized estimates for the one factor model (Model 1)

Study 2. Spanish sample			
	Standardized estimate	Standard error	Significance
SWLS	.72	.031	<.001
Self-acceptance	.89	.025	<.001
Positive relations	.54	.025	<.001
Autonomy	.48	.023	<.001
Enviromental mastery	.84	.022	<.001
Personal growth	.46	.020	<.001
Purpose in life	.81	.025	<.001

affect and negative affect) is a fundamentally hedonic construct (e.g. Ryan & Deci, 2001) because attention was paid mainly to the affective components of SWB (e.g. Pavot, & Diener, 1993). For this reason, this identification (SWB = hedonic well-being) made sense from a conceptual point of view. Subsequently, as a theoretical extension, it has been considered that the cognitive component of SWB, satisfaction with life, was also a good indicator of hedonic well-being. However, from a conceptual point of view, many of the philosophical traditions (e.g. analytic philosophy; for more information see, for example, the monograph entitled *Human Flourishing*, in the journal *Social Philosophy & Policy*, one of the publications more relevant within the philosophical thought) identify *being satisfied with one's life* as a eudaimonic component related to the development of the capabilities and

Table 6
Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha and Pearson's correlations

Study 2. Spanish sample									
	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.SWLS	3.33	.73	.86						
2. Self-acceptance	4.32	.85	.83	.68					
3. Positive relations	4.58	.84	.79	.42	.49				
4. Autonomy	4.24	.74	.74	.28	.44	.27			
5. Enviromental mastery	4.32	.71	.70	.57	.74	.43	.46		
6. Personal growth	4.56	.65	.68	.22	.31	.37	.26	.34	
7. Purpose in life	4.48	.83	.84	.59	.71	.44	.36	.72	.44
* All correlations *p*<.01									

Discussion

The primary objective of this project was to examine the potential existence of a G-Factor in SWLS and PWBS. To answer this question, we conducted a parallel analysis and an exploratory factor analysis that indicated the existence of a one-factor structure (Study 1). The results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that this one-factor model provided excellent data fit (Study 2). Using a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) with this model as a baseline model for the two samples (Spanish and Colombian), we analyzed the factor invariance. The MGCFA is the most frequently used technique for an empirical assessment of cross-cultural factor invariance (e.g. Sirigatti et al., 2013). We used a model with factor loadings and error variances constrained to be equal across groups. The results of the analysis (χ^2 =116.32; *df* = 31; CFI = 0.94; IFI = 0.94; SRMR = 0.05) allow us to maintain the hypothesis that factor loadings and error variance were equivalent in the Spanish and Colombian samples. To the best of our knowledge, previous research has not examined the emergence of a *Eudaimonic Well-being G-Factor*. However, one study has analyzed the cross-cultural factor invariance of PWBS (i.e., Sirigatti et al., 2013) and consistent with our findings, the results demonstrated a cross-cultural structural invariance.

The existence of the G-Factor has implications both from a conceptual perspective and an applied one. Firstly, it questions the fact that life satisfaction is uniquely a hedonic indicator. It has generally been accepted that SWB (satisfaction with life, positive

potential of one's self. The results of the present research seem to point in that direction. First, PA, eigenvalues and scree plot graphs (Study 1) suggest the existence of a one-factor structure. The EFA factor loading of SWLS was > .40, even higher than the scale of Personal Growth, one of the most eudaimonic PWBS components (e.g., Ryff, 1989). The CFA confirmed that one-factor model demonstrated excellent fit to the data. In Study 2, the estimated factor loadings of SWLS, was superior to five of the PWBS. Only the Purpose of Life Scale showed a higher saturation in the Well-being G-Factor.

Therefore, the results of these two studies point to the need for greater integration between hedonic and eudaimonic traditions. In fact, the existence in scientific psychology of two different theoretical traditions that have advanced in parallel, has minimized the points of convergence between hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives. As such, there is a lack of research that has simultaneously used hedonic and eudaimonic indicators, and even researchers who did so, tended to treat these indicators separately (e.g. Keyes et al., 2002; Rodríguez-Carvajal et al., 2010).

The present research has implemented one of the most widely used assessment instruments for general life satisfaction (SWLS). However, other one-item or multi-item scales for general or specific populations exist (Single Item on Overall Life Satisfaction -OLS; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale-MSLSS; Huebner, 1991). In this regard, future research could focus on confirming that hedonic components associated with life satisfaction allowing the emergence

of Well-being G-Factor do not depend on the scale used (SWLS). However, both the review of the content of the items included in other satisfaction with life scales, and high correlations between them, indicate that all instruments share a eudaimonic component (e.g. Diener, Inglehart, & Tay, 2013). Another limitation of the present research is related to the presentation order of the scales. Although there is no evidence that SWLS (which was administered first) may influence on PWBS, future research should control or randomize the order of appearance.

Importantly, results of this research support the need for greater conceptual integration between the subjective well-being and psychological well-being traditions. The present paper proposes that future studies use an approach to satisfaction with life according to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, and implement an understanding of *eudaimonia* as a source of happiness. That is, "be aware of the strength and beauty of life" before even beginning to evaluate it.

Acknowledgements

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