Psychological well-being in students of Mexican universities

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Psychological well-being must be included as one of the priorities of university institutions. It has been established that identifying the level of psychological well-being in university students is a descriptive, non-experimental, cross-sectional study. The results showed the six dimensions of psychological well-being, and on three levels: low, medium and high. At the low level in the positive relations dimension, the following schools were found: Technological University of the South of the State of Mexico, Academic Unit Tejupilco, and the National Pedagogical University. Likewise, at the level under the Autonomy dimension, the Domain dimension and in the positive relations dimension, the Academic Unit Tejupilco staff were found. In the medium level of the Personal Growth dimension, the Academic Unit Tejupilco was found and at the high level in the autonomy dimension: the Technological University of the South of the State of Mexico, in the personal growth dimension the University of Higher Studies was found. It was concluded that in the Universities of the South of the State of Mexico, despite having activities focused on the prevention of health problems for students such as: sports, cultural activities and workshops aimed at the development of skills, they are not aimed at psychological well-being. The context in which the university is located must be taken into account to determine its level of psychological well-being, since it influences the behavior of the university.

Key words: Psychological well-being, students, universities.

INTRODUCTION

Within Mexican universities, one of the activities that should be taken into account is psychological well-being, since this can be used as a measure of preventing the physical and mental health problems of students who attend institutions to train as professionals.

Emphasis is placed on the promotion of psychological well-being in a higher education institution, because they are considered relevant workspaces for carrying out scientific activities. Welfare states bring the balance down positively in various spheres of life. There are different authors who have shown that experiences associated with well-being have a favorable impact on general health, particularly on physiological indicators (Howell et al., 2007; Vázquez et al., 2009).

At the time of joining the university, it is expected that the student will achieve independence in all areas, such as being able to develop social skills, monitor their grades, and have adequate management of free time, adequate management of possible separation from parents because in some cases they must move to other states for adaptation to the new system.

To offer quality professional training, universities must
consider all aspects that are involved in the teaching-learning processes, identifying the complications and obstacles facing the university should be one of their priorities. Also, they should respond to demands with strategies that solve these complications. Although, it is true that there are programs that focus on student support, but not on the part of mental health as an indispensable part of professional development.

In his article, the access routes to well-being, Castro (2011) stated that:

The relations between hedonic and eudaemonic well-being, in a study in the Argentine population, commented that there are different ways to achieve happiness. The authors of positive psychology have proposed access routes to well-being and have integrated them into a common conceptual framework.

And in relation to mental health: it is an integral part of the goals and traditions of public health and health promotion can be applied with equal benefit to the field of heart health, infectious diseases and tobacco control.

Cruceanu et al. (2014) opined that:

There is a connection between functional well-being and the body’s ability to adapt to different areas of human life, be it work, intellectual, personal or social. Every person requires an objective and a subjective well-being, the latter is connected with the quality of life that encompasses many measurable aspects of the human being, which are evaluated according to their attitude to adverse situations, satisfaction with their person and their life (cited in Sánchez et al., 2017).

Taking into account all these aspects, Ryff (1989) a psychologist and professor at Pennsylvania State University and director of the Institute of Aging, proposed psychological well-being, with a multidimensional model that contains indicators of positive functioning and mentioned that it is a personal experience that is being built through the psychological development of the person and the ability to relate in a positive and integrated way with the life experiences, considering the active incorporation of positive measures for it and not just the absence of negative life experiences. Psychological well-being is a broad concept that includes social, subjective and psychological dimensions, as well as health-related behaviors in general that lead people to function in a positive way.

Ryff and Singer (1998) considered:

The precursor of the current models of positive psychology, and this continues to be one of the most brilliant contributions in theories and applications related to human well-being. It is defined from non-hedonic elements: the optimal human functioning produces a greater amount of positive emotions or pleasure and not vice versa.

In this model, six dimensions are proposed, each dimension is an index of well-being in itself, and not a predictor of well-being. Hence, it indicates the consequences of maintaining optimal or deficit levels in each of them.

Another advantage added to this model is the fact that a questionnaire that takes into account positive mental health is constructed relatively independent of negative mental health. They are related to both greater life satisfaction and greater subjective well-being, as well as indicators of better physical health, lower levels of cortisol (less stress), lower levels of citrugs (indicator of chronic inflammation processes), lower cardiovascular risk and greater REM sleep duration (best sleep pattern).

Some authors such as Keyes et al. (2002) have extended the limits of this classification and have used the subjective wellbeing construct (SWB) as the main representative of the hedonic tradition and the psychological wellbeing construct (Psychological Wellbeing, PWB) as representative of the eudaimonic tradition (cited in Díaz et al., 2006).

The dimensions of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff

In the contribution Ryff (1989) made with the multidimensional model, six dimensions were proposed in the scale namely:

Self-acceptance

It is related to the fact that people feel good about themselves being aware of their limitations. Having positive attitudes towards oneself is a fundamental characteristic of positive psychological functioning.

High self-acceptance is the result of telling positive attitudes towards oneself; the person knows himself, accepts himself as he is, with his virtues and defects; He feels satisfied with his vital experiences.

Positive relationships

It is necessary to maintain stable social relationships and have friends that you can trust. The ability to love and a mature affectivity is a fundamental component of well-being and mental health.

It has also been proven that people with good positive relationships with others have characteristics such as feeling affection, satisfaction and trust in interpersonal relationships; they care about the welfare of others; and show a high capacity to feel empathy, affectivity and proximity to others.

Domain of the environment

It is the personal ability to choose or create favorable environments for themselves. People with a high domain of the environment have a greater sense of control over the world and feel able to influence the context around them.

This ability is used for proper development and must be taken into account that it is another of the central indicators of mental health (Ryff, 1989) and positive functioning (Díaz et al., 2006).

It has been observed that people with a high domain of the environment, experience personal satisfaction and
adequate perception of self-determination. In this way, it enables them to feel capable of influencing and producing changes in their surrounding context. They enjoy a sense of control and competence in the management of the environment. In addition, people who perceive a high domain of their environment are able to take advantage of the opportunities it offers. Finally, they have the capacity to choose or create appropriate contexts for the satisfaction of their own needs and values.

People with low domain of the environment, have difficulties in facing everyday events, inability to change or improve the environment, miss the opportunities it provides and manifest a palpable lack of perception of control with respect to the outside world.

According to Ryff (1989), autonomy is a concept close to that of self-determination, which refers to the relationship between will and action, that is, the degree to which the person feels free to start behaviors of their choice. From this consideration, the achievement of full autonomy, or as full as possible, requires, not so much a physical or functional autonomy, as a level of cognitive competence that allows freely chosen decisions. It also makes the difference between people with high autonomy and those without it.

Ryff and Keyes (1995) stated that people who have autonomy have the ability to support their individuality in all tenors, in such a way that they have the ability to cope with social pressure and be guided by referred author standards, this is by their own beliefs and convictions, maintaining their independence and personal authority.

**Purpose in life**

The person is required to have clear goals and be able to define their vital goals. A high score in this dimension indicates that the person is clear about what they want in life; another characteristic is that they propose goals in life and have the desire to conduct themselves for achievement, and feel that their own past and present life has meaning to them.

On the contrary, people with a low score in this dimension have difficulty finding meaning in their own lives, have few vital goals and objectives, feel low desires to drive towards them, find no meaning or purpose in past life experiences and show little conviction when it comes to attributing meaning to one's life.

**Personal growth**

The ability of the individual to generate the conditions to develop their potential and continue growing as a person is evaluated (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

A high level of psychological well-being in personal growth requires that the individual strives to continue growing, developing to the fullest all his potentials and abilities, being demanding with the achievements obtained in the past and facing new personal challenges that allow him to grow as an individual. Ryff (1989) stated that personal growth is very close to the concept of eudaimonia developed by Aristotle, which alludes to the feeling that oneself has achieved excellence, perfection in everything that has been endeavored, endowing with meaning to your own life.

Individuals who score low in this dimension experience a sense of personal stagnation, a value that they are not progressing or developing over time, feel reluctant, disinterested about their own lives and unable to implement new attitudes or new behaviors.

Having high levels of psychological well-being is essential to obtain optimal positive functioning. Therefore, the role played in contexts in which psychological well-being becomes more important in the university context is considered important. Since the university is a fertile field, it has become ideal for exposure to potentially stressful situations for students (Dwyer and Cummings, 2001; Fisher, 1984). The experience of academic stress can significantly reduce students’ psychological well-being, based on the persistence in achieving the proposed personal goals, as well as the possibilities of personal growth, can be seriously threatened (Freire, 2014).

An approach of psychology has been proposed to address these aspects; this is the so-called Positive Psychology. Martin Seligman is considered the most recognized in this field, and at the end of the nineties he intended to study the healthy approaches of people, leaving aside pathologies (Lupano and Castro, 2010).

**METHOD**

The objective of this research was to identify the level of psychological well-being in university students in the southern region of the State of Mexico, a type of descriptive study was used, and the research design was non-experimental, transversal.

The research was carried out with a population of 1114 university students of both sexes, it highlighted that the directors of the different universities authorized application to the entire population. Therefore there was no sampling technique, considering the five universities mentioned as follows: National Pedagogical University, Academic Unit Tejupilco, Normal School, University of Higher Studies and University of Technology and Services of the South of the State of Mexico, it should be mentioned that their ages ranged from 18 to 25 years.

**RESULTS**

Of the five universities that were evaluated, the research presents data on frequency (f) and percentages (%), at three levels: low, medium and high. The highest percentage of each university is mentioned, of the dimensions that make up the psychological well-being instrument (Table 1).
### Table 1. Self-acceptance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UPN</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP T</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORMAL</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UES</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTSEM</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The self-acceptance dimension shows, at the level under UAP T 91.8%, and UTSEM with 44%.

### Table 2. Positive relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UPN</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP T</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORMAL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UES</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTSEM</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the positive relations dimension, at the level under the UAP T 91.8%, and UPN with 69.6%.

### Table 3. Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UPN</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP T</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORMAL</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UES</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTSEM</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the autonomy dimension, at the level under UAP T 88.3% and UTSEM 60.7%.

### Table 4. Domain of the environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UPN</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP T</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORMAL</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UES</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTSEM</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the domain dimension, at the level under UAP T 94.1%, and Normal with 48.8%.

### Table 5. Personal growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UPN</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP T</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORMAL</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UES</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTSEM</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The personal growth dimension, at the high level is UES with 56%, and the UAP T with 81%.
DISCUSSION

In universities of the South of the State of Mexico, despite having activities focused on the prevention of health problems for students such as: sports, cultural activities and workshops aimed at the development of skills, they are not aimed at psychological well-being.

Of the five universities, none of them has proposed actions, the World Health Organization and the Mexican Network of Health Promoting Universities (2004) in the implementation of actions focused on monitoring health promotion activities in the field of higher education, as well as the proposals that its objective is to have the inter-institutional bases of support and collaboration to become healthy universities, trainers of integrally healthy individuals committed to their environment as agents generating change, contributing to human and social development, healthy and sustainable within the framework of its powers, political functions and programs; helping to improve the health conditions of members of the university community by strengthening a culture of integral health.

To conduct analysis, it is important to mention that the South of the State of Mexico, has specific characteristics that make the context where this research was conducted unique, its location is the Mexican Subtropical, between coordinates 18° 21' and 19° 34' latitude north and 99° 16' and 100° 36' west longitude. Politically, this geographical space has boundaries with three states of the country (Morelos, Guerrero and Michoacán). By the North and Northwest, the region has limits with municipalities of the same State of Mexico (San Felipe del Progreso, Almoloya de Juárez, Villa Victoria, Villa from Allende, Amanalco de Becerra, Zinacantepec, Toluca, Tenango del Valle, Texcayacac, Joquicingo and Tianguistenco), to the South and Southeast, it borders the states of Morelos and Guerrero, and finally, to the West it has limits with the state of Michoacán and Warrior portions. Our study was conducted in the latter region South and Sou.

The students who attend these participating universities come from municipalities such as: Almoloya de Alquisiras, Amatepec, Coatepec Harinas, Donato Guerra, Ixtapan de la Sal, Ixtapan del Oro, Luvianos, Malinalco, Ocuilan, Otzoloapan, San Simón de Guerrero, Santo Tomás de los Plátanos, Sultepec, Texjupiloc, Temacaltepec, Tlatlaya, Tonatico, Tenancingo, Texcaltitlán, Villa Guerrero, Valle de Bravo, Zumpahuacán, Zacualpan and Zacazonapan (Juan, sf).

The territory is classified by the State Plan of Urban Development of the State of Mexico, as a union of municipalities with rural peculiarities, as well as climatic, hydrological and vegetation cover conditions which benefit the progress of agricultural dynamisms. This situation revealed that the sectorial productive situation, in addition to that internally productive sub-regions, created as extremes of local affinity, can be tied.

The context of the investigation was analyzed, and it was concluded that in the self-acceptance dimension, university students of UAP T, 156 students scored at low levels representing 91.8%, when they are obtained at the low levels people usually feel dissatisfied, disappointed with their vital experiences, they feel worried about some personal characteristics and would experience desires to be different.

In the positive relationships dimension(Table 2), the UAP T is presented at low levels, 156 students representing 91.8%. It appears that students were developing psychosocial skills, such as maturity or the feeling of belonging, integration and group identification, and over the years that they will be in this environment. They will be strengthened, and at the same time observe to see if university students have social support which increases motivation and their academic performance.

During university education, work is done to achieve a balance between positioning and prospering, fulfilling new obligations and establishing deeper links. These two would be the most important individual development goals in the young adult: joining the labor market and establishing positive relationships with other people.

It is therefore in this sense that the training provided by the university institutions of the South of the State of Mexico should be focused. It should take into account the development of individual and collective capacities, as well as the psychological well-being of students, by facilitating the competencies necessary for the achievement of various essential vital purposes, such as economic independence, professional development, acquisition of social status, which could give him elements as future professionals.

The autonomy dimension according to Ryff (1989) is a concept close to self-determination, which suggests the
relationship between will and action, that is, the degree to which the person feels free to start behaviors of his choice (Table 3). The UPN and the UTSEM, have high levels, considering that these university students do have this characteristic, meanwhile the UAP T, and the UES have low levels.

In the Domain of the Environment, according to Díaz et al. (2006), they stated that this ability is used by university students for proper development and that it should be taken into account that it is another of the central indicators of mental health and positive functioning (Table 4). However, the five universities found a low level, representing a point of attention, since it would be considered that the students of the universities of the South of the State of Mexico do not have this ability.

In Personal Growth, the ability of the individual to generate conditions that will develop their potential and continue growing as a person is evaluated (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) Table 5.

In Purpose of Life (Table 6), it is necessary that the person has clear goals and is able to define vital objectives, students of the South of the State of Mexico of the five universities scored low levels therefore it was concluded that they did not have the ability. Hence, the importance of considering the context and geographical area of the South of the state of Mexico, as well as social levels, economic activities, security and many aspects must be considered to contextualize the data obtained in this investigation.

Conclusions

A high level of psychological well-being in personal growth requires that the individual strives to continue growing, developing to the fullest all his potentials and abilities, being demanding with the achievements obtained in the past and facing new personal challenges that allow him to grow as an individual. Therefore, university students from 4 universities do not have the ability except the UAP T that was found at an average level with 81%, considering 137 students this may be due to the fact that most of the students enrolled to study for a degree in psychology.

While it is true that regardless of the context conditions the university must have as a vision a quality education that must take into account all the factors involved in the process of training professionals, it is important to consider the psychological well-being of those who go to the university with the dream that through the institution, their life project has a development that maintains their psychological well-being suitable for the development of their abilities.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

REFERENCES


