



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Contextual and psychological variables in a descriptive model of subjective well-being and school engagement



Arantzazu Rodríguez-Fernández*, Estibaliz Ramos-Díaz, Arantza Fernández-Zabala, Eider Goñi, Igor Esnaola, Alfredo Goñi

Universidad del País Vasco-Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV-EHU), Spain

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KEYWORDS

Contextual variables;
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Abstract *Background/Objective:* The objective of this *ex post facto* study is to analyze both the direct relationships between perceived social support, self-concept, resilience, subjective well-being and school engagement. *Method:* To achieve this, a battery of instruments was applied to 1,250 Compulsory Secondary Education students from the Basque Country (49% boys and 51% girls), aged between 12 and 15 years ($M = 13.72$, $SD = 1.09$), randomly selected. We used a structural equation model to analyze the effects of perceived social support, self-concept and resilience on subjective well-being and school engagement. *Results:* The results provide evidence for the influence of the support of family, peer support and teacher support on self-concept. In addition, self-concept is shown as a mediating variable associated with resilience, subjective well-being and school engagement. *Conclusions:* We discuss the results in the context of positive psychology and their practical implications in the school context.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Variables contextuales;
variables psicológicas;
bienestar subjetivo;
implicación escolar;
estudio *ex post facto*

Variables contextuales y psicológicas en un modelo explicativo del bienestar subjetivo y la implicación escolar

Resumen *Antecedentes/Objetivo:* El objetivo de este estudio *ex post facto* es analizar las relaciones entre apoyo social percibido, autoconcepto, resiliencia, bienestar subjetivo e implicación escolar. *Método:* Se aplicó una batería de instrumentos a 1.250 estudiantes de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria del País Vasco (49% chicos y 51% chicas), de entre 12 y 15 años ($M = 13,72$, $DT = 1,09$), seleccionados aleatoriamente. Se sometió a prueba un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales para analizar los efectos del apoyo social percibido, el autoconcepto y la resiliencia

* Corresponding author: Departamento de Psicología Evolutiva y de la Educación, Universidad del País Vasco, 01006 Vitoria-Gasteiz, España. E-mail address: arantzazu.rodriguez@ehu.eus (A. Rodríguez-Fernández).

sobre el bienestar subjetivo y la implicación escolar. *Resultados:* Los resultados aportan evidencias a favor de la influencia que ejercen el apoyo de la familia, el apoyo de los iguales y el apoyo del profesorado sobre el autoconcepto, que a su vez se muestra como variable mediadora asociada a la resiliencia, el bienestar subjetivo y la implicación escolar. *Conclusiones:* Se discuten los resultados obtenidos en el marco de la psicología positiva y sus implicaciones prácticas en el contexto escolar.

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Traditionally, Psychology has shown more interest in identifying problematic behaviors and human limitations than in studying our strong points (Pemberton & Wainwright, 2014). However, a new model has emerged in recent years known as Positive Youth Development. This model focuses on optimal functioning and aims to determine the individual and contextual aspects of development necessary for a healthy adolescence (Masten, 2014). In accordance with the belief that every adolescent has the potential to become a well-adjusted individual, the approach highlights the need to foster psychosocial human development in educational contexts by promoting competences that enable young people to cope successfully with their personal lives and make a positive contribution to society (Madariaga & Goñi, 2009). To this end, this study argues in favor of the healthy, well-adjusted side of adolescent development, including only positive indicators of adaptation.

Many factors are involved in an individual's successful adaptation, but during adolescence, as Bird and Markle (2012) indicate, one particularly significant indicator of psychological adjustment is subjective well-being, which encompasses one cognitive element linked to the individual's life satisfaction and two affective ones, positive affect and negative affect (Pavot & Diener, 2013; Rodríguez-Fernández & Goñi-Grandmontagne, 2011). Life satisfaction is expressed in the form of an individual's global assessment of how their life has turned out to date (Campbell, Converse & Rogers, 1976; Diener, 1994), while positive and negative affect are emotional responses to different life events that are experienced independently (Bradburn, 1969). Although research into the subject of happiness has been the focus of little attention in the field of adolescent studies (Casas, 2011), our awareness of the consequences of inadequate psychological development has given rise to the analysis of factors related to optimal adolescent psychological adjustment (Fuentes, García, Gracia, & Alarcón, 2014).

The other type of adolescent adjustment, school adjustment, refers to students' engagement in their school environment (Li & Lerner, 2011). There is, as yet, no consensus regarding the scope and limitations of this concept, and these issues are the subject of much debate between researchers (Veiga, Burden, Appleton, Céu, & Galvao, 2014). However, a consensus has been reached regarding the definition of school engagement as a meta-construct encompassing three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and behavioral (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, Friedel, & Paris, 2005; González & Verónica-Paoloni, 2014). This variable is of vital importance to our understanding of healthy adolescent behavior (Li & Lerner, 2011; Ros, Goikoetxea, Gairín, &

Lekue, 2012), since the school environment is one in which teenagers spend a great deal of their time. Furthermore, recent research has gradually provided empirical evidence regarding the existence of psychological and contextual conditions that influence adolescents' school engagement (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012).

One variable which bestows a certain degree of continuity on adolescent psychosocial adjustment, despite the risks inherent to that stage, is resilience (Lerner et al., 2013), a concept which has attracted a considerable amount of attention in the school field due to the key role played by these institutions as promoters of well-being (Toland & Carrigan, 2011). Many interpretations have been offered regarding this construct, which has sometimes been understood not only as a variable that facilitates adaptation, but also as an indicator of adolescent development (Masten & Tellegen, 2012). Despite the lack of consensus regarding its definition (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013), researchers increasingly agree in defining resilience as the ability to cope adequately with the developmental tasks inherent to a specific developmental stage, despite the risks that same stage poses (Masten, 2014). During adolescence, young people develop a set of individual and contextual characteristics that help them cope positively with stressful life events (Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013).

A large number of different resources are involved in adolescents' psychosocial adaptation (Lippman et al., 2014). One of the most important of these is self-concept, understood as the set of perceptions an individual has about him or herself, based on both a personal assessment and the evaluation of significant others (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). Due to its importance in psychology, self-concept has been identified as a theoretical concept closely linked to adjustment in adolescence (Rodríguez-Fernández, Droguett, & Revuelta, 2012). Its association with resilience has been documented (Kidd & Shahar, 2008), as has the dependent relationship which exists between adolescents' subjective well-being and their self-concept (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada, 2014). Less is known, however, about the role played by self-concept in school engagement, although empirical evidence indicates that it has a direct relationship with educational variables such as students' engagement in the learning process (Inglés, Martínez-Monteagudo, García-Fernández, Valle, & Castejón, 2014).

One of the contextual factors that has a positive impact on positive adolescent development is perceived social support (Chu, Saucier, & Hafner, 2010), understood as the individual's subjective perception of the adequacy of the support provided by their social network. This concept is a

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