

# The hierarchy of social assets for life satisfaction in English and Spanish young people

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## **Aims and Objectives:**

To investigate the relative importance of a range of 'social assets' on the life satisfaction of young people growing up in England and Spain by:

- 1 analysing the differences between countries in the perceived quality of a range of relationships in different social contexts (family, peer, school, neighbourhood), taking account of their socio-economic status.
- 2 studying the differences in the weight of these relationships and how these compare across the two countries, independently of socio-economic status. ic status on adolescents' life satisfaction in Spain and England.

## **Method:**

The sample consisted of 5,333 15 years old, of whom 3,624 were Spanish and 1,709, English. The socio-demographic variables considered were gender and family affluence scale (a proxy for socio-economic status). The social relationship variables were family (communication with parents, parental affection, parental monitoring and family life activities), peers (communication with friends of the same sex and opposite sex, to have been involved in any episode of bullying, and to have been bullied), school (liking the school, classmates' support and teacher's support) and neighborhood (perceived support and wellbeing from the neighborhood). Life satisfaction was measured by Cantril's scale.

The chi squared test was used to prove significance for each variable in each country simple. A general linear regression model was used to assess the role of each variable in life satisfaction in separate models for Spain and England (partial square etha and the standardized coefficients were used to determine the weight of each variable in explaining levels of life satisfaction).

## **Results:**

Family context: no statistical differences were found between England and Spain in: communication with father, communication with mother, father's affection, mother's

affection and frequency of family life activities. However, significant differences were found in parental monitoring - Spanish adolescents were more likely to report that their mother or father knew more about their lives than English adolescents.

Peer context, no statistical differences were found between England and Spain in: communication with same sex friends and reported frequency of being bullied. However, there were significant differences in communication between friends of the opposite sex and between the frequency of reports of having bullied others.

School context, no statistical differences were found between England and Spain in teacher's support. However, the differences in liking school and classmates' support were significant. Spanish adolescents were both more likely to claim that they liked school and that they felt that their classmates supported them.

Neighbourhood sense of belonging: Spanish adolescents were significantly more likely to report a feeling of belonging in their neighbourhood as measured by the trust neighbours watching out for one another.

It is important to note that there were significant differences in FAS between England and Spain. In England there were a lower proportion of families with lower affluence (for example, only 6,7% of English adolescents compared with 28,10% of Spanish adolescents).

Results from the general linear model show that both the variable types and their relative importance in explaining life satisfaction is very similar for both countries. In particular, in both countries the positive relationships with mothers is central to their life satisfaction of adolescents (in both countries, communication with the mother and maternal affection occupy the top two places in the hierarchy). Some aspects of peer relationships, school and relationships with fathers are also important and common across the two countries..

However, there are some differences between the two countries that are worth noting. In England, family affluence is a much stronger predictor of life satisfaction along with being bullied, whereas in Spain these are not so important.

The results presented here are useful in classifying a hierarchy of health assets that are important in the lives of adolescents living in 2 different country contexts. By inference the results can be used to understand the relative importance of different assets and thus better understand how, sometimes, when an asset fails, another can help to improve life satisfaction in adolescence.