

Activities and relationships with parents as key ecological assets that encourage personal positive youth development

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Abstract

Scientific literature has shown contextual factors that predict youth development, and family variables are the most important ones. In this study, we propose a model that explains the relation between family variables (relationship with parents and family activities) and Personal Positive Youth Development (assessed through Life satisfaction, Interiority, and Self-control), across different cultures. We recruited 2867 adolescents aged 12–18 years (52% female) from three countries: Spain, Mexico, and Peru. They completed an anonymous questionnaire. We run exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and structural equation modelling, testing for invariance across countries and sexes. In all subsamples, positive family relationships were associated with adolescents' Life Satisfaction. In addition, time invested on family activities was associated with Interiority and with Self-control. However, some differences across cultures and sex were found in the specific associations. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed regarding how to improve adolescent development through family life.

KEYWORDS

family relationships, interiority, personal positive youth development, satisfaction, self-control

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1 | INTRODUCTION

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective sees adolescents focusing on “resources to develop” based on their strengths (Burkhard et al., 2020; Lerner et al., 2011). This strength-based view of adolescents has been used to study youth development (Lerner et al., 2011). It has contributed toward the promotion of different personal and social resources that promote a better development. The term “PYD” has been referred to in different ways, and has been used in various contexts (e.g., Lerner et al., 2011; Silbereisen & Lerner 2007; Tolan et al., 2016, in Shek et al., 2019). The diverse theoretical models of PYD have certain points in common, such as the environmental perspective. One of the models is Benson's Forty Developmental Assets (Benson, 1997). Benson argues that internal and external assets (i.e., individual strengths and environmental resources) are needed to promote positive development.

Individual/internal assets are personal positive characteristics, as well as skills and competencies (Melton et al., 2021) that can be enhanced. External assets are positive features of developmental ecologies in which youth receive encouragement by interacting with multiple socialization systems (e.g., the family, the school and/or the neighborhood) (Benson, 1997, in Melton et al., 2021; Shek et al., 2019). Individual assets are internal and character strengths. They play a key role in PYD, not only as broad protective factors that prevent negative aspects of development, but also as enabling conditions that promote competency (Park, 2004). These strengths can be cultivated and strengthened by familiar factors, as well as appropriate parenting, among other contextual factors (Jach et al., 2018; Park, 2004).

1.1 | Personal positive youth development (PPYD)

In the same line of Benson's PYD perspective, we propose the PPYD approach (Balaguer et al., 2020). PPYD, like PYD, is based on ecological models, which focus on the environmental contexts and relational systems associated with human development (Balaguer et al., 2020; Ford & Lerner, 1992; Lerner et al., 2015; Overton, 2015). Indeed, the different contexts in which adolescents' lives take place and the positive interaction between young people and their environments are all essential for positive development (Burkhard et al., 2020; Lerner et al., 2015; Shek et al., 2019), as well as for promoting competencies and adjustment.

Similarly to Benson's perspective, the PPYD concept includes both external and internal assets or strengths (Balaguer et al., 2020). However, PPYD models focus on how different contextual systems (e.g. family, school, peers, neighborhood, and other associations and institutions...) empower the youths' internal ones. Indeed, internal strengths shape a personal core, evaluated by individual psychological constructs. The personal core refers to individual assets. They can be emotional, spiritual, and/or cognitive-behavioral components. The emotional component includes the subjective perception of positive feelings (e.g., Happiness, Life Satisfaction, Subjective Well-being). The spiritual component implies the relationship with oneself (e.g., Interiority, Meaning, Transcendence). The cognitive-behavioral component comprises individual competency perception (e.g. Self-control, Self-management, Self-efficacy), among others.

One of the emotional components is Life Satisfaction. This construct explains the individual perception of personal satisfaction, both with life in general and with the social environment. It refers to feeling free and happy (the personal component), as well as to feeling loved by others and comfortable to express oneself among them (the social component). These basic aspects of satisfaction can be related to the three dimensions of the Self-Determination Theory: autonomy (feeling able to manage one's life), competency (perceived self-efficacy to do what one wants), and relatedness (one's relation with others) (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

On the other hand, Interiority is one of the spiritual components of PPYD. It refers to activities the adolescent tends to carry out when alone and in silence. These do not pursue an external goal (social, academic, etc.), but,

rather, meditation: admiring nature, wondering about deep issues, or seeking silence and tranquility. Several authors (Hermann, 2005; Krinke, 2005; Naval, 2020; Treib, 2005) have described a series of characteristics related to the psychological response of contemplation; they have included elements such as fixed attention, inner orientation, and inner silence (Olszewska et al., 2018).

Indeed, contemplation of a natural landscape improves health and wellbeing; (1) it helps the individual recover the ability of directed attention (Cottet et al., 2018; Kaplan, 1995; Olszewska et al., 2018), (2) it reduces mental tiredness and improves the ability to reflect over important issues (Herzog et al., 2003), and (3) it produces a personal sense of mental freedom and pleasure, which helps to reduce stress (Kaplan, 1995; Olszewska et al., 2018; Skalski, 2005).

Contemplation also activates the brain regions in charge of visual attention (Olszewska et al. 2018). Accordingly, wondering about life issues, or about the sense of life, is typical of adolescence (King & Roeser, 2009; Klůzová Kráčmarová, Dutková and Tavel, 2018). The diversity of roles, values, beliefs, and ideologies encountered by adolescents leads them to raise existential questions and to search for the meaning of life (King & Roeser, 2009). Last, silence is a natural aspect of adolescent development (Le Fourn, 2013). The fact of thinking about nothing at all is a particular state in adolescence (Mâle, 1982). According to Liimets & Koit (2018), "the capacity to listen to silence and understand the talk of silence teaches one to transcend one's boundaries" (p. 48).

Finally, one of the constructs that cognitive-behavioral component embraces is Self-control. It is the ability that enables the regulation of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in different situations. It also permits the individual to manage stress and self-motivation, and to establish and reach goals (Greenberg et al., 2017). Different components of self-control have been described in the literature: self-management, self-regulation, resisting negative influence, and impulse control. All of them play important roles in adolescence (Ross et al., 2019).

Self-control also refers to responsibility, self-dominion, and temperance. It is related with personal maturity and with the ability to plan, manage, direct, and/or order one's life. Goal-oriented intentions are associated with self-control (Becker & Mulligan, 1997). For example, self-control predicts the achievement of academic goals (Duckworth & Seligman 2017), and vice versa (Galla et al., 2018). Individuals with a high degree of self-control are more prone to save money (Brown & Taylor, 2016; Gathergood, 2012; Strömbäck et al., 2017; Webley & Nyhus, 2013), although adolescents' motivations for saving vary according to each culture's values (Gallimore et al., 1974).

1.2 | Family life

According to the PYD models, the development of competencies is influenced by contextual factors such as the family (Balaguer et al., 2020; Oliva et al., 2002). Family is the most robust factor to enhance PPYD (Balaguer et al., 2020). Several family aspects can be related to different adolescent development assets. This is the case of emotional competencies (such as psychological adjustment; Gracia et al., 2012), spiritual assets (Malinakova et al., 2019), or cognitive-behavioral competencies (such as self-control; Vazsonyi and Belliston, 2007). Understanding this development implies deepening in the family functioning, and this needs to be seen from an intercultural perspective (both regarding immigrant families and transcultural issues) (Costigan et al., 2017).

Families are different depending on the culture. Some studies have been done from an intercultural perspective to consider different composition of families and different ideal models of family (Margolis et al., 2016). Family stands as one of the most relevant variables to understand acculturation of the new generations (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). The cultural differences appear in many dimensions: family composition, routines, cultural values, beliefs on child development, food habits or discipline practices. For instance, latino parents tend to be more protective, and they perceive strong family unity and ties, which is a critical cultural value for Latinos (Ayón et al., 2015).

García & Peralbo (2000) found that the perception of the ideal model of family differed between Spanish and Australian families, and that such perception differed among the family members. Kiang & Fuligni (2009), indicate some cultural differences among Latin American, Asiatic, and European families. For instance, they found differences in issues such as helping in family duties, obedience to adults, and mainly loyalty. Weitkamp and Seiffge-Krenke (2019) found differences among families from these same cultural groups in dimensions such as support, control, or anxious rearing.

Few studies have followed a cross-cultural perspective analyzing PYD and family variables. For example, Moreno-Maldonado et al. (2020) analyzed life satisfaction and several family variables among Spanish and Portuguese adolescents. In addition to cultural factors, these authors indicated that age and sex could also be important variables to explain differences in life satisfaction. For example, family unemployment might affect boys more than girls. Seiffge-Krenke et al. (2018) performed a cross-cultural study on family factors and behavioral problems in adolescents. They found that the interaction between culture and sex are important in some countries, for example in Peru, one of the countries analyzed in our study.

Nevertheless, few studies have faced an important aspect of family functioning: daily routines and activities shared by the family members. Bowes et al. (2004) highlighted that it is through daily routines how families implement many of their socialization processes and of their transmission of cultural values. This process, however, is not unidirectional. It rather implies an authentic negotiation. In this negotiation, both the performing of routines and the managing of emerging conflicts can be tackled in very different ways.

Accordingly, we hypothesize that, depending on the culture, family routines might be related with different levels of adolescent positive development. However, there is an empirical lack regarding these cross-cultural differences. In fact, “although PYD perspectives are meant to apply to all youth, to date, there has been limited attention paid to the role of race and ethnicity” (Williams & Deutsch, 2016, p. 203) in this field.

In addition, research on PYD has been mainly conducted within the US context (Wium & Dimitrova, 2019). Therefore, we wonder how these hypothesized associations may vary according to the geographic context. Some studies have partially analyzed some of these issues. For example, Kiang and Fuligni (2009) found that adolescents from Latin American families share more time in family leisure activities than those from European families. However, there are no studies doing these analyses with regard to the dimensions of PYD, as we intend here.

2 | HYPOTHESES

Our model hypothesizes two family-related constructs that predict an adolescent's personal positive development, namely PPD. On the one hand, we propose *Family Relationships* as a construct that encompasses the relationship between the parents, as well as the relationships between the parents and the child. The second construct is *Family Activities*, which refers to activities carried out at home.

We propose a model designed to explain PPD by means of five constructs: three indicators of PPD (Life Satisfaction, Interiority, and Self-Control) and two indicators regarding family (Family Relationships and Family Activities). We hypothesize that both family relationships and family activities contribute to improve the PPD of adolescents.

Furthermore, we expect to find differences in this model across the three countries under study: Spain, Mexico, and Peru, and by sex within each country.

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Study design

This research is part of an international study (the YourLife Project) that focuses on what youth feel and think about relationships, love, and sexuality. The methods of this project have been described elsewhere (Carlos et al., 2016).

3.2 | Sample

Adolescents enrolled in the stage of secondary education were recruited through public and private high schools in Mexico, Peru, and Spain. Participating schools invited their students aged 12–18 to participate in the study.

In total, 2751 students from Mexico ($N = 645$, 23.2%), Peru ($N = 1331$, 48.0%), and Spain ($N = 791$, 28.8%) filled out the survey. Spanish participants had a mean age of 14.45 ($SD = 1.49$), Mexicans 14.69 ($SD = 1.65$), and Peruvians 14.35 (1.41). Although these differences are statistically significant ($F_{2,2775} = 11.054$, $p < .001$), size effect shows that they are not relevant ($\eta^2 = .008$). Across the entire sample, 53.3% were girls. By country, 59.0% of Spaniards, 27.4% of Mexicans, and 62.4% of Peruvians were girls.

According to school type, 370 students (13.4%) were from public schools, 1551 (56.4%) were from private schools, and 830 (30.2%) were from state-subsidized/semi-private schools. This distribution was not the same in each country: in Spain, most students (89.9%) were from semi-private schools, and fewer from private schools (10.1%); in Mexico, all participants were from private schools; in Peru, most came from private schools, (63.0%), some from public ones (28.0%), and a few from semi-private schools (9.0%).

3.3 | Measures

An online questionnaire was designed for adolescents aged 12–18. The questionnaire, written in Spanish, primarily featured closed questions. It was pilot tested and adjusted to ensure comprehension, clarity, and suitability for local conditions, and to ensure that no more than 45 min would be required to fill it out.

For this study, 15 items were used, all of which were to be answered via a 5-point Likert scale. Among them, 5 items belong to the family domain, and correspond to the exogenous variables in structural equation modeling (SEM). The remaining 10 items belong to the personal domain, and correspond to the endogenous variables.

3.3.1 | Exogenous variables: family issues

This domain was assessed through five items, subdivided into two constructs: one related to the quality of family relationships, and the other related to activities within the family. This model presents an adequate fit in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) ($\chi^2 = 9.921$, $df = 4$, $\chi^2/df = 2.480$; goodness of fit index [GFI] = 0.996, comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.986; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.032). *Family Relationships* was assessed through three items: “I consider my parents' relationship satisfactory”; “I consider my relationship with my mother satisfactory”; “I consider my relationship with my father satisfactory” ($\alpha = 0.764$, composite reliability [CR] = 0.795, Rho average variance extracted [AVE] = 0.495). *Family Activities* was assessed through 2 items: “I usually have dinner with my parents”; “I help with household chores” ($\alpha = 0.36$, CR = 0.474, Rho AVE = 0.361).

3.3.2 | Endogenous variables: personal development issues

This domain was assessed via 10 items, grouped into 3 constructs. *Life Satisfaction* was assessed through 4 items: "I generally feel free in my life"; "I feel loved by others"; "I am generally happy with the life I lead"; "I can express my thoughts with my friends without fear" ($\alpha = 0.772$, CR = 0.587, Rho AVE = 0.326). These questions were inspired by Elzo (2006). *Interiority* was assessed through 3 items: "Every now and then, I like to admire a landscape"; "I like to question myself about different things in life"; "Every now and then, I like to be in silence without noise or electronic devices" ($\alpha = 0.736$, CR = 0.737, Rho AVE = 0.485). *Self-Control* was assessed through 3 items: "I plan what I do"; "I usually finish the things/projects that I start"; "I usually save money" ($\alpha = 0.572$, CR = 0.819; Rho AVE = 0.534). This model presents an adequate fit in CFA ($\chi^2 = 79.265$, $df = 31$, $\chi^2/df = 2.557$; GFI = 0.983, CFI = 0.955; RMSEA = 0.032).

3.4 | Procedure

The web page of the YourLife project (<http://proyectoourlife.com/en/>) offers participation to all schools in Spanish-speaking countries. In some countries, local collaborators invited high schools, both through massive emails and through specific invitations to schools where access was easier (convenience sampling). Data from 27 schools were collected between November 2016 and July 2017 (13 schools from Peru, 10 from Spain, and 4 from Mexico).

The purpose of the study was explained to the adolescents verbally and in writing 2 days before the survey date and just before taking the survey. Students were informed that the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous. It was stressed that participation was on a voluntary basis, and that they did not have to answer any question they did not want to. This information was likewise provided on the first page of the online questionnaire.

Each school administered the online questionnaire during teaching periods. All students from the specified grades were invited by their teacher to go to the computer room and access a URL. In that URL, information on voluntariness and anonymity was reminded, and the students who accepted to participate clicked on the Start button and filled the survey. Students not attending that day and students refusing to participate did not fill the questionnaire (and we do not have data on the response rate).

Schools were responsible for and in charge of obtaining parental consent, in accordance with local laws and policies. Ethical approval was obtained for the project from the Ethics Committee of the University of Navarra (Spain).

3.5 | Data analyses

The main analysis in this study was based on SEM for the different groups. The AMOS program (Arbuckle, 2009) is an appropriate option for the performance of CFA and for the establishment of regression models amongst the observed and latent variables, thereby enabling researchers to make comparisons between different groups (Byrne, 2010). More specifically, multigroup analysis permits to test equivalencies across groups, with a special interest (in our case) on testing equivalence in structural regression paths. A possible option is that of *partial measurement invariance*, this is the possibility that equivalence may be proved for some structural regression paths and not for other ones. This option cannot be ruled out in cross cultural studies (Byrne, 2010).

First, we defined the variables according to the indicators exposed above, proposing five latent variables (Family Relationships, Family Activities, Life Satisfaction, Interiority, and Self-Control). For each latent variable, convergent validity data were calculated by means of CR (recommended value >0.07) and AVE (recommended value >0.05) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 1999).

We split the sample randomly in two halves. We performed two exploratory factor analyses (EFA) on the first subsample: one on the family variables, and another one on the personal variables. The results were contrasted with the second subsample through CFA. The five latent variables were confirmed and used in the subsequent analyses.

Then we defined six subsamples based on sex and country: Spanish boys (sample 1, $n = 324$), Spanish girls (sample 2, $n = 467$), Mexican boys (sample 3, $n = 464$), Mexican girls (sample 4, $n = 175$), Peruvian boys (sample 5, $n = 497$), and Peruvian girls (sample 6, $n = 824$).

We started with correlations between latent variables in each of the subsamples, establishing the restriction that measurement weights should be equal across subsamples (i.e., maintaining the measurement model invariant).

Then we tested the SEM model in which the family variables (*Family Relationships* and *Family Activities*) were exogenous variables, and in which the personal development variables (*Life Satisfaction*, *Interiority*, and *Self-Control*) were endogenous variables (Figure 1). To compare the different samples, we departed from the strategy of comparing nested models in which different restrictions are imposed.

Two initial models were considered. One assumed equal measurement weights across groups (Model A), and the other assumed equal structural weights (Model B). Both models showed different fit indexes, and we therefore cannot assume equal structural weights for all groups. We subsequently kept the assumption of equal measurement weights, and established 0 for the nonsignificant structural weights, comparing two models: one without equality restrictions in the remaining structural weights (Model C), and another model applying such equality restrictions (Model D). After ascertaining that both models were not equal, subsequent models permitted differences in other structural weights where differences among groups were higher. Each of these models was compared with Model D, to test if the added proposal improved the fit with respect to the previous one. Lastly, we constructed a final model that incorporated all the specifications that had improved the model (Model E).

In terms of estimation method, we used ADF (asymptotically distribution-free), which is especially recommended when working with ordinal variables, and which does not require the assumption of multivariate normality (as other more extended methods do, such as maximum likelihood). To test the models' fit, the usual indexes were used: the chi-square index (χ^2), the normalized chi-square index (χ^2/df), the GFI, the CFI, and the RMSEA (Byrne 2010). When dealing with nested models, comparisons between models were made by calculating $\Delta\chi^2$ (Byrne, 2010; McDonald and Ho, 2002), the akaike information criterion (AIC) (Byrne, 2010), and ΔCFI , another option to compare models, with a lower dependence from sample size (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

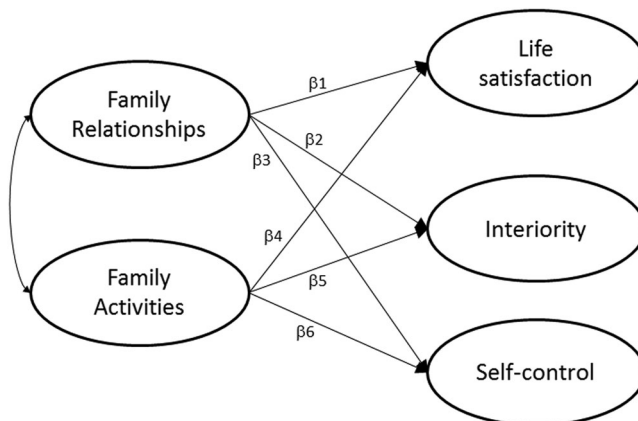


FIGURE 1 Path diagram

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Correlations

Table 1 shows correlations among the latent variables used in the study, both in the whole sample and in each of the 6 subsamples. Certain differences across the subsamples could be noted. Regarding the relation between the two family variables (activities and relationships), they correlated in the whole sample ($r = 0.339$), but this value was much lower in the two boys' samples: Spain (with no statistical significance) and Mexico. On the contrary, the value was much higher among Spanish girls ($r = 0.619$).

There were also significant correlations among the personal development variables. *Self-control* showed moderate associations with both *Life Satisfaction* ($r = 0.360$) and *Interiority* ($r = 0.343$). These correlations were similar across subsamples, except for a lower correlation between *Self-Control* and *Life Satisfaction* among Spanish girls ($r = 0.143$) and a higher correlation between *Self-Control* and *Interiority* among Mexican girls ($r = 0.708$). However, the correlation between *Interiority* and *Life Satisfaction* was low in the whole sample ($r = 0.101$), and inconsistent across subsamples: positive in the boys' groups, negative among Mexican girls, and nonsignificant in the other girls' groups.

Finally, the correlations between family variables and personal development variables were complex. *Family Relationships* had a moderate positive correlation with *Life Satisfaction* ($r = 0.454$) and with *Self-Control* ($r = 0.364$), with similar values across subsamples. On the contrary, the correlation between *Family Relationships* and *Interiority* was significant for Spanish boys and for Peruvian boys and girls, but not for the whole sample. The highest correlation was between *Family Activities* and *Self-Control* ($r = 0.717$ for the whole sample, without important differences across subsamples). *Family Activities* also correlated with *Life Satisfaction* ($r = 0.268$) and with *Interiority* ($r = 0.296$); however, these correlations were not significant in all groups, and the correlation between *Family Activities* and *Life Satisfaction* was inverse among Mexican girls ($r = -0.277$).

4.2 | SEM model comparison

Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relations among the latent variables. These variables were measured by the mentioned indicators (see Measures section). The measurements were tested with EFA and CFA, and adjustment was good (see Data Analyses section).

Structural coefficients between each exogenous variable (family variables) and each endogenous variable (personal development variables) were then estimated by SEM for each group in different models.

First, we compared measurement weight models versus structural weight models (i.e., a model without restrictions regarding structural weights, and a model with the restriction that weights must be equal across all subsamples: Models A and B, respectively). Fit indices of these models are shown in Table 2. The comparison between these two models showed that they are different ($\Delta\chi^2 = 101.701$, $\Delta df = 30$, $p < 0.001$; $\Delta AIC = 41.701$). Furthermore, the first model shows structural weights that are not different from zero, and should therefore be dropped. Analyzing this comparison from CFI, the increment ($\Delta CFI = .018$) did not reach the value suggested by Cheung & Rensvold (2002). Therefore, the conclusion would be the same: the model with more restrictions should be rejected (Elosua, 2005).

Then we tested two new models, eliminating the nonsignificant structural weights in both of them: one model without equality restrictions in the remaining structural weights (Model C), and another model with such equality restrictions (Model D). Again, the comparison between these models indicates differences between them ($\Delta\chi^2 = 65.379$, $\Delta df = 17$, $p < 0.001$, $\Delta AIC = 31.379$, $\Delta CFI = 0.012$), for which we cannot assume that structural weights are equal across subsamples.

TABLE 1 Correlations between latent variables in the whole sample and in each subsample

	Whole sample	Sample 1 Spanish boys	Sample 2 Spanish girls	Sample 3 Mexican boys	Sample 4 Mexican girls	Sample 5 Peruvian boys	Sample 6 Peruvian girls
Family Activities	0.339***	0.128	0.619***	0.169*	0.464***	0.505***	0.384***
Self-control	0.360***	0.284***	0.143*	0.248***	0.329***	0.533***	0.335***
Self-control	0.343***	0.485***	0.425***	0.344***	0.708***	0.365***	0.314***
Interiority	0.101***	0.217**	-0.003	0.125*	-0.227**	0.251***	0.124
Family Relationships	0.454***	0.268***	0.404***	0.375***	0.289***	0.528***	0.563***
Family Relationships	0.052	0.164*	-0.034	0.105	0.074	0.162***	0.143*
Family Relationships	0.364***	0.368***	0.412***	0.222*	0.334***	0.422***	0.301***
Family Activities	0.268***	0.129*	0.264*	0.099	-0.277**	0.502***	0.258**
Family Activities	0.296***	0.290**	0.480***	0.417***	0.168	0.285***	0.245**
Family Activities	0.717***	0.419**	0.937***	0.604**	0.514***	0.825***	0.715***

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 2 Fit-indices for structural equation models

Model	Model description	CMIN	DF	p	CMIN/DF	GFI	RMSEA	AIC	CFI
A	Measurement weights	1165.020	536	<0.001	2.174	0.943	0.021	1533.020	0.843
B	Structural weights	1266.721	566	<0.001	2.238	0.931	0.021	1574.721	0.825
C	Nonsignificant weights dropped. No other restrictions	1199.260	549	<0.001	2.184	0.926	0.021	1541.260	0.826
D	Nonsignificant weights dropped. Other weights equal	1264.639	566	<0.001	2.234	0.925	0.021	1572.639	0.838
D.1.1	($\beta_{1_1} = \beta_{1_2} = \beta_{1_3} = \beta_{1_4}$); ($\beta_{1_5} \neq \beta_{1_6}$)	1253.185	564	<0.001	2.222	0.929	0.021	1565.185	0.828
D.1.2	($\beta_{1_1} = \beta_{1_2} = \beta_{1_3} = \beta_{1_4} = \beta_{1_5}$); (β_{1_6})	1256.674	565	<0.001	2.224	0.926	0.021	1566.674	0.828
D.1.3	($\beta_{1_1} = \beta_{1_2} = \beta_{1_3} = \beta_{1_4} = \beta_{1_5}$); (β_{1_6})	1257.961	565	<0.001	2.226	0.926	0.021	1567.961	0.827
D.1.4	($\beta_{1_1} = \beta_{1_2} = \beta_{1_3} = \beta_{1_4}$); ($\beta_{1_5} = \beta_{1_6}$)	1264.614	565	<0.001	2.238	0.926	0.021	1574.614	0.826
D.2	($\beta_{2_1} = \beta_{2_3} = \beta_{2_5} = \beta_{2_6} = 0$) ($\beta_{2_2} \neq \beta_{2_4}$)	1263.856	565	<0.001	2.237	0.926	0.021	1573.856	0.826
D.3	($\beta_{3_2} = \beta_{3_4} = \beta_{3_5} = \beta_{3_6} = 0$); ($\beta_{3_1} \neq \beta_{3_3}$)	1263.892	565	<0.001	2.237	0.926	0.021	1573.892	0.826
D.4	($\beta_{4_1} = \beta_{4_2} = \beta_{4_3} = \beta_{4_4} = \beta_{4_6} = 0$); (β_{4_5})	1264.639	566	<0.001	2.234	0.925	0.021	1572.639	0.826
D.5.1	($\beta_{5_1} = \beta_{5_2} = \beta_{5_4}$); ($\beta_{5_3} = \beta_{5_5} = \beta_{5_6}$)	1231.987	565	<0.001	2.181	0.926	0.021	1541.987	0.834
D.5.2	($\beta_{5_2} = \beta_{5_4}$); (β_{5_1}); ($\beta_{5_3} = \beta_{5_5} = \beta_{5_6}$)	1231.604	565	<0.001	2.180	0.928	0.021	1541.604	0.834
D.5.3	($\beta_{5_1} = \beta_{5_4}$); (β_{5_2}); ($\beta_{5_3} = \beta_{5_5} = \beta_{5_6}$)	1234.301	565	<0.001	2.185	0.928	0.021	1544.301	0.833
D.5.4	($\beta_{5_1} = \beta_{5_2}$); (β_{5_4}); ($\beta_{5_3} = \beta_{5_5} = \beta_{5_6}$)	1263.174	566	<0.001	2.232	0.927	0.021	1571.174	0.826
D.6.1	($\beta_{6_1} = \beta_{6_3} = \beta_{6_4}$); ($\beta_{6_2} = \beta_{6_5} = \beta_{6_6}$)	1253.267	565	<0.001	2.218	0.926	0.021	1563.267	0.828
D.6.2	($\beta_{6_1} = \beta_{6_3} = \beta_{6_4}$); ($\beta_{6_5} = \beta_{6_6}$); (β_{6_2})	1253.254	564	<0.001	2.222	0.926	0.021	1565.254	0.828
D.6.3	($\beta_{6_1} = \beta_{6_3} = \beta_{6_4}$); ($\beta_{6_2} = \beta_{6_6}$); (β_{6_5})	1252.445	564	<0.001	2.221	0.926	0.021	1564.445	0.828
D.6.4	($\beta_{6_1} = \beta_{6_3} = \beta_{6_4}$); ($\beta_{6_2} = \beta_{6_5}$); (β_{6_6})	1251.968	564	<0.001	2.220	0.926	0.021	1563.968	0.829
E	FINAL	1217.812	562	<0.001	2.167	0.926	0.021	1533.812	0.837

We then tested the most plausible alternative models for each structural weight, as shown in Models D.1–D.6, which were compared with Model D, which assumes restrictions in structural weights that are different from zero.

For the path between *Family Relationships* and *Life Satisfaction* (β_1), Models D.1.1–D.1.4 test the constraint that structural weights in the samples with the most extreme values (subsamples 5 and 6) are different from the others. These four models are significantly different from Model D (which assumes equality among them all), whereby Model D.1 is the one with the best fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 11,454$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.003$). This model assumes that the two weights (5 and 6) are different from the others, and different from each other.

The weight between *Family Relationships* and *Interiority* (β_2) was significant in two groups only: Spanish and Peruvian girls. Model D.2 includes a difference between both weights, and between them and the ones in the other subsamples, but this does not increase the fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = .783$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = 0.376$), which means that the difference was not significant.

The weight between *Family Relationships* and *Self-control* (β_3) was significant in two samples only: Spanish boys and Mexican boys. Both weights were low and similar. Model D.3 includes a difference between both weights, and between them and the ones in the other subsamples, but this does not increase the fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = .747$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = 0.387$), which means that the difference was not significant.

The weight between *Family Activities* and *Life Satisfaction* (β_4) was only significant for Peruvian boys. In this case, there are no alternative models, since the proposed model, constraining all nonsignificant weights to zero, and estimating the weight for Peruvian boys, is the same as Model D.

The weight between *Family Activities* and *Interiority* (β_5) was much more relevant, since it was significant in all groups. In three groups (Spanish boys and girls, and Mexican girls), it was higher than in the others. Four models (D.5.1–D.5.4) tested these differences. The model with the best fit (D.5.1) establishes equality for the three samples with the highest values, and for the three remaining ones. This model has a better fit than Model D, which establishes equality restrictions for the six subsamples ($\Delta\chi^2 = 32.652$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.001$).

Finally, the weight between *Family Activities* and *Self-Control* (β_6) was significant in all groups as well, and with the highest values. Models D.6.1–D.6.4 tested differences among them. The model with the best fit (D.6.1) assumes differences between the three subsamples with the highest values (Spanish girls, Peruvian boys, and Peruvian girls) and the remaining subsamples ($\Delta\chi^2 = 11.372$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.001$).

4.3 | SEM model summary

As a synthesis, the final model (Model E) includes all the previous restrictions that improved the initial model. The final model's structural weights are shown in Table 3. It is statistically different from Model D, which assumed the equality of regression coefficients in all paths that were different from zero ($\Delta\chi^2 = 46.827$, $\Delta df = 4$, $p < 0.001$, $\Delta AIC = 38.827$, $\Delta CFI = 0.011$). This model proposes that *Family Relationships* influences *Life Satisfaction* in all subsamples (with a higher influence among Peruvian girls, $\beta = 0.559$, and a lower one among Peruvian boys, $\beta = 0.330$). It also has an inverse influence on *Interiority* among Spanish ($\beta = -0.428$) and Mexican girls ($\beta = -0.403$), and a small influence on Spanish and Mexican boys' *Self-control*. Additionally, *Family Activities* has a strong influence on *Self-Control*, especially among Spanish girls ($\beta = .769$), and Peruvian boys ($\beta = 0.877$), and girls ($\beta = 0.811$), and a moderate influence on *Interiority*, mainly for Spanish boys ($\beta = 0.653$) and girls ($\beta = 0.611$), as well as for Mexican girls ($\beta = 0.698$). It also has a slight influence on *Life Satisfaction*, but only among Peruvian boys ($\beta = 0.315$).

Table 3 also includes the squared multiple correlations of endogenous variables. The proposed models have a better capacity to predict the self-control variable. Regarding *Interiority*, an important difference can be noted between Spanish boys (42.7% of variance explained) and the other subsamples (with lower values). A similar finding occurs with *Life Satisfaction*: the model's predictive capacity is higher among Peruvian boys and girls than in the other subsamples.

TABLE 3 Path coefficients and latent variables

	Sample 1 Spanish boys	Sample 2 Spanish girls	Sample 3 Mexican boys	Sample 4 Mexican girls	Sample 5 Peruvian boys	Sample 6 Peruvian girls
Family Relationships →β ₁ Life Satisfaction	0.392	0.433	0.424	0.381	0.330	0.559
Family Relationships →β ₂ Interiority	0	-0.428	0	-0.403	0	0
Family Relationships →β ₃ Self-control	0.141	0	0.124	0	0	0
Family Activities →β ₄ Life Satisfaction	0	0	0	0	0.315	0
Family Activities →β ₅ Interiority	0.653	0.611	0.315	0.698	0.368	0.330
Family Activities →β ₆ Self-control	0.684	0.769	0.638	0.584	0.877	0.811
Squared Multiple Correlations						
Life Satisfaction	0.154	0.187	0.179	0.145	0.297	0.313
Interiority	0.427	0.269	0.099	0.280	0.136	0.109
Self-control	0.544	0.591	0.487	0.341	0.769	0.657

5 | DISCUSSION

Our objective was to test whether certain family-related issues (*Family Relationships* and *Family Activities*) are associated with personal PYD, embracing emotional, spiritual, and cognitive-behavioral components (*Life Satisfaction*, *Interiority*, and *Self-Control*), and differ across countries and sex. The results are discussed according to the relationships found for each endogenous variable: Life Satisfaction, Interiority, and Self-Control.

5.1 | Life satisfaction

The emotional component Life Satisfaction was associated with Family Relationships in all subsamples and with Family Activities only among Peruvian boys. It must be underlined that the *Life Satisfaction* variable included a social component in some of its items (regarding feeling loved by others, and feeling free to state one's opinion), and it is aligned with relatedness (one's relation with others) within Self-Determination Theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

In this sense, our results are in line with attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973). To explain the relationships between family activities and life satisfaction for Peruvian boys, we can only attempt a hypothesis. This would refer specially to the collectivist nature of the Peruvian culture, with a high level of family involvement (Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2018; Weitkamp & Seiffge-Krenke, 2019). In this group of boys, these values would be represented by family activities. For boys, but not for girls, family values would be associated with life satisfaction.

Our hypothesis was that bonds of trust, closeness, and safety in relations with parents extrapolates to peer bonds. Accordingly, adolescents with good family relationships feel loved by others and express their opinion within their group of friends. Moreover, they feel free, and are generally happy with their life. The perception of individual and social freedom cannot be understood without taking into account the emotional influence that stems from an individual's close social environment. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that youngsters build a model of secure attachment with their parents, which subsequently leads them to establish secure and trusting relationships with themselves and with their peers.

During adolescence, peer relationships start to gain importance compared with parental ones (Brown & Larson, 2009). Thereby, the greater the autonomy pursued by adolescents, the more pronounced is the decline of family ties. At the same time, however, the autonomy achieved in the group of peers would work in favor of a good relationship with the family (Ausubel, 1952). On the basis of their relationship with parents, adolescents develop expectations regarding their relationships with others (Hartup, 1985). Indeed, a strong and secure relationship with parents improves, on the one hand, the belief that one can trust others and, on the other, the beliefs of value and individual competency.

5.2 | Interiority

The association between Family Relationships and the spiritual component Interiority was only found among Spanish and Mexican girls, and the association was inverse. This might suggest that having satisfying relationships during adolescence might increase the amount of time of interaction with others, and therefore reduce the moments of solitude and interiority. This result shows an important gender factor with relevant results, for girls, in two of the three countries. This gender effect has also been found in other studies. For example, in a study on school violence, Estévez et al. (2016) found that good family relationships had a more relevant protective role for girls than for boys. This happened both for Spanish and for Mexican students. However, further studies should look into this issue in more detail.

Conversely, Family Activities was positively associated with Interiority in all subsamples. Spain had the highest association, and Peru the lowest, without differences by sex in any of these countries. However, Mexico did show important differences by sex, with girls showing a higher association than boys.

Regardless of differences among subsamples, our results suggest that these family activities help improve adolescents' relationship with themselves, assessed in this construct through the admiration of nature, reflection on important issues, and silence. The small cultural differences found might be due to the use of few indicators of family activities, which in any case have revealed associations.

5.3 | Self-control

The items assessed in the cognitive-behavioral construct self-control ("I plan what I do", "I usually finish the things/projects that I start", and "I usually save money") are indicative of strategic vision, planning, persistence, and foresight. According to Zimmerman's Cyclic Phase Model of Self-Regulated Learning (Zimmerman, 2008), our construct would belong to "Task Analysis" within the "Forethought phase", and also to "Self-control" within the "Performance phase". These self-regulation-related abilities are likewise found in the constructs Positive Psychology uses to assess PYD (Balaguer et al., 2020; Orejudo et al., 2013; Snyder et al., 2005) and, specifically, the personal component of PYD (which we call PPYD).

The Self-Control variable is the one for which the model shows the greatest predictive capacity (the highest Squared Multiple Correlations). This variable is almost unrelated to Family Relationships (very low associations, and only in two subsamples), but has the highest associations with Family Activities. This fact suggests that interactions within the family (the presence of parents, collaboration with household chores) are relevant for these self-regulation-related abilities. As we have mentioned, family activities are an important socialization context, in which families communicate the dominant cultural values, and give a meaning to them (Harkness et al., 2011), especially values such as responsibility, which would be central in the development of self-control (Bowes et al., 2004).

In this process, some differences appear by country and by sex. The association is strongest in the Peruvian samples, a culture especially linked to the role of the family and the assumption of responsibilities within it (Seiffge-Krenke et al., 2018; Weitkamp & Seiffge-Krenke, 2019). This would mean that, in these cases, family becomes a key environment for personal development in the behavioral field, related to fulfilling family demands. For Spanish girls, the gender factor might be more relevant to explain this result. As we have mentioned, some studies find a higher relevance of family variables in the development of girls, both in emotional dimensions and in other dimensions linked to expectations (Moreno-Maldonado et al., 2020; Orejudo et al., 2012).

5.4 | The global model

Globally, we found, in all subsamples, that Family Relationships is related to the emotional component of PPYD (Life Satisfaction), while Family Activities predicts the spiritual and cognitive-behavioral components (Interiority and Self-Control). This suggests that perceiving good relationships in the family is relevant in helping adolescents to develop feelings of freedom, love, and happiness.

Nevertheless, although in adolescence there is a decrease in communication between parents and children, this is not necessarily a negative fact (Parra et al., 2015). Such communication will be even less frequent in the phase of emergence to adulthood, although communication at that stage will be more equitable, frank, and open (Morgan et al., 2010). In any case, in this process, we find some cultural and gender differences. For example, Family relationships predict life satisfaction in all analyzed samples, but they predict interiority in two girl samples. Other cross-cultural studies have found this gender effect in the same cultural contexts.

Moreno-Maldonado et al. (2020) found evidence that family relationships are an important predictor of life satisfaction, regardless of socioeconomic condition or country (in this case, two Southern European countries: Portugal and Spain). However, when comparing two more diverse countries (Spain and England), Morgan et al. (2012) found some differences in the family domain.

The most important factor was family relations in Spain, but promotion of autonomy in England. For their part, Ramírez García et al. (2014) analyzed the link between parental acceptance and depression among Mexican adolescents. They found that the association was stronger for girls than for boys. Perez-Brena et al. (2012) studied parents' promotion of autonomy. They found different patterns for adolescent boys and girls, both among fathers and among mothers. With Spanish students, Orejudo et al. (2012) found that family conflicts and family communication had a stronger influence in boys' than in girls' optimism.

On the other hand, we likewise found that good family relationships do not suffice, and that the extent of daily interactions is also important, at least with regard to the spiritual and cognitive-behavioral components of PPYD. Family routines have an important role in children's development. Many of these routines are opportunities to develop dominant social and cultural values, such as responsibility (Bowes et al., 2004). Responsibility has a direct relationship with self-control, since it implies the necessity to establish personal goals and to regulate behavior to approach such goals. These routines are not the same in all cultures (Harkness et al., 2011), but depend on the family context (e.g., professional activities, which also differ culturally). However, across different cultures, in these routines cultural values are transmitted to the children.

In fact, positive development should be understood, among other aspects, as a gradually evolving process (Burkhard et al., 2020) with which personal as well as ecological assets are closely linked (Melton et al., 2021; Shek et al., 2019); thus, "adolescents with more personal and social assets [...] have a greater chance of both current well-being and future success" (National Research Council, 2002).

5.5 | Limitations and strengths

This study has certain limitations. First, its cross-sectional design does not allow us to reach definitive conclusions regarding the causal direction of the examined associations between family variables and PPYD. Furthermore, the sample was not representative (e.g., the distribution of participating schools was different across countries, and different from the distribution in the population). These results should therefore be confirmed by longitudinal studies with more representative samples. The issue will be partially resolved when the project will have collected longitudinal data from the same schools.

Second, we did not use validated instruments to assess the studied constructs, but questions specifically designed for this project, and in some cases Cronbach's alphas were low. However, this may be due to the fact that measures were composed of only two or three items. Furthermore, both EFA and CFA support the appropriateness of our measures, as did the SEM analyses.

Another limitation is that only family is considered in the contextual variables analyzed. Besides, all the information comes from the same source—adolescents—which might magnify the relationships between the different variables. For example, The use of more diverse sources such as parents, educators, and peers, would provide us with more complete and well-balanced information.

Finally, we could have included the adolescent's age as a moderating variable. However, the resulting model would have been less simple and parsimonious.

We can also note some strengths. The first strength is the large sample size of adolescents from several countries, which has enabled complex analyses and supports the generalizability of our results. The second is the fact that the model evaluated in this paper fit the data well and is consistent with previous research as well as with the theoretical framework.

5.6 | Future research and implications

Future research based on this approach to youth development from an ecological perspective might add other contextual variables that are important for PPYD, such as peers, school issues—general climate, connections, opportunities, etc.—or aspects related to the perception of neighborhood: community assets such as engagement, a sense of belonging, security, etc. It would be interesting to continue evaluating PPYD in relation with other beliefs or competencies that favor the adolescent's adaptation to the environment; it would likewise be interesting to include beliefs related to well-being, or capacities such as behavioral self-regulation.

It is also necessary to find more evidence around cross-culture comparisons of these PPYD models, given the scarcity of empiric evidence in this regard. Therefore, it would be interesting to check whether these contextual factors are good predictors of PYD in other cultures. It is important to consider differences in the family culture and in family values, which is a sign of the relevance of culture in the PYD. Our results do suggest that the studied family variables influence PPYD, but the differences on these associations across cultures and across sexes are still not clear.

All this would be key in the applied field of designing PYD programs. A higher attention to racial and ethnic issues might provide information on the relevance of PYD models for specific youth groups. Culturally specific issues might improve the applicability of PYD models and programs in some groups (Williams & Deutsch, 2016). Therefore, running PYD studies with a cross-cultural focus provides a unique insight. It also allows one to make inferences about similarities and differences between cultures and nations (Wiiium & Dimitrova, 2019).

Finally, our findings have important theoretical and practical implications. Knowledge of the factors that help a young person to thrive represents an advancement in the field of PPYD. It allows us to understand the psychological resources that need to be concretely used to promote PPYD. Knowing the psychological variables that predict positive development in adolescents represents a fundamental step in designing effective positive development intervention programs (Lerner et al., 2011).

PEER REVIEW

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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