Orientation to Happiness as Predictor of University Students' Engagement

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	There is empirical evidence for a close link between positive personal components and students' engagement in academic activities. Personal well-being is a construct that can be studied from a variety of angles. Recent studies point to the relevance of orientation to happiness examining three types of well-being. The main objective of this study was to test the relationship that orientation to happiness has with university students' engagement at a public institution in northern Mexico. A stratified probabilistic sample of 266 students was employed. The internal consistency of the scales was analyzed using the SPSS package and a model of structural equations in the EQS program. Results indicated direct and significant relationship between the orientation to happiness and the students' engagement. This supports the importance of promoting positive factors in students to improve their academic and personal development.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

The academic performance of university students is a primary indicator of success in the current educational reality, which may account for the increasing number of studies that performance. According to Castaño and Páez, however, it is also important to investigate the relationship between academic performance and the emotional states of these students[1].

In the literature, academic performance is usually measured quantitatively [2]. However, Moroco et al. present the students' engagement construct as an alternative variable for the study of university students' performance [3].

Student engagement can serve to prevent low academic performance, dropout and other negative factors for students in higher education [3]. This engagement is defined by Fredricks et. al [4] as the willingness of students to participate in institutional activities and is formed by three dimensions: behavior, emotion, and cognition.

Academic performance is determined by multiple factors, however, three main categories are often identified: institutional, social, and personal characteristics [5], [6]. This research focuses on personal factors [7]. Peterson et al. [8], claim there is an "orientation to happiness" that includes 3 types of well-being: the hedonic or life of pleasure, the eudaimonic well-being or life of meaning and the flow or life of engagement.

The main objective of the study was to determine the relationship between orientation to happiness and university students' engagement of a public higher education institution in Sonora, Mexico.

1.1. University Students' Engagement

Academic achievement is commonly measured as a function of number of degrees, certificates or qualifications obtained [9], [10]. A number, however, does not fully determine the student's commitment to the academic activities of their institution. Thus, the study of academic performance can be misinterpreted by focusing only on one number or rating [11].

Moroco et al. [3] suggest studying the factor called students' engagement, defined as the willingness of students to participate in academic activities [4], [12], [13]. It is also important to highlight the need to study student engagement in a holistic way.

There are three types of engagement in the university student [3]. *Behavioral commitment* is the active participation or action of students in academic and extracurricular activities of the university. *Emotional commitment* is the positive and negative reactions that occur in the school context, directed to either people or situations. Finally, *cognitive commitment* includes the processes that are involved in the student's learning, that is, those thoughts that encourage the actions of the students.

1.2. Orientation to happiness

The literature presents various ways of approaching personal well-being. In general terms, it can be defined as emotions of happiness, satisfaction with life and personal growth [14]. In the present research, it was decided to work specifically on orientation to happiness, where three different types of wellbeing are presented. First, the two classic facets of well-being, the hedonic and the eudaimonic, complemented by the third component based on flow theory [8].

Hedonic well-being is the sum of moods, feelings, and sensations related to the pleasure of an individual [15]. This well-being is not a "final goal". It is rather the process that individuals generate on a daily basis, where positive and negative experiences are engaged. In general, hedonic well-being is related to favorable short term experiences in the individual [16].

Eudaimonic well-being has its foundation in the meaning of life and goes beyond mere transient happiness [17]. It is a process that receives positive rewards in the long term, since it focuses on individual development. It produces the impression that all talents and abilities are improved, and that they serve as a basis for the realization of good things in one's own life or that of others [18].

Finally, the well-being of flow is determined by the individual, since it comes from an activity that, when carried out, produces positive sensations in the subject that may even alter their spatiotemporal perception. These actions may be related to arts, sports, work, etc. This type of well-being depends on each subject. Some can find positive states when engaged in activities that do not generate positive states in others and may even generate negative feelings. There is empirical evidence of the relationship between flow and exceptional work performance [19].

The close relationship that exists between the two facets of well-being continues to be demonstrated in recent studies. According to Gallagher et al. [20] there is a close correlation between hedonism and emotions related to eudaimonic well-being in both adults and university students. In addition, recent theories establish the link between these two types of well-being and positive emotions from the flow [21].

2.   RESEARCH METHOD
2.1. Participants

The sample was stratified probabilistically, taking into account a reliability of 95% and an error of 6%, with a total of 266 students drawn from all career tracts taught at the Technological Institute of Sonora, Guaymas unit (Table 1), including the municipalities of Empalme and Guaymas. They are 51% female and 49% are male. The average age reported was 20.38 (SD = 2.76). Majority (92%) reported being a regular student when participating in the research.

2.2. Instruments

To evaluate orientation to happiness, the Spanish version by Durón et al. [22] of the original scale in English from Peterson et al. [8] was used. It contains 18 items divided equally into 3 subscales to assess hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, and flow. The answers were given using a Likert-type scale (*Completely opposed to me* up to *Very similar to me*). The authors reported acceptable levels of reliability (.61-.82) in each of the components, as well as a confirmatory factor analysis to establish the validity of the instrument.

The students' engagement was evaluated using the Spanish version of the USEI (University Student Engagement Inventory) of Durón et al. [23]. It consists of 15 items and is divided into cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions, each composed of five items. Participants could respond using a Likert-type scale with options from never to always. According to analyzes presented by authors, the instrument is valid in the

Mexican population, with a good internal consistency in each component (.70 - .75). Confirmatory factor analysis indicates that the three factors belong to the same construct.

2.3. Procedure and Data Analysis

The number of participants for the probabilistic sample was established with 95% reliability and 6% error. Then the number of participants was divided proportionally using the percentage of students in each career track. Subsequently, the instruments were applied individually or in groups, depending on the participants. A database was established using the SPSS and EQS programs where the students' answers were recorded.

For the analysis of the data, the internal consistency of the scales was first verified, and then an index was computed for each variable using the mean, after which the descriptive statistics of the two variables with their components were analyzed. Using the EQS program, a Model of Structural Equations was made to test the relationship between happiness orientation and academic performance [24]; This statistical procedure was chosen to avoid the bias that could arise due to the variables that were not retaken within the present investigation. It is decided to use the scquared multiple correlation R^2 to estimate the influence that Orientation to Happiness has on the university student's engagement [25].

3.   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The internal consistency and descriptive statistics of the scales are presented on Table 1. It is important to note that both the dimensions and the constructs obtained acceptable reliability indices [24]. In the engagement reported by the students, the three types present very similar means, placing themselves in a medium-high range. The orientation to happiness presents response averages that are at a medium-high level as well, in the three well-being areas.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliability of scales and components.

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Alpha
Students' engagement	0	4	2.82	0.58	.84
Behavior engagement	0	4	2.97	0.63	.72
Emotional engagement	0	4	2.82	0.74	.69
Cognitive engagement	0	4	2.68	0.78	.76
Orientation to hapiness	1	5	3.71	0.53	.84
Hedonic well-being	1	5	3.68	0.68	.75
Eudaimonic-Well-being	1	5	3.83	0.66	.72
Flow well-being	1	5	3.61	0.59	.61

Table 2 displays correlation matrix of the 6 dimentions that constitute the 2 construts of this study. All correlations were high and significant. The factor of university students' engagement has values between .43 and .55, while the orientation to happiness between .46 and .56 (p <.01). There is also an association between these two constucts, because the components of each are significantly associated with values between .16 and .42 (p <.05). This is consistent with other studies in this area [1], [16].

Table 2. Correlation matrix.

	BE	EE	CE	HW	EW	FW
Behavior engagement	1					
Emotional engagement	.50**	1				
Cognitive engagement	.55**	.43**	1			
Hedonic well-being	.16*	.16**	.20**	1		
Eudaimonic-Well-being	.42**	.36**	.40**	.54**	1	
Flow well-being	.36**	.33**	.38**	.46**	.56**	1

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Figure 1 exhibit the model of structural equations where it can be observed that *orientation to happiness* is a factor composed of the 3 types of well-being, and *flow* presents the highest factorial weight. The university students' engagement factor was formed by the three types indicated by the theory [3]. There is a positive and significant relationship between the orientation to happiness and the students' engagement, indicating that better conditions of well-being in students can predict the commitment they invest in academic activities, results that agree with findings obtained in similar studies [16], [26].
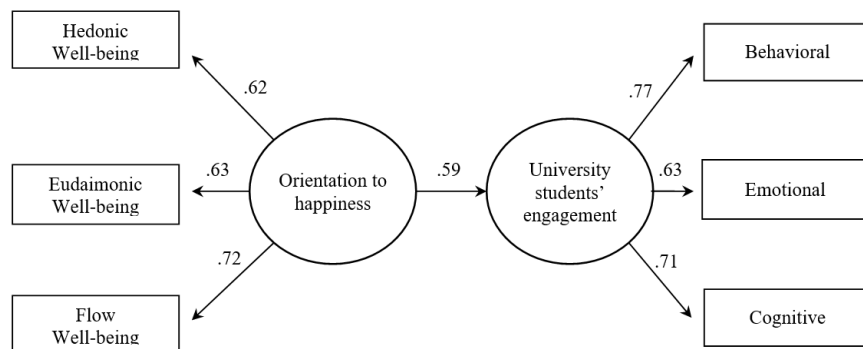
Figure 1. Orientation to happiness and its relation with University students' engagement.

Factorial weights and significant structural coefficients (p <.05). Goodness of fit: X2 = 18.67 (7 GL) p <.0005; BBNFI = .95, CFI = .97; IFI = .97; RMSEA = .079; R^2 University students' engagement = .35.

4.   CONCLUSION

The results obtained emphasize the importance of promoting the development of students in various areas of their lives, not only the academic. This is often promoted in elementary education, but institutions of higher education typically focus primarily on academic issues, the assumption being that a student body composed of adults support in non-academic areas. This research supports the claim that college students perform better when they have positive mental states.

These findings are of great importance because they support the use of strategies to promote well-being in university students, not only to help them in their personal performance, but it is a direct support to performance in activities related to their professional training. It is recommended to extend this type of studies in different universities, in order to corroborate the very close relationship that exists between the orientation to happiness and students' engagement.

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