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EL GOBIERNO DEL BIENESTAR:
EL IMPERATIVO DE FELICIDAD EN EL S.XXI

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"Una promesa de felicidad recorre la cultura de masas,

la publicidad y la misma ideología económica.

En el discurso común la felicidad no es ya una opción,

sino una obligación, es el valor esencial de la mercancía que

producimos, compramos y consumimos."

- **Franco Berardi,** *La fábrica de la infelicidad*

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1. Introducción.

En esta tesis se estudia la felicidad. Pero no la felicidad como concepto universal, atemporal y etéreo, sino como un fenómeno psicosocial localizado y aterrizado que ha cambiado radicalmente la forma en que vemos y vivimos nuestras vidas. Mejor dicho, esta tesis es una crítica al sistema felicista que ha hecho de la felicidad un producto que, aunque no nos damos cuenta, estamos obligados a comprar.

No en vano, el "ser feliz" ha sido y sigue siendo uno de los grandes objetivos considerados como excepcionalmente valiosos en el imaginario social de culturas ancestrales pasadas y de nuestras sociedades contemporáneas. En la literatura académica es común afirmar que el concepto de "felicidad" se trata de una construcción que ha ido variando diacrónicamente, es decir, a lo largo de la historia, y sincrónicamente, a través de la cultura y los ejes políticos. En la actualidad han surgido multitud de movimientos que la entienden como un derecho y que abordan este sentimiento desde una perspectiva hiper-práctica, basada en principios en teoría científicos que pretenden dotarla de alguna u otra utilidad (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Seligman, 2002; Seligman y Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). No es casualidad que esta nueva perspectiva felicista esté muy alineada con el *modus vivendi* neoliberal que se basa en una sociedad del rendimiento y fomenta un capitalismo desmesurado con el objetivo de monetizarlo todo, incluso las emociones. La concepción más reciente, considerada propia del siglo XXI, sugiere que la felicidad no puede regirse únicamente por normas que controlan la vida de las personas a través de sus cuerpos, sino más bien a través de la gestión inmediata y productiva de la psique (Stiegler, 2013; Han, 2014). Hoy en día, el ámbito psíquico ha recibido una nueva definición mucho más amplia y operativa, que lo convierte en un conjunto de relaciones entre aspectos internos del ser humano y otros aspectos externos que pasan directamente por el conocimiento y las tecnologías que recientemente han comenzado a dominar nuestra vida cotidiana. Si bien en los últimos años hemos puesto mucho más énfasis en buscar la llamada sociedad del bienestar (Rose et al., 2006), actualmente estar bien físicamente ya no es suficiente y es necesario dar un paso más. Hoy es necesario ser feliz.

La Psicología Positiva es uno de los movimientos que ha aprovechado este paradigma y se ha alineado con esta nueva actitud hacia la psique, que debe

optimizarse para alcanzar un bienestar perpetuo. Desde su nacimiento en enero de 1998 comenzó a utilizar los conceptos de "felicidad" y "bienestar" indistintamente como constructos genéricos para describir las propuestas de su iniciativa práctica e intelectual. Todos estos años ha sido objeto de multitud críticas:

En primer lugar, los críticos señalaron el excesivo individualismo de este enfoque. Su concepto de felicidad y bienestar gravita exclusivamente en torno a un individuo que toma decisiones en una dimensión social muy estrecha y limitada (Cabanas, 2018). En segundo lugar, algunos autores (De la Fabian y Stecher, 2017; Teo, 2018) afirman que este individualismo es un recurso para legitimar un nuevo concepto de *Homo Neoliberalus*, basado en una subjetividad centrada en el utilitarismo y la falta de crítica sociopolítica. Finalmente, se ha sugerido que no existe un análisis de cómo ciertas tecnologías comunes en nuestra vida cotidiana generan una serie de modulaciones afectivas con nuestros cuerpos que los alinean con actitudes neoliberales hacia la productividad, las emociones y la acción (Martínez-Guzmán y Lara, 2019) .

A pesar de las críticas, el número de estudios sobre Psicología Positiva ha aumentado exponencialmente en los últimos años, y se han publicado varios metaanálisis que muestran su eficacia para aumentar el bienestar psicológico y reducir la depresión y el estrés (Hendriks et al., 2020). Algunos autores (Fagundes et al., 2018; Martínez et al., 2007) consideran que todo ello muestra la existencia de un nuevo imperativo al servicio de un viejo objetivo: aumentar la productividad de los trabajadores. Otros trabajos (Brito et al., 2020) regresan al aspecto estandarizador que este imperativo, expresado a través de la "autoayuda", podría tener sobre las percepciones subjetivas de los ciudadanos neoliberales.

La Psicología Positiva más actual (Tercera Ola) arguye que el enfoque excesivo en el individuo se ampliará para incluir aspectos culturales, éticos y contextuales. Según Lomas et al. (2020), esto introducirá un enfoque más profundo y complejo que tendrá en cuenta los grupos y sistemas en los que habitan los individuos. La Psicología Positiva del futuro será interdisciplinar y trabajará con una amplia gama de metodologías, lo que conducirá a una necesaria expansión epistemológica. El mecanismo de repartir felicidad se refinará y se hará más resistente, y es eso precisamente lo que debemos temer. Los seres humanos del siglo XXI usamos este

concepto que hemos denominado "felicidad" para gobernar nuestras sociedades. Pero el Estado público ya no es el único que ostenta el poder, ahora también lo ejercen las instituciones privadas, las organizaciones no gubernamentales y las grandes multinacionales. A través de un análisis crítico de sus discursos y prácticas en la vida cotidiana, se examinan los tipos de mecanismos que utilizan las organizaciones globales para (re)producir un Imperativo de Felicidad que ha (re)modelado el nuevo imaginario social del Bienestar.

Para acabar con la introducción, se presentan los trabajos y se justifica la unidad temática de la tesis a continuación:

Como primera parte, se presenta el artículo titulado "El imperativo de la felicidad en la psicología positiva: hacia una psicopolítica del bienestar"

En este texto se afirma que la "nueva ciencia" de la Psicología Positiva ha reconstruido cómo entendemos la felicidad. Aunque las prácticas y discursos que presenta para realizar esa reconceptualización parecen libres de intencionalidad política, sus propuestas definen una novedosa y sutil forma de gobierno a la que hemos denominado Psicopolítica. Se trata de un sistema de gestión del poder que en vez de colocar el centro de las luchas sociales y políticas en el cuerpo del ciudadano, se centra directamente en la psique. A través de una defensa extrema de las emociones positivas y la felicidad como clave para una buena vida, la Psicología Positiva promueve un tipo de relaciones de poder amistosas que, en lugar de castigar, motivan y potencian la creatividad del individuo. En esta nueva disciplina de la positividad, la salud se ha redefinido en torno al eje de la felicidad y esta ha pasado a convertirse en una responsabilidad individual. Las dimensiones encontradas en este primer estudio son simplemente una definición categórica de un nuevo tipo de relaciones de poder que pueden caracterizar el siglo XXI.

Como segunda parte, se presenta el artículo titulado "El Gobierno del Bienestar: ¿Hacia un "Mundo Feliz"?."

En este escrito se describe el fenómeno del "gobierno del bienestar" que, retomando la línea de la anterior investigación, la amplía a nivel global y comprende el uso de la felicidad como herramienta de poder utilizada por organismos gubernamentales, no gubernamentales, y organizaciones públicas y privadas de todo el planeta. A partir

de una exploración cronológica de las políticas globales contemporáneas y a través de las prácticas felicistas que podemos encontrar en los diferentes ámbitos de nuestra vida cotidiana se explica que la felicidad se está convirtiendo en un dispositivo de control social y que se está institucionalizando mediante su 1) Universalización, 2) Privatización, 3) Cientificación, y 4) Cajanegrización. Finalmente, se exponen las consecuencias de todo ello con el objetivo de evitar que el imperativo de felicidad nos gobierne hacia un "mundo feliz" huxleyano en el que podría imperar un "régimen del bienestar" que cada vez parece menos utópico.

2. Objetivos

En cualquier caso, existen dos lagunas importantes en cuanto a la observación crítica de la felicidad actual. En primer lugar, no existe un análisis cualitativo de los discursos y prácticas que promueven la Psicología Positiva que esté realizado desde la propia disciplina. En segundo lugar, no se ha sugerido que el éxito de la Psicología Positiva y su imperativo de felicidad sea simplemente una señal de que está surgiendo un nuevo tipo de poder, que no cae bajo la biopolítica de Foucault (1979) ni bajo la sociedad de control de Deleuze (1991).

Esta tesis intenta llenar estos vacíos. El primer artículo se zambulle en el anterior debate con el objetivo de descubrir si la Psicología Positiva está usando mecanismos psicopolíticos para fomentar un imperativo de felicidad. El segundo artículo tiene como objetivo comprobar si este imperativo se está expandiendo como discurso político y explicitar cómo las instituciones utilizan "la felicidad" para ejercer poder sobre las poblaciones. En última instancia, se pretende promover la reflexividad científica, política y social frente a un ejercicio de gubernamentalidad (gobierno de la mentalidad) principalmente impulsado por la disciplina positiva de la sociedad neoliberal.

3. Investigación

En este apartado se explica el marco teórico que ha vertebrado la investigación y se describe la metodología utilizada como parte fundamental.

3.1. Marco Teórico

Ya en 1979, Foucault dio el nombre de "empresario de sí mismo" a los individuos que reproducen una lógica de autogestión (entendiendo empresa como una tarea que implica trabajo o esfuerzo), no sólo en el ámbito profesional sino también en el personal y sobre todo en el emocional. Por su parte, Deleuze y Guattari (1987) adelantaron que la característica esencial de las sociedades modernas iba a ser un exceso de comunicación, que más tarde Han (2013) bautizaría como "la sociedad de la transparencia". En ella, nos hacemos visibles voluntariamente y toda la información que producimos mediante cada una de nuestras acciones cotidianas a través de los dispositivos tecnológicos que nos acompañan (móviles, relojes inteligentes, pulseras biométricas, etc.) se recoge y se segmenta para construir psicografías globales que se proyectan hacia el futuro. Este *Big Data* promueve que nuestra salud se mida constantemente y que todo se convierta en algún tipo de dato a través de recordatorios, publicaciones, anuncios y aplicaciones. El movimiento conocido como *Quantified Self*, cuyo objetivo es aumentar el rendimiento físico, mental y espiritual a través de la automedición, es un buen ejemplo de ello (Nafus y Sherman, 2014; Lupton, 2016). Conocerse a uno mismo, autoayudarse y autocuidarse es precisamente lo que genera material y elementos para exhibir continuamente ante los demás. Desde el punto de vista de algunos autores (Illouz, 2019; Lazzarato, 2012), esta necesidad es la implementación de un nuevo mecanismo de autoexplotación que tiene como principal vehículo la generación de información, y en nuestra propia subjetividad el principio y final del horizonte de ese proceso. Con todo, ese llamado "empresario de sí mismo" se configura como un proyecto reflexivo que se somete, solo o con el apoyo de consultores, terapeutas, *coaches* u otras autoridades, a un continuo autocontrol, para ajustar sus sentimientos, pensamientos y conductas. En ese sentido, esta permanente generación de información que expresamos cada día mediante plataformas de redes sociales (como *TikTok, Facebook, Instagram*, etc.) abre un espacio para la comunicación total que se asimila al panóptico como mecanismo de control -aunque

ahora uno tecnológico-, pero con la diferencia de que ya no operan las miradas de un solo ojo físico sino la producción y circulación constante de información y supervisión entre comunidades muy amplias de individuos e instituciones. El Gran Hermano orwelliano (Orwell, 1949) somos todos nosotros, y somos nosotros mismos quienes nos cercioramos de que la tendencia positiva del discurso del bienestar (o el de "estar bien") siga estando más en auge que nunca. Como se observa, el ocio se ha convertido en negocio, y la vida privada ha pasado a estar también controlada por "la felicidad".

En este contexto han proliferado multitud de prácticas y discursos de *coaching*, autoayuda, inteligencia emocional y Psicología Positiva. Hoy en día lo que más se valora -por su capacidad de desarrollo, su inimitabilidad y su "ventaja competitiva" (Luthans et al., 2007)- son los recursos psicológicos (o personales) de los individuos, como la Actitud, la Inteligencia Emocional, las Fortalezas personales o el Capital Psicológico. Para algunos autores, todo esto muestra que hemos entrado en un nuevo tipo de capitalismo que, más allá de la información (Zuboff, 2015), opera en las emociones (Illouz, 2019). El ámbito emocional es el nuevo campo de acción de la capitalización y la generación de riqueza: invertimos en emociones, buscamos su rentabilidad, las acumulamos, y las vendemos. Así, las grandes corporaciones e instituciones movilizan las emociones para generar valor añadido a la circulación de información y de bienes.

El filósofo surcoreano Byung-Chul Han, adaptando la noción de psicopoder de Stiegler (2011), planteó recientemente una nueva forma de gobierno de la población caracterizada por priorizar la psique como objeto de sus acciones. A esto lo llamó Psicopolítica (2014). A diferencia de la biopolítica, la Psicopolítica actúa sobre la mente prerreflexiva de los individuos, ejerciendo un tipo de poder que no los coacciona ni oprime, sino que los motiva. Han (2013) se refiere a un poder que actúa basado en la libertad y la positividad, que no subyuga violentamente para doblegar a los ciudadanos a su voluntad, sino que seduce al ciudadano para que elija libremente someterse. Este poder no estandariza, como lo hace la disciplina con el cuerpo, sino que se amolda a la psique de cada individuo y, a partir de ella, dirige la conducta. La Psicopolítica convierte al individuo en un proyecto que constantemente se reinventa en el plano emocional. La amplia gama de opciones de vida que ofrecen el neoliberalismo y la sociedad de consumo van acompañadas de una

sensación de libertad individual junto con una desconexión de toda responsabilidad social externa. Han (2012) sugiere que, lejos de ser libres, los individuos contemporáneos han interiorizado la coerción disciplinaria y se explotan constantemente a sí mismos para maximizar sus proyectos de vida.

En todo lo anterior, la Psicología Positiva como disciplina académica juega un papel clave con su redefinición de la felicidad, su cuantificación y la prescripción del individuo sano a partir de sus estándares. Este compendio muestra cómo sus discursos y prácticas siguen lo que se ha descrito y reproducen perfectamente un proyecto ciudadano que encaja perfectamente en esta nueva forma de gobierno, la Psicopolítica.

3.2. Metodología

3.2.1. Un caso digno de estudio

Este compendio se basa en una investigación cualitativa. Específicamente, se ha utilizado el método de estudio de caso porque desde un principio abría la posibilidad de usar una amplia gama de técnicas, permitiendo recopilar datos de múltiples fuentes de información (Yin, 2009). Como el objetivo principal era describir para encontrar variables e identificar relaciones, propusimos un diseño holístico de caso único que permitiera explorar el contexto en el que se inserta el fenómeno y explicar los vínculos causales de los procesos involucrados en el fenómeno en la realidad (Rashid et al., 2019). Como explican algunos investigadores sobre esta metodología, el propósito principal no es generalizar, sino particularizar un caso determinado sobre su realidad situacional (White & Cooper, 2022).

Concretamente, en el primer artículo el caso elegido fue un Máster Profesionalizador en Psicología Positiva Aplicada, que era la mejor fuente para recolectar datos de calidad por las siguientes razones: primero, es ilustrativo del tema de investigación, ya que se promueve explícitamente la propuesta de Felicidad de la Psicología Positiva. En segundo lugar, porque es relevante en todos los países de habla hispana ya que se trata del primer Máster en Psicología Positiva impartido íntegramente en línea por una universidad de España, en castellano, y con el apoyo

de la Sociedad Española de Psicología Positiva (SEPP). En tercer lugar, porque es generalmente representativo del campo analizado ya que incluye los discursos y aplica las prácticas de la Psicología Positiva más actual avalada por la metodología del programa de Máster en Psicología Positiva Aplicada (MAPP) de la Universidad de Pensilvania. En cuarto lugar, la facilidad de acceso a los materiales de este curso de formación de un año de duración ya que el investigador principal era estudiante del máster (en su 5ª edición) durante la investigación.

Con base en el metanálisis de Ebneyamini y Sadeghi (2018), se siguieron los protocolos de estudio de casos de Merriam (1998) y Yin (2009) y los superpusieron para obtener un protocolo paso a paso que se ajustara a las necesidades específicas de esta investigación, lo que resultó en los niveles que finalmente se realizaron: 1) revisión de literatura, 2) construcción de un marco teórico, 3) identificación del problema de investigación, 4) definición de preguntas de investigación, 5) selección de muestra, 6) recolección de datos, 7) análisis de datos y 8) conclusiones.

3.2.2. Recopilación de datos

Tal y como se ha explicado un poco más arriba, la investigación se propuso analizar los contenidos de los discursos y las prácticas promovidas por la Psicología Positiva a través de un estudio de caso de máster impartido en una universidad pública española para explicar si la felicidad puede estar relacionada con la política.

En concreto, los datos empíricos planteados como principales fuentes para el análisis de contenido fueron los siguientes: 1) Textos del curso que contienen la teoría impartida en clase en formato texto, 2) imágenes y gráficos en forma de diapositivas de clase, 3) archivos audiovisuales, 4) página web oficial del programa y su contexto de intranet virtual, y 5) discursos y 6) prácticas impartidas por los docentes.

La pregunta de investigación sobre si los discursos y prácticas de la psicología positiva pueden relacionarse con la política guió la recolección de datos (Merriam y Tisdell, 2015) y dio lugar a un documento construido durante un período de seis meses, durante ocho horas por semana, donde se recogieron notas de forma sistemática sobre los principales contenidos impartidos en el curso. Se decidió

analizar únicamente el segundo semestre ya que la primera mitad fue tratada como un período de adaptación al campo y utilizada para diseñar la investigación teniendo en cuenta las características del caso estudiado. Aunque los estudiantes no fueron parte del proceso de observación, se utilizó la Observación Participante para comprender las formas cotidianas de actuar, pensar y sentir de un grupo en un espacio y tiempo delimitado bajo los discursos y prácticas cotidianas de Psicología Positiva impartidas por los docentes.

3.2.3. Análisis de la información

Para analizar la información se siguió un razonamiento abductivo (Järvensivu y Törnroos, 2010), que es una estrategia de producción de conocimiento asociada al construccionismo que ocupa el término medio entre la inducción y la deducción. Aunque Plutynski (2011) identifica muchos problemas (límite, formalización, descripción y justificación), en este razonamiento se utilizaron datos empíricos para ilustrar la hipótesis al mismo tiempo que se aceptaba la teoría para explicar los datos empíricos. Entonces, aunque se aceptó la teoría existente de la psicopolítica, también se tuvieron en cuenta los datos para (re)generar esa teoría. Y como un buen proceso de abducción debe tener una hipótesis que explique los hechos mientras que los hechos sustentan la hipótesis (Peirce, 1998), eso es exactamente lo que se presentó en nuestro caso de estudio.

Se realizó un Análisis de Contenido para explorar cómo y en qué medida el discurso y las prácticas de felicidad propuestos en el curso de Psicología Positiva sirven al dispositivo actual de gubernamentalidad neoliberal definida como Psicopolítica. Para categorizar y vincular la información dividida en material empírico (datos recopilados) y material teórico (características de la Psicopolítica), se introdujo el corpus empírico en el programa de análisis de datos cualitativos ATLAS.ti (versión 8) y con esteo se generó una lista de ítems que ejemplifican el concepto general de Felicidad propuesto por la Psicología Positiva.

Dada la naturaleza cualitativa de esta investigación, se considera de vital importancia abordar algunas cuestiones de confiabilidad. Hay que tener en cuenta que las afirmaciones que se extraen de este análisis no son definitivas y posiblemente pueden cambiar según el contexto y a lo largo del tiempo. Con el

método propuesto se han analizado marcos de significado que no permiten generalizar, pero sí elaborar un tipo ideal, un modelo que se ajusta muy bien al caso estudiado y que puede servir para investigar otros casos, pero suponiendo que en otros casos concretos puede variar.

Para recapitular, en este apartado hemos comenzado presentando el concepto de "empresario de sí" y su capitalismo emocional vehiculado por la comunicación total. A partir de ahí, se ha explicado la noción de Psicopolítica en sus aspectos conceptuales y heurísticos. Y finalmente, se ha descrito la metodología y el análisis de datos utilizados en esta investigación. A continuación se presenta un resumen global de los resultados, que permitirá elaborar una discusión que nos llevará hasta las conclusiones finales.

4. Resultados

A partir del análisis de sus discursos y prácticas, se ha observado que la Psicología Positiva se presenta como una disciplina sin vínculos con ningún marco político global. De forma aparentemente inocente, se ha encontrado que sus aspiraciones se centran en 1) la eliminación del sufrimiento individual, 2) la promoción del bienestar y 3) la autorrealización personal. Y aunque dejan claro que su actividad intelectual y práctica está vinculada a la búsqueda de herramientas que permitan todo eso, el Análisis de Contenido muestra que, en primer lugar, reconfigura los conceptos de salud y felicidad y recurre a ellos para lograr esos objetivos y, en segundo lugar, al hacerlo se hace evidente la dimensión política que intenta eludir. Sus objetivos definen un imperativo de felicidad a través de prácticas que son constantemente cuantificadas y medidas por los propios individuos destinatarios. A continuación se presentan las redes temáticas que se han encontrado en esta investigación. Cada una de las seis estructuras categóricas describe a su vez un eje que define a la Psicología Positiva como una nueva disciplina científica que se acopla a las acciones cotidianas mediante una filosofía positiva que guía a los individuos a través de un proyecto de vida concreto. Y todas ellas, en su conjunto con una única dirección, muestran el despliegue de un nuevo ejercicio de relaciones de poder que se ha denominado como Psicopolítica del Bienestar.

La Psicología Positiva estructura sus discursos y prácticas en base a, como mínimo, los siguientes seis ejes categóricos: a) buena salud mental significa mayor desempeño laboral y personal; b) la felicidad se articula a partir de las emociones; c) la felicidad se visualiza como un camino con varias etapas que deben superarse; d) existen prácticas específicas que nos permiten seguir ese camino; e) la felicidad se puede medir; y f) no es una falacia pensar que existe el ideal de un individuo positivo y feliz.

En términos globales, los ejemplos analizados demuestran que la felicidad se está institucionalizando y señalan que el discurso felicista se ha politizado y ha echado raíces en todas las parcelas de la vida cotidiana contemporánea. La felicidad se está convirtiendo en un verdadero dispositivo de gubernamentalidad a través de su: 1) Universalización, 2) Privatización, 3) Cientificación, y 4) Cajanegrización.

5. Discusión

Como se ha mencionado desde el principio, una de las principales críticas a la Psicología Positiva la acusa de ser un instrumento del imaginario neoliberal. Esta afirmación se basa en el excesivo individualismo que exhibe esta disciplina y el vínculo que establece entre felicidad y actividad productiva. Sin embargo, esta investigación ha demostrado que la realidad es más compleja.

En el apartado anterior se ha evidenciado que la Psicología Positiva estructura sus discursos y prácticas en base a seis ejes categóricos que marcan las pautas para su enseñanza, su investigación y su comprensión de nuestra realidad cotidiana. Estos ejes nos indican que la Psicología Positiva va más allá del marco liberal-neoliberal. Efectivamente, si prestamos atención a los ejes que enfatizan la individualidad y el vínculo entre felicidad y producción, podemos acusarla de ser una herramienta al servicio de la reproducción de este marco. Sin embargo, al hacerlo estaríamos ignorando lo que nos muestran todos los demás ejes.

Realizando una lectura conjunta de los seis ejes, es posible proponer un marco para interpretarlos caracterizado por cuatro dimensiones. En primer lugar, la Psicología Positiva ofrece un imperativo. Es decir, el ciudadano es libre de elegir lo que se

propone, pero no elegirlo significa renunciar al buen vivir y a la perspectiva de toda vida que quiera ser vivida en plenitud. Este imperativo opera como una obligación sutil que apunta a una ética individual que muestra todo lo que es bueno sentir, pensar y hacer. Esta obligación se establece en todos los ámbitos de la vida cotidiana y opera a través de las emociones más inmediatas, aplicando una positividad a la mente que responsabiliza al individuo de seguir sometiéndose a un proyecto interminable de optimización. En segundo lugar, se considera al individuo como un proyecto que trabaja continuamente hacia la mejora futura. La felicidad, como hemos mencionado, está al final de un camino que hay que recorrer, desplegando determinadas prácticas de autoobservación, autogobierno, información autogenerada y exhibición de uno mismo ante los demás. En tercer lugar, la información que este individuo produce sobre sus estados internos se cuantifica, se mide, se convierte en datos y se puede registrar para su análisis. Finalmente, conviene señalar que el principal campo de acción de todo lo anterior es la psique, más que la realidad somática o social del ciudadano. Será a través de la intervención en el plano psíquico que se alcanzará, o no, esa meta de felicidad y bienestar que todo ser humano teóricamente anhela y debe perseguir.

La Psicología Positiva, por todos estos motivos, no sería precisamente una herramienta exclusiva del liberalismo-neoliberalismo. Más bien, formaría parte de la esfera de inteligibilidad de la Psicopolítica. Este nuevo régimen psicopolítico (Han, 2014) sería la característica esencial de nuestro presente, e indicaría que el ámbito de las luchas de poder y las ansias de control ya no se encuentran exclusivamente en el ámbito biológico, como ha afirmado el pensamiento postestructuralista (Agamben, 2020; Hardt y Negri, 2000; Deleuze y Guattari, 1987; Foucault, 1979) desde finales del siglo XX, sino que ahora también incluyen un interés especial en la mente de los individuos. De esta manera, hoy somos sujetos que convertimos todo lo que hay en nuestra psique en datos, que luego son evaluados y devueltos para poder optimizar y mejorar continuamente nuestras estructuras mentales. La novedad o matiz que añade la Psicología Positiva a este ejercicio psicopolítico es promover lo que podríamos llamar una Psicopolítica del Bienestar. En otras palabras, este ejercicio de datificación de la psique permite y promueve una optimización infinita que se dirige a una meta específica, que es la del bienestar o la del buen vivir.

6. Conclusiones

Esta investigación avala la conclusión de que la felicidad se está usando como uno de los exponentes de un nuevo régimen de poder. Concretamente, se ha demostrado que la Psicología Positiva promueve un imperativo de felicidad, que es el eje central de un sistema de dominación que se ha bautizado como Psicopolítica del Bienestar. Y como se ha comprobado, esta Psicopolítica del Bienestar se está expandiendo a lo largo y ancho del planeta a causa de su institucionalización.

La Psicología Positiva ha reconstruido cómo debemos entender la felicidad, y sus prácticas y discursos se han extendido a cada acción de nuestra vida cotidiana y en cualquier parte del globo ya que los gobiernos, las organizaciones no gubernamentales y las empresas están apadrinando sus técnicas para obtener beneficios políticos y económicos. Aunque se presenta como una disciplina que no participa en los principales mecanismos de poder, se ha descubierto que reproduce muy sutilmente un nuevo tipo de control positivo. En él, el ámbito de la lucha y el conflicto políticos ha pasado a centrarse en la psique, lo que permite definir un individuo activo y productivo alineado con las exigencias del *status quo*.

Las prácticas felicistas se están filtrando entre las esferas de nuestra cotidianidad a través de la creación de más programas de felicidad en el campo de la educación, estudio de las nuevas ciencias del bienestar en el ámbito académico, talleres para gestionar la salud mental en el trabajo, nuevas aplicaciones positivas de la "ciencia ciudadana" y, obviamente, también mediante formaciones en el campo de la psicología, donde el *coaching* ha adquirido tanta importancia que ahora es la nueva definición de Psicología Popular.

Sin embargo, la Psicología Positiva hace algo más que reproducir un mecanismo de poder; crea "el problema de la infelicidad" (¿Eres feliz?, ¿Sabes por qué no eres tan feliz como podrías?, ¿Sabías que puedes aumentar tu felicidad?) para mantenerse y hace que la solución pase por ella echando la culpa a los individuos sin dejar espacio para que estos se planteen siquiera que muchos de los problemas de malestar son debidos a causas estructurales y a la conformación injusta de la sociedad del bienestar. Marca el objetivo y la ruta a seguir, consiguiendo que la búsqueda de la felicidad nos gobierne a la vez que nos hace sentir desdichados

mientras no la conseguimos. Aquí y ahora, la buena vida, la vida que vale la pena vivir, es la vida que persigue constantemente el bienestar, que depende solo de nuestros pensamientos y acciones, pero de nada más.

La universalización, privatización, cientificación y cajanegrización constituyen cuatro mecanismos que cierran el proceso de institucionalización de la felicidad y la convierten en un nuevo dispositivo de gubernamentalidad. Este "gobierno de la mentalidad" es una prisión positiva y sin muros, que reina en nuestras mentes e inocula una autoesclavitud del rendimiento y de la automejora a través del consumismo y el entretenimiento. Los mecanismos actuales usados para hacernos perseguir "la felicidad" se parecen demasiado al "soma" del "mundo feliz" que predijo Aldous Huxley (1932) en su novela distópica. El gobierno de la felicidad es la dictadura encubierta perfecta porque todo el mundo la quiere y porque puede usarse -y se usa- para justificar la opresión (Ahmed, 2010) y para mantener el control social sin oposición.

Pero el discurso felicista no se presenta por igual a lo largo de todo el mapa político internacional, sino que se moldea para satisfacer los objetivos de cada nación siendo precisamente ese el argumento que se utiliza para esquivar el debate democrático en nombre del bienestar, aunque se vulneren sus derechos humanos. Teniendo en cuenta todo lo anterior, podemos temer con cierta seguridad que los virulentos dispositivos para controlar nuestra salud física, como en su momento lo fue el "Certificado Covid", se expandan y muten hacia un "Certificado Feliz" que permita controlar, también, la salud mental del individuo a escala global: hacia un mundo donde solo se nos permita ser felices.

¿Pero quién querría un mundo así? ¿Y para qué? Las personas y los organismos que promueven la felicidad la abordan desde una posición privilegiada, más bien cómoda, que les hace comprenderla de una determinada manera que no es pertinente ni aplicable para todo el mundo. Hemos llegado hasta este punto porque a estos discursos subyacen ciertos intereses que sirven para obtener algo que el ser humano ha anhelado desde tiempos inmemoriales y que procede de nuestros orígenes antropológicos: tener el poder y mantener el control, en otras palabras; gobernar. Y no ha sido hasta la actualidad que nos hemos dado cuenta de que la mejor forma de gobierno es a través de la felicidad. Todo el mercado de

la autoayuda, los *coaches*, o los productos de bienestar persiguen el beneficio económico lucrándose de la sed de felicidad que ellos mismos han generado. De hecho, hoy en día se puede vivir de vender felicidad. Yo mismo, igual que otros autoproclamados "expertos" en bienestar, lo hacemos gracias a las formaciones en la llamada "ciencia de la felicidad". El tema es sin duda llamativo porque, admitámoslo; ¿quién no quiere ser feliz?. Ese es precisamente el problema, la necesidad que han creado en nosotros. El bienestar psicológico se ha convertido en un producto, que además es de lujo y muy costoso de conseguir. No tanto por su precio, sino por su eterna manutención, ya que el producto que se compra requiere de una gran inversión de medios, de tiempo, y de recursos cognitivos; es una suscripción de por vida. También hay intereses de estatus social que usan la supuesta "ciencia de la felicidad" para dar renombre institucional a sus empresas o centros educativos. Y también intereses políticos como la desactivación sindical y de revuelta, que facilita la manipulación de una población centrada en su permanente evaluación emocional. Como se ha demostrado, el discurso felicista provoca, en términos psicosociales, relaciones de poder que no solo afectan a la política y economía de ciertos países, sino que también han modificado los estándares éticos de la época en el mundo entero.

Ya lo decían los griegos, que no se puede saber si has sido feliz hasta que en el fin de tus días echas la vista atrás y repasas todo lo que has conseguido. Pero igual que ellos, un gobierno estructurado por y para la felicidad crea clases y las segmenta en posibilidades de oportunidad. Buscar la felicidad es un lujo que solo las personas bienestantes pueden permitirse. Es una gran paradoja tener que tener dinero o tiempo para tener la obligación de invertirlo en intentar ser feliz. En otros tiempos, en otras sociedades, quizás daban más valor a la tranquilidad, a la quietud del alma, a la fuerza física, a la estrategia militar, o a la simple capacidad de supervivencia. Pero hoy lo más importante es la felicidad. Una felicidad mal entendida que nos ha llevado a cometer el error de no entender que anhelar siempre una experiencia vital positiva es en realidad una experiencia negativa. Es lo que el filósofo Alan Watts usó para describir *the backwards law* o "la ley del revés", una idea de que como más perseguimos sentirnos mejor todo el tiempo, más insatisfechos nos sentimos, ya que perseguir algo solo refuerza el hecho de que te falta en primer lugar. La Psicología Positiva, de forma diametralmente

opuesta, alienta a que se ponga la felicidad en primer lugar, habiendo establecido supuestamente de forma científca que el hecho de buscarla conscientemente nos hará alcanzarla. Seguramente las dos propuestas tengan una parte de razón, pero ninguna de ellas, toda.

Perseguir siempre la felicidad es una tarea muy cansada. Y aunque la sociedad actual nos lo ponga verdaderamente difícil, a veces se hace necesario tomarse un respiro. El derrumbamiento del mito de la felicidad no debería abocar a un nihilismo destructivo sino que ha de servir para crear una individualidad y una sociedad más sensata y más serena, dejando de lado la fatigante búsqueda obligada de algo que nosotros mismos hemos creado para gobernarnos.

Precisamente, el objetivo de esta investigación ha sido describir y explicar las relaciones de poder de este nuevo "mundo feliz" por el bien de la comunidad y para que los individuos puedan tomar sus propias decisiones con el máximo de información disponible. Estas conclusiones pueden conducirnos a una comprensión más profunda de los discursos y prácticas de gran variedad de ámbitos, pero lo cierto es que la propia forma de analizarlos va más allá de la psicología, incluso va más allá que un solo campo en concreto; la Psicopolítica Gubernamental se encuentra en todas partes, eso es precisamente lo que pretende, ha hecho de la felicidad su esclava y dueña simultáneamente, promoviéndose y perpetuandose para la sostenibilidad del sistema en el que ella misma -la gubernamentalidad, no la felicidad- se ha auto constituído.

Las futuras líneas de investigación deberán aprender a traspasar fronteras -culturales y disciplinares- para poder abarcar de la forma más completa posible un tema tan complejo como el de la felicidad. Las reflexiones y difracciones de esta tesis podrían aplicarse principalmente a la vida cotidiana de todas aquellas personas que -de forma directa o indirecta, consciente o inconsciente- se ven afectadas por el *modus operandi* del "gobierno de la felicidad". La aplicación de las soluciones propuestas ayudaría a conseguir una verdadera liberación de la responsabilidad individual que se nos ha impuesto, logrando por fin una "depsicologización" y una "desubjetivación" de la culpa por no cumplir con los estándares de la sociedad neoliberal, del cansancio de la sociedad de la transparencia y de la infelicidad de la búsqueda interminable de la felicidad.

7. Artículos publicados

<u>Artículo 1:</u>

Rivera, A. R., Gálvez-Mozo, A., & Tirado-Serrano, F. (2023). The imperative of happiness in positive psychology: Towards a psychopolitics of wellbeing. *New Ideas in Psychology, 72,101058.*

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<u>Artículo 2:</u>

Rivera, A. R., Parellada, S., & Tirado-Serrano, F. (2024). The Governance of Well-being: Towards a "Brave New World"?. *Psychologist Papers. Vol. 45(2).*

[Impact Factor: 1.3 (2022), Theoretical Psychology, Quartile 1 (Q1)]
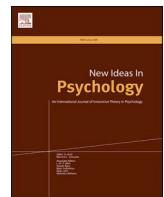
New Ideas in Psychology

The imperative of happiness in positive psychology: Towards a psychopolitics of wellbeing

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A B S T R A C T

Positive Psychology has reconstructed how we understand happiness. The practices and discourses it presents to perform that reconceptualization appear as if free from political interest or intentionality. However, this article will show that its proposals define a subtle new form of government which we will call Psychopolitics. Instead of placing the population or the body of the citizen at the centre of political struggles, it focuses on the psyche. Through an extreme defence of positive emotions and happiness as the key to a good life, Positive Psychology promotes a type of friendly power relations, which instead of punishing motivates and empowers the individual's creativity. To illustrate all of this, we conducted a case study with a Positive Psychology training course taught in a Spanish state university. Content analysis was used to explain the recurring themes and practices of this new discipline of positivity, showing how health is redefined around the happiness axis, and how happiness becomes an individual responsibility. We conclude that all these dimensions are simply a categorical definition of a new type of power relations which may characterise the 21st century.

1. Introduction: Happiness and positive psychology

As several authors (Arguís et al., 2010; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Fordyce, 1977) have remarked, happiness is one of the major goals regarded as exceptionally valuable in the sociocultural imaginary of our contemporary societies. It is a commonplace in academic literature to state that this is a construct which varies both diachronically - that is, over history, and synchronically - through culture and political axes. If we go back to Classical Greece, we quickly find that it was considered a greater good (Aristotle, 2009). On the other hand, in the Middle Ages, happiness appears as something we obtain in the next life (Aquinas, 2010; Augustine of Hippo, 2019). If we look at its definition in other cultures, past and present, but characterised by their distance from our own cultural coordinates, we find that happiness is included with values centred in the body or in collective well-being. All these examples show that its definition varies and multiplies depending on temporal, local,

social, religious, and political coordinates (see Tables 3–7).

More recently, and in our immediate context, in the Modern Age, with the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789), happiness was proclaimed to be a right. Along these lines, a plethora of movements have emerged in the Contemporary Age which approach this right and feeling from a more practical perspective, based on scientific principles (Lyubomirsky, 2008; Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The most recent conception, considered to belong to the 21st century, suggests that happiness may not be governed only by rulings which control people's lives through their bodies or their religious values, but also through the immediate and productive management of the *psyche* (Han, 2014; Stiegler, 2013). This notion should not be understood as a genetic, idiosyncratic and deep-rooted dimension of the individual which could be externalised through words or observation as it was in the 19th century, with the clearest examples being psychoanalysis or classic

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cognitive psychology, but more from an existential perspective of meaning in life, initially explored in the 20th century by the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl (1959), whose experience of being a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp can be used to address today's global psychological problem of suicidal behaviours (Costanza, Amerio, et al., 2020) after the financial crisis (Economou et al., 2013) and the COVID-19 pandemic (Costanza et al., 2021). Nowadays, the psychic realm has received a new, much broader and more operational definition, which makes it a set of relationships between internal aspects of the human being (which pass through the body and cognition) and other external aspects which pass directly through knowledge and the technologies which have recently begun to dominate our everyday lives (apps focusing on health, mindfulness, balanced diets, etc.). This is the result, among other things, of the fact that although in recent years we have put much more emphasis on looking for the so-called society of wellbeing (Rose et al., 2006), which emphasises care for the somatic, at present being physically well is no longer enough, and we are required to go a step further. Thus, the transformation of different world organisations in relation to the concept of health is clear. While in 1948 the World Health Organization defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not the mere absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 1946), by the end of the 20th century it was considered "a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities" (PAHO, 1986). In this new accepted sense, "personal" covers everything which was formerly called mental, but many more axes too, such as our relationship with the information generated by certain healthcare apps, the results we get from psychological or intelligence tests, or our interpersonal skills. In this pivot by the WHO we see health become an assumption, and the new goal of every citizen becomes achieving absolute and overall or comprehensive positive well-being. At this crossover of dimensions is when the so-called "psyche" acquires a new definition and value.

Positive Psychology is one of the movements which has taken advantage of this paradigm change and has aligned itself with this new attitude towards the psyche, which must be optimised to reach this well-being. In January 1998 it began using the concepts of "happiness" and "well-being" interchangeably as generic constructs to describe the proposals of its practical and intellectual initiative. The creators of this new discipline decided that "the content of the scientific enterprise should rest on three pillars" (Seligman, 2002, p. 384): a) the study of positive emotion; b) the study of the positive personality, the strengths and virtues whose regular exercise generates positive feelings; and 3) the establishment of a classifying and categorising system. In this way, the new discipline was affirming that a happy person would be one who enjoyed many positive experiences, had few negative ones, and saw himself as satisfied with his life (Diener et al., 1999). This meant a change of direction from what had originally underpinned Positive Psychology. In the beginning it had focused on studying only the positive aspects of human functioning in its most everyday and immediate activities. This First Wave, which emerged as a kind of counterweight to traditional psychology (Gable & Haidt, 2005), received a series of popular criticisms for its negative side effects, its simplistic application and the universality of its theories with a "Pollyanna-ish"[1] view of the world (Sample, 2003). This internal questioning gave way to a Second Wave which advocated giving up the negative-positive dichotomy and broadening the field of study, coming to understand well-being in a more dialectic and eudaimonic way (Salanova & Llorens, 2016). This more interactive perspective, which includes the change of direction mentioned above, has been called "Positive Psychology 2.0" (Wong, 2011).

However, what could be called the Third Wave of Positive Psychology is already becoming apparent. Here the excessive focus on the individual will be expanded to include cultural, ethical, and contextual aspects. According to Lomas et al. (2020), this will introduce a deeper and more complex approach which will take into account the groups and systems which individuals inhabit. The Positive Psychology of the future

will be interdisciplinary and work with a wide range of methodologies, leading to a necessary epistemological expansion. It seems obvious that this wave is the response to the many criticisms of Positive Psychology in recent years, which are structured around three axes. First, critics point to the excessive individualism of this approach. Its concept of happiness and well-being gravitate exclusively around an individual who makes decisions in a very narrow and limited social dimension (Cabanas, 2018). Second, some authors (De La Fabian & Stecher, 2017; Teo, 2018) affirm that this individualism is a resource to legitimise a new concept of Homo Neoliberalus, based on subjectivity centred on utilitarianism and the lack of socio-political criticism. Finally, it has been suggested that there is no analysis of how certain commonplace technologies in our everyday lives generate a series of affective modulations with our bodies that align them with neoliberal attitudes to productivity, emotions, and action (Martínez-Guzmán & Lara, 2019).

To avoid validating the analysed premises, thus perpetuating the mechanisms of subjectivation, we must make clear that of course there are other philosophical approaches to happiness that Positive Psychology is not considering at all; for example the philosophical theory of Absurdism, where the universe is irrational and meaningless. Research based on this would definitely contradict the claims of Positive Psychology, as it states that trying to find meaning would lead humanity into a conflict with the world.

Despite all these criticisms, it seems obvious that the number of studies on Positive Psychology has increased exponentially in recent years, and several meta-analyses have been published in very important journals, showing its effectiveness in increasing psychological well-being and reducing depression and stress (Hendriks et al., 2020). Some authors (Fagundes et al., 2018; Martínez et al., 2007) consider that all of this shows the existence of a new imperative at the service of an old objective: increasing worker productivity. Other works (Brito et al., 2020) return to the standardisation effect which this imperative, expressed through "self-help", could have on the subjective perceptions of neoliberal citizens.

At any event, there are two important gaps in all the literature mentioned above. First, there is no analysis of the discourses and practices promoting Positive Psychology, which could be shaping the previously mentioned third wave. Second, it has not been suggested that the imperative of happiness or success of Positive Psychology is simply a sign that a new type of power relations is emerging, which does not fall under the heading of "neoliberalism" nor under the Foucauldian label of biopolitics or optimisation of the life of the neoliberal citizen (Foucault, 1979).

To fill these gaps, our research proposed to analyse the contents of the discourses and the practices promoted by Positive Psychology through a case study of a Master's degree taught in a Spanish state university, to explain if happiness can be related to politics. Although it seems paradoxical, we suggest that this hidden political value would not be linked to the liberal or neoliberal economic and social imaginary which defines our societies. On the contrary, we argue that the discourses and practices of Positive Psychology relate to the emergence of a new format of power relations, which Han (2014) calls the psychopolitical regime. Positive Psychology is an instrument promoting a happiness imperative which forms one of the key dimensions of what we have called the psychopolitics of well-being. This new power regime could be the essential characteristic of our present, and would indicate that the arena of power struggles and the urge to control are now not exclusively in the biological realm (Bios), as post-structuralist thinking has stated (Agamben, 2020; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Foucault, 1979; Hardt & Negri, 2000) since the late 20th century, but now also include a special interest in the psyche.

To illustrate all of this, first we present and discuss the notions of the entrepreneur and emotional capitalism. Next, we assess the notion of psychopolitics in its conceptual and heuristic aspects. Third, we describe our methodology and data analysis with ATLAS.ti, and finally, we conclude that Positive Psychology is one of the exponents of a new

power regime. This discipline promotes a happiness imperative which is the central axis of what we have called the Psychopolitics of Well-being.

2. Entrepreneur of the self and emotional capitalism

The new era of permanent communication and public exposure (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) has a flipside, which is simply the need for us to constantly know ourselves (self-knowledge) and take care of ourselves (self-care). The movement known as *Quantified Self*, the goal of which is to increase physical, mental, and spiritual performance through self-measurement, is a good example of this (Lupton, 2016; Nafus & Sherman, 2014). From the point of view of many authors (Illouz, 2019; Lazzarato, 2012), this need is simply the implementation of a new mechanism of self-exploitation, which finds its main vehicle in generating information, and where the beginning and end of the process depends on our own subjectivity.

As we know, Foucault (1979) gave the name "entrepreneurs of the self" to individuals who reproduce this self-management logic. The subject is now an entrepreneur (understanding enterprise to be a task or action which involves work or effort), not only in the professional sphere but also in the personal and above all in the emotional realms. This entrepreneur is configured as a performativity of actions, appearing as a reflective project which is subjected, alone or with the support of consultants, therapists, coaches or other authorities, to a continuous self-monitoring, to adjust, again and again, the trajectory of *sui vida* (Brockling, 2015).

In the context discussed above there has been a proliferation of practices and discourses on coaching, self-help, emotional intelligence, and Positive Psychology. Using them, we dose ourselves with well-being, try to temporarily calm an unease which we find ourselves unable to identify clearly, and construct a *modus vivendi* which little by little makes the search for happiness its central axis. In this way, we have gradually entered a new form of "intangible production" which now not only values technical expertise (hard skills) or information, but also values emotional competencies (soft skills). As well as human capital and social capital (people with good social networks, to attract new customers, new ideas, new projects, etc.) at present what is most valued - for their capacity for development, their inimitability and their "competitive advantage" (Luthans et al., 2007) - are the psychological (or personal) resources of individuals, such as Attitude, Emotional Intelligence, personal Strengths or Psychological Capital. For some authors, all this shows that we have entered a new type of capitalism which, going beyond information (Zuboff, 2015), fuses onto and operates in the emotions (Illouz, 2019). The emotional realm is the new field of action of capitalisation and wealth generation: we invest in emotions, we look for their profitability, we accumulate them, we sell them … Large corporations and institutions mobilise emotions to generate extra value which is added to the value generated by information and the circulation of goods.

3. What is psychopolitics?

The philosopher Byung-Chul Han, adapting Stiegler's (2011) notion of psychopower, recently put forward the thesis that we are witnessing the birth of a new form of government of the population characterised by prioritising the psyche as the object of its actions. He called this Psychopolitics (2014). Unlike biopolitics, whose object is life, whether in the form of *bios* (the moral) or *zoé* (the body), psychopolitics acts on individuals' pre-reflective mind, exercising a type of power which does not coerce and oppress, but motivates them and lets them act freely. Han (2013) refers to a power which acts based on freedom and positivity, which does not subjugate violently to bend citizens to its will but seduces the citizen into freely choosing to submit. This power does not standardise, as discipline does with the body, but moulds to the psyche of each individual, explores its nature, and based on that, directs behaviour.

Psychopolitics makes the individual into a project constantly being proposed and reinvented on the emotional plane. In psychopolitical devices, individuals constantly manage their psyche, looking for well-being and positive emotions. The wide range of life choices provided by neoliberalism and the consumer society are accompanied by a sensation of individual freedom together with a disconnection from all external, social coercion. Han (2012) suggests that, far from being free, contemporary individuals have interiorised disciplinary coercion and are constantly exploiting themselves to maximise their life projects.

Positive Psychology as an academic discipline plays a key role in all the above. Its redefinition of happiness, its quantification, and the definition of the healthy individual based on that quantification are its defining elements. The following sections show how its discourses and practices follow what we have described, and perfectly reproduce a citizen-project which perfectly fits into this new form of government, Psychopolitics.

4. Methodology

4.1. A case study

This article is based on qualitative research. Specifically, we chose the case study method because it would open up the possibility of using a wide range of techniques, allowing data to be gathered from multiple information sources (Yin, 2009). As the main purpose was to describe in order to find variables and identify relationships, we proposed a holistic single-case design which would let us explore the context in which the phenomenon was inserted and explain causal links of the processes involved in the phenomenon in real-life application (Rashid et al., 2019). As some researchers explain about this methodology, the main purpose is not to generalize but to particularize a given case based on its situational reality (White & Cooper, 2022).

The Master's in Applied Positive Psychology was the case chosen to gather data for the following reasons: First, it is illustrative of the research topic, since the Happiness proposal of Positive Psychology is explicitly promoted. Second, its relevance in all Spanish-speaking countries since it is the first Master's Degree in Positive Psychology to be taught fully online by a university in Spain, in Spanish, and with the support of the Spanish Society of Positive Psychology (SEPP). Third, it is generally representative of the field because it includes the discourses and applies the practices of the most current Positive Psychology endorsed by the methodology of the Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) program at the University of Pennsylvania. Fourth, it was easy to access the materials of this one-year training course because the main researcher was a student of the Master (in its 5th edition) during the investigation.

Based on the meta-analysis by Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam (2018), we followed the case study protocols of Merriam (1998) and Yin (2009) and overlapped them to obtain a step-by-step protocol to fit our research needs which resulted in the levels that we finally carried out: 1) literature review, 2) construction of a theoretical framework, 3) identification of the research problem, 4) definition of research questions, 5) sample selection, 6) data collection, 7) data analysis and 8) conclusions.

4.2. Data collection

Specifically, the empirical data raised as the main sources for content analysis were the following: 1) Course texts containing the theory taught in the class in text format, 2) images and graphics in the form of lecture slides, 3) audiovisual files, 4) the program's official webpage and its virtual intranet context, and 5) discourses and 6) practices delivered by the lecturers.

The research question of whether positive psychology's discourses and practices can be related to politics guided the data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) and led to a document[2] constructed over a six-month period, for 8 h per week, where notes by the main researcher

were systematically taken on all this content taught in the course. We decided to analyse only the second semester as the first half was treated as period of adaptation to the field and used to design the research taking into account the characteristics of the case studied. Although the students were not part of the observation process, Participant Observation was used to understand the everyday ways of acting, thinking and feeling of a group in a specific space and time under the daily discourses and practices of Positive Psychology delivered by the lecturers.

4.3. Analysis of the information

To analyse the information we followed abductive reasoning (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010), which is a knowledge production strategy associated with constructionism that occupies the middle ground between induction and deduction. Although Plutynski (2011) identifies many problems (Boundary, Formalization, Description and Justification), in our reasoning we used empirical data to illustrate the hypothesis while we were accepting the theory to explain the empirical data. So, although we accepted the existing theory of psychopolitics we were also data-driven to (re)generate that theory. And as a good abduction process should have a hypothesis that explains the facts while the facts sustain the hypothesis (Peirce, 1998), that is exactly what we found in our case of study.

A Content Analysis was performed to explore how, and how much, the happiness discourse and practices proposed in the Positive Psychology course serve the current device of neoliberal governmentality defined as Psychopolitics. To categorize and link the information divided into empirical material (data collected) and theoretical material (characteristics of Psychopolitics), we introduced the empirical corpus in the qualitative data analysis programme ATLAS.ti (version 8) and this gave us a list of items exemplifying the general concept of Happiness proposed by Positive Psychology.

The process to qualitatively categorize this information was to extract the following attributes from each item: 1) its main characteristics, 2) what these characteristics imply, and 3) Keyword(s) that can summarize it. There were 74 different units of data involved in the coding. To take an example, from an item of empirical data extracted from the course texts and theory such as "Positive Psychology concludes that happiness is distributed in three large dimensions: Genetics (50%), Circumstances (10%) and Intentional Activity (40%) (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005)." it could be qualitatively concluded that 1) Happiness, according to Positive Psychology, depends a little on circumstances, a bit more on intentional activity and a great deal on genetics. 2) That implies that circumstances are almost irrelevant to happiness, since it depends on the genetics with which you were born and what you do intentionally. 3) Keyword(s): individualisation, innate happiness, intentional control, not dependent on context, etc.

Therefore, with just one item of empirical material it could already be explained that the main premise of the science of happiness is that it is worth striving to be happy (since it is stated that 40% percent is subject to a certain control by the individual), a fact that could be related to the Psychopolitical theoretical perspective through the coding "Individualisation".

From there, redundant items were eliminated and the most relevant ones were selected to reach saturation. Next, the remaining items were grouped in codes that represented the main topics of Positive Psychology. Finally, each thematic code (for example, "Practices") was related to the characteristics of Psychopolitics through their respective associated items.

It is noteworthy that this analytical procedure was put to the test by other researchers from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, reaching similar conclusions.

Table 1 summarizes the different types of empirical data gathered (first column) and how the characteristics of Psychopolitics (second column) emerged from each specific category. We also show all the repetitive characteristics that overlapped during the analysis (third

Table 1
Categories of empirical data and psychopolitics.

Empirical Data (and number of units)	Characteristics of Psychopolitics	Overlapped Characteristics
1) Course texts & theory (28)	**Individualisation:** Structures are disregarded. Responsibility falls on individuals. If they fail, they blame themselves. **Psychologicisation:** The power which used to be exercised against the body is now applied to the mind. The mental is more important than the physical.	● Improvement ● Attraction ● Emotional Capitalism ● Transparency ● Prescription ● Positivity ● Measurement
2) Images and graphics (19)	**Improvement:** Promotes refining, a perpetual improvement of the Self.	● Attraction ● Transparency ● Ubiquity ● Gamification
3) Audiovisual files (3)	**Attraction:** It does not force anything, it invites. Smart power, seductive rather than oppressive, and giving us the freedom to reproduce and even improve the neoliberal *modus vivendi.* From "must be" to "can do". **Emotional Capitalism:** Emotion is the raw material; neoliberalism converts the power of the psyche into productive power. It exploits everything to do with the emotions.	● Transparency ● Ubiquity ● Immediacy ● Gamification
4) Virtual context (2)	**Transparency:** We strip naked voluntarily. The digital panopticon (Big Data) enables us to surveil each other, creating a standardisation of the masses. Psychographics with a double function: gathering and distributing information about the desires of society/societies. **Ubiquity:** through total communication, it reaches the whole world horizontally and penetrates all the fabric of society vertically. It attempts to be present in every sphere of our everyday lives.	● Individualisation ● Psychologicisation ● Improvement ● Attraction ● Immediacy ● Gamification
5) Discourses (13)	**Prescription:** This shows us what it is good to feel, think and do. It constructs reality and (fore)tells what is desirable. **Positivity:** "The good" is rewarded and made visible, and "the bad" is criminalised and made invisible. Creation and establishment of ideal thoughts and behaviours.	● Psychologicisation ● Improvement ● Emotional Capitalism
6) Practices (9)	**Measurement:** Everything must be measurable, and everything must be measured. Everything must become data. The Quantified Self as a data source for Big Data. **Immediacy:** Promotes and exploits immediacy, leaving no space for reflection. Stigmatises slowness and encourages accelerationism: now or never. Operates at the emotional, pre-reflective level. **Gamification:** It can make our jobs more flexible and fun, but our working hours follow us home. There are no longer boundaries between leisure and business. Life is capital.	● Individualisation ● Psychologicisation ● Improvement ● Attraction ● Emotional Capitalism ● Transparency ● Ubiquity ● Prescription ● Positivity

column), with the main characteristics being the most representative and the overlapped being just secondary (see Table 2).

As shown in the table, some elements have overlapped and we take this overlapping into account in the analysis. The categories obtained

Table 2
Positive mental health for positive performance.

Empirical Data	Primary Characteristics
Positive Mental Health (Díaz et al., 2007)	Prescription Psychologicisation Positivity Emotional Capitalism
Theory of the "Happy-Productive Worker" (Lucas & Diener, 2003)	Gamification Individualisation Improvement Ubiquity Emotional Capitalism Prescription Measurement
€2.97 Operating Return on Investment (World Economic Forum)	Emotional Capitalism Measurement Gamification

Table 3
(Re)defining happiness.

Empirical Data	Primary Characteristics
Diener's (1999) requirements of happiness: - Presence of positive emotions (joy) - Absence of negative emotions (sadness) - Positive evaluation of life (satisfaction)	Prescription Psychologicisation Positivity Emotional Capitalism
The experience of joy, satisfaction or positive well-being, combined with the feeling that life is good, meaningful and worthwhile. (Lyubomirsky, 2008)	Emotional Capitalism Prescription
True happiness derives from identifying and cultivating people's major strengths and from its everyday use in work, love, leisure, and raising children. (Seligman, 2011)	Ubiquity Measurement Prescription Transparency Individualisation Improvement

Table 4
(Re)modelling happiness.

Empirical Data	Primary Characteristics
Model of the three paths of Seligman (2002): 1. The Pleasant Life (emotions) 2. The Good Life (engagement) 3. The Meaningful Life (purpose)	Prescription Psychologicisation Positivity Emotional Capitalism Individualisation Improvement
The PERMA model of happiness (Seligman, 2012): - Positive Emotions - Engagement - Relations - Meaning - Accomplishment	Positivity Individualisation Attraction Psychologicisation Emotional Capitalism Prescription
The Model of Eudaimonic Well-being of Ryff (1989): - Autonomy - Self-acceptance - Positive Relationships - Purpose in Life - Personal Growth - Environmental Mastery	Emotional Capitalism Psychologicisation Improvement Positivity Prescription Individualisation Attraction

Table 5
Practising happiness.

Empirical Data	Primary Characteristics
Mindfulness	Prescription Psychologicisation Individualisation Ubiquity
Best Possible Self	Psychologicisation Individualisation Improvement Ubiquity Immediacy
Three Good Things	Positivity Prescription Ubiquity
Savouring	Individualisation Ubiquity Attraction Immediacy
Positive Language	Positivity Measurement Immediacy Psychologicisation Individualisation Prescription

Table 6
A measurement of happiness.

Empirical Data	Primary Characteristics
Happiness can be measured using questionnaires, tests and apps	Measurement Emotional Capitalism Immediacy Individualisation Ubiquity Attraction Psychologicisation Transparency

Table 7
A new individual: positive and happy.

Empirical Data	Primary Characteristics
What are Positive People like? - Social affiliation and free time - Sense of humour - Extroverts and emotionally stable - Sense of spirituality - Behaviour tends towards the positive (optimism) - They try to be happy - They smile more - They live longer and better! - Prosocial behaviour (helping others)	Prescription Psychologicisation Positivity Individualisation
Personal Resources of Positive People: • Self-efficacy • Resilience • Optimism • Positive emotions • Responsibility • Trust	Prescription Psychologicisation Positivity Individualisation Emotional Capitalism

from the ATLAS.ti analysis of the items were grouped under the following epigraphs to illustrate their relation with Psychopolitics: 1) Positive Mental Health for Positive Performance, 2) (Re)defining happiness, 3) (Re)modelling happiness, 4) Practising happiness, 5) A measurement of happiness, 6) A new individual: positive and happy, 7) Positive Education, 8) Positive Psychology Models and 9) Positive Psychology New Perspectives. These nine themed categorical structures were derived from linking each specific unit of empirical data [for example, Positive Psychology's (re)definition of Mental Health (Díaz

et al., 2007)] with their primary characteristics, and then expanding these characteristics to other items of empirical data to create networks of qualitative relations. (To justify the first axis for example, it is a fact that the new "Positive Mental Health" was taught on the exact same page as "Benefits for Performance" and "Return On Investment", thus corroborating the results of the qualitative analysis of the Master's).

Although these are the main nine axes of the Psychopolitics of Positive Psychology, all themes were not equally prominent, and so we decided to eliminate the three last axes from the former analysis,

because they rarely appeared or appeared only in one source and not others, and thus were less relevant. The discarded axes were Positive Education, Positive Psychology Models, and Positive Psychology New Perspectives.

4.4. A note about reliability

Given the qualitative nature of this research, it is vital to address some issues of trustworthiness, taking into account that the claims we make about what to draw from our analysis are not definitive and can change depending on the context and over time. With our method we have analysed frames of meaning that do not allow generalisation, but do allow us to elaborate an ideal type, a model that fits the case studied very well and can be used to investigate other cases, while assuming that in other specific cases it may vary.

5. What is hidden behind the discourses and practices of positive psychology?

Positive Psychology is presented as a discipline without links to any global political framework. Its aspirations centre on eliminating individual suffering, and its intellectual and practical activity are linked to finding tools to enable this eradication. Our Content Analysis shows that first, it turns to the concept of health and happiness to achieve these goals, and second, doing this makes apparent the political dimension of this discipline, which it tries to sidestep. Its goals define a happiness imperative through practices which are constantly quantified and measured by the recipient individuals themselves. Next, we will present the six networks or themed categorical structures which we found in our research, and which allow us to make this statement. Each of them in turn describes an axis defining Positive Psychology as a new scientific discipline and life project. And all of them, as a whole, unanimously show the deployment of a new exercise in power relations we will call the Psychopolitics of Well-being. We will introduce these networks with a table at the start of each sub-section showing the relationships among categories obtained with the Atlas.ti software, clearly displaying the number and density of links established between them. These tables show the groupings of categories we obtained in our analysis. Column 1 shows the data used while column 2 shows the primary Psychopolitical characteristics of every specific item of the Empirical Data.

5.1. Positive Mental Health for Positive Performance

Our first axis' table presents the following groupings:

The above table shows a direct link between positive mental health and positive performance in any area or project a citizen is working on. The verbatim quote from Díaz et al. (2007) is central to this conceptual network: "mental health implies a positive emotional state, […] having expectations of a positive future, and in general, an adaptative mode of interpreting reality. But it also means having resources to face adversity, and even more important, to develop as human beings."

Thus, Positive Psychology is presented as a discipline which goes beyond the deficit; in other words, it aspires to be something more than a palliative for a lack. It establishes a link between mental health and success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) through notions and theories of performance such as the *"Happy-Productive Worker"* (Lucas & Diener, 2003). In fact, the Positive Psychology course explains that health is closely linked to capital, justifying in literally economic terms what is called a Return on Investment: an amount of monetary resources saved on the use of health services or returned in other ways, such as increased productivity in companies. It mentions as a fun fact that according to the World Economic Forum, the value of this ROI is calculated at 2.97 euros for each euro invested in Happiness Programmes. The table clearly shows that Well-being is a keyword which spreads from the sphere of health to the business world. And most importantly, that this does not happen through discourse on public-private investment policies or

practices and improving human capital, but through a clear Psychologization. The mind and the psyche dominate the conceptual structure, replacing interest in physical health. This psychologization is dominated by the emotions which refer to happiness and its possible capitalisation. As we already mention in earlier sections, the conceptual structure of the graph perfectly fits the paradigm propounded by the World Health Organisation itself on the link between well-being and personal performance: "Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2018).

Here we have the first axis defining Positive Psychology, which suggests that positive mental health is a necessary condition for positive performance.

5.2. (Re)defining happiness

The second table we obtained is:

The second obvious category structure which appeared in our study shows how the defining axes of Positive Psychology include the intention of reconceptualising the idea of happiness. It goes from a broad and varied conceptualisation to pivoting almost exclusively on the central axis of emotion. Thus, the literature used in the course analysed is dominated by classic authors such as Diener et al. (1999) who for years have been focusing on how we should feel our emotions, and strange as it may seem, how much. If these emotions are positive and plentiful in time and space, they will create a state of joy and satisfaction, which is the desired objective of Positive Psychology (Lyubomirsky, 2008). True happiness is built on this axis of emotionality (Seligman, 2012) and all citizens are invited to make their inner selves transparent so that the proposal of happiness can be applied and radiate into all spheres of everyday life through "its everyday use in work, love, leisure, and raising children."

Thus the second defining axis of Positive Psychology, as can be seen in this table, is the articulation of happiness over positive emotional experience and the need to quantify these experiences, given that the more often they occur in our lives, the more well-being we will experience.

5.3. (Re)modelling happiness

At a third moment, we were able to establish this table:

The above table shows a third categorical structure whose importance surprised us. It refers to the fact that happiness is not just redefined, but also remodelled. Positive Psychology is not averse to the scientific ambition of proposing models and causal explanations. Thus, in this case, it looks for models which support the factors influencing the creation of human happiness. In fact, the teachings of one of its founders, Martin Seligman, is prominent in the Positive Psychology course because it suggests that a "good life" (Seligman, 2002) can be achieved if we can break down the concept into three phases or hierarchical stages: first, the life of the emotions (the Pleasant Life); second, of commitment (the Good Life); and third, of purpose (the Meaningful Life). Alongside this structure of three phases, the PERMA model of happiness (Seligman, 2012) also appears often, adding a list of factors which must be fulfilled to have a happy life (Prescription). Other authors such as Carol Ryff (1989) also appear frequently, as they have formulated models which emphasise engagement, or commitment to a purpose and to personal growth, using attractive graphics (Attraction) to prescribe the idealistic idea that any autonomous individual (Individualisation) must develop himself or herself (Improvement) to fit into the Well-being Model prescribed by positive science.

From the above, we can conclude that the third axis defining Positive Psychology is modelling happiness according to the image or metaphor of a path with different stages which must be overcome to reach a final goal, which would be what is considered a "good life" or desirable state

of happiness.

5.4. Practising happiness

The fourth table of results of our research is complementary to the previous one and can be seen below:

Obviously, the existence of the network of categories described in the previous section is supported by another which describes suitable practices for following the path that leads to the "good place". Thus, we see that one of the key points of Positive Psychology is its supply of a wide range of so-called "Positive Practices" intended to increase well-being in search of an "optimal human functioning" (Improvement). Some of these practices are thinking positive, thinking of your *Best Possible Self*, *Savouring* the here and now through *Mindfulness*, and practising gratitude by writing a letter or listing *Three Good Things* which have happened at the end of the day. As can be inferred from this list of practices, individuals on their journey to maximum happiness are constantly required to explain (Transparency) their emotions, thoughts and behaviours using Measuring and recording mechanisms which accompany them at all times. Thus, happiness is something which demands exercise, practice, and perseverance. But not just any type of action leads to "good living". There is an extensive catalogue in which individuals must make their emotions, thoughts and behaviours transparent. This is the fourth major axis defining Positive Psychology.

5.5. A measurement of happiness

A fifth table offers these results:

One of the most characteristic elements of Positive Psychology, and which makes it radically different from other approaches which also deal with the question of human well-being (psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology in all its variants, emotional intelligence, etc.) is its emphasis on the ability to measure happiness. This theme is the heart of the fifth conceptual structure which appeared in our research.

"Happiness can be measured using questionnaires, tests and apps" is a phrase recorded from the training course which epitomises the *modus operandi* of Positive Psychology as a scientific discipline. This leverages the aspiration of the scientific method to measure everything (Measurement) so that its proposal for happiness seems to involve a goal which can be objective and operational, and presents a certain level of stability. The basic premise of the "science of happiness" is that everything must be measurable and everything must be measured: when someone asks how we feel, we immediately become transparent and the emotional data we provide (for example, reacting with emoticons [icons of the emotions] on social networks online) can be quantified based on various systems. Quantifying and measuring happiness is the fifth axis defining Positive Psychology.

5.6. A new individual: positive and happy

Finally, our data are grouped in this sixth table:

Finally, our exploration obtained a categorical structure which had to do with the definition of the citizen. Here, individual people are the main recipients and beneficiaries of the messages sent by Positive Psychology. This discipline explains what persons determined to be "positive" are like, and what resources they have. In this exercise we observed three elements. First, an exacerbated individualisation which appears as a result of the Psychologization mentioned above. Second, a projection of this individual into the future, given that they are considered a project which can be improved indefinitely. Finally, this individual is made responsible for making, or not making, the decision which can lead to a fuller, happier life. In other words, the resources, the practices, the knowledge, the scientific constancy exist, and therefore it is ultimately the individual who is responsible for having a good life or rejecting that path. Thus, the characterisation of a certain type of individual who faces a context which offers resources for improving their life, and is

responsible for accepting or rejecting them, is the sixth axis defining Positive Psychology.

6. Discussion: the happiness imperative of positive psychology

As we have mentioned above, one of the main criticisms of Positive Psychology accuses it of being an instrument of the neoliberal imaginary. This accusation is based on the excessive individualism exhibited in this discipline and the link it establishes between happiness and productive activity. However, our research shows that the reality is more complex. In the previous section we showed that Positive Psychology structures its discourses and practices based on six categorical axes: a) good mental health means better work and personal performance; b) happiness is articulated based on emotions; c) happiness is visualised as a path with several stages which must be overcome; d) there are specific practices which enable us to follow that path; e) happiness can be measured (and the new algorithmic technologies and apps have an important part to play in this); and f) it is not a fallacy to think that the ideal of a positive, happy individual exists - in other words, the final product of following the path. These axes make up the conceptual and practical framework of this discipline. They set the guidelines for teaching and researching it, and how it understands our everyday reality.

These axes quickly show that Positive Psychology goes beyond the liberal-neoliberal framework. Evidently, if we pay attention to the axes which emphasise individuality and the link between happiness and production, we can accuse it of being a tool at the service of reproducing this framework. However, in doing that we would be ignoring what all the other axes are showing us. Therefore, we propose a joint reading of the six axes which offers a framework for interpreting them, characterised by four dimensions. First, Positive Psychology offers an imperative. That is, the citizen is free to choose what it proposes, but not choosing it means renouncing good living and the prospect of all lives that want to be lived to the full. This imperative operates as a subtle obligation pointing to an individual ethic which shows everything that is good to feel, think and do. This obligation is established in every sphere of everyday life and operates through the most immediate emotions, applying a positivity to the mind which makes the individual responsible for continuing to submit to an endless project of optimisation. Second, the individual is considered a project continuously working towards future improvement. Happiness, as we have mentioned, is at the end of a journey which must be taken, deploying certain practices of self-observation, self-governance, self-generated information, and exhibition of the self to other people. Third, the information this individual produces about their internal states is quantified, measured, converted to data, and can be recorded for analysis. Finally, it is advisable to note that the main field of action for all the above is the psyche, rather than the somatic or social reality of the citizen. It will be through intervention in the psychic plane that they will reach, or not, that goal of happiness and well-being that every human longs for.

Positive Psychology, for all these reasons, is not exactly a tool of liberalism-neoliberalism. Rather, it forms part of the sphere of intelligibility of Psychopolitics. Thus, we see individuals who convert everything in their psyche into data, which are then evaluated and returned to them so that they can continuously optimise and improve their mental structures. The novelty or nuance which Positive Psychology adds to this psychopolitical exercise is to promote what we could call a Psychopolitics of Well-being. That is, this exercise of datification of the psyche which permits its infinite optimisation can be directed to a specific goal of well-being or good living.

The Psychopolitics of Well-being seems to be seeping into every aspect of our everyday life. It makes happiness the core of its action on the psyche, and while its goals may be noble and seek the constitution of a human being with less suffering, it still deploys subtle power relations and control mechanisms. These include the establishment of an imperative that motivates us intelligently instead of punishing us; it promises

tangible and scientifically proven realities, rather than political or religious utopias; it offers courses of action that are practically impossible to reject, rather than hard-to-achieve fantasies; and it makes our psyche a project open to its scrutiny and intervention, where individuals' ability to choose is diminishing, given that they delegate their decision-making criteria to computer applications and systems of knowledge like that offered by Positive Psychology.

7. Strengths of the study

This research could establish a base from which we can continue exploring the full implications of this framework, and precisely the general strength of this study is that it has paid attention to the historic, social, and symbolic nature of a particular analysed object. This involved a focus on examining the discourses and practices in which that object is inserted and defined (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This case study explored a contemporary system (Johansson, 2007) over a defined period (Creswell et al., 2007), without attempting to isolate that unit from its real context of production (Dul & Hak, 2007) thus allowing us to observe psychological power relations that happen in real life. Thanks to having placed us in a privileged study position from within the case itself [with one of us being a participant observer], this has allowed us to observe how a Master's in Positive Psychology empowers a new era of "positive graduates" who are continuing with the work of perpetuating the chain of positivity (and all that this implies), meaning that we now know first-hand how Positive Psychology is reproducing and how it uses its followers to ensure the continuity of its discourses and practices, so from this research they will be aware of the role they are playing in society. This study shows the power relations that are enabled by Positive Psychology, something that is currently not being done. The fact that in the end everyone is interested in happiness makes the results of this research relevant not just to experts but to all the people who in one way or another have been, are being, or definitely will be affected by "The happiness of Positive Psychology".

8. Limitations of the study

Today more than ever, we must be aware of the great limitation that is approaching happiness from a privileged, rather comfortable position, which makes us understand it -and promote it- in a certain way that may not be relevant for everyone. Therefore, a counterproductive part of this research that tried to make the mechanisms of Positive Psychology explicit is that, without intending it, it can inadvertently validate the very premises that have been analysed, thus perpetuating the mechanisms of subjectivation that they provoke. In addition, another limitation is that since the identities of the case studied have not been openly disclosed because that could be harmful to the people who make it up, it has not been possible to reach the most desirable option which is the complete dissemination of the information that would have facilitated replication and linking to other investigations. Finally, the question of whether it is possible that Positive Psychology is not alone in operating via Psychopolitical mechanisms is not answered yet and should be discussed in future investigations, constantly reviewing the findings of this case study. Evidently, this future research will have to face the challenge of showing how psychopolitical operations are nested within other types of practices and discourses which are presented as breaking with the established neoliberal order.

9. Conclusions

Positive Psychology has reconstructed how we must understand happiness. Its practices and discourses have spread to every action of our everyday life. Although it is presented as a discipline taking no part in the main mechanisms of power, we have found that it subtly reproduces a new modality of power and control, called Psychopolitics. Here, the arena of political struggle and conflict have moved from the notion of the *bios* to that of the psyche. This is what enables us to define a productive, active individual aligned with the requirements of the status quo, the practical consequences of which are spreading into the spheres of our everyday reality through the creation of more happiness programs in the field of education, well-being workshops to manage one's emotional health at work, new positive applications to the "citizen science", and obviously training in the field of psychology as well, where life coaching has become so important that it is now the new definition of Popular Psychology.

However, Positive Psychology does something more than just reproduce a power mechanism; it creates it to maintain itself and it has established a variant or nuance of Psychopolitics which we have called the Psychopolitics of Well-being. Here and now, the good life, the life worth living, is the life that is constantly seeking the well-being generated by positive thoughts and emotions.

Author's statement

The authors declare that the text is completely original and that there are no conflicts of interest in it.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2023.101058.

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Article

The Governance of Well-being: Towards a "Brave New World"?

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the phenomenon of the "governance of well-being," which includes the use of happiness as a tool of power used by governmental, non-governmental, and public and private organizations around the world. Based on a chronological exploration of contemporary global policies and through the happiness practices that we can find in the different areas of daily life, it is explained that happiness is becoming a device of social control and that it is being institutionalized through its 1) universalization, 2) privatization, 3) scientification, and 4) blackboxing. Finally, the consequences of all this are exposed in order to prevent the imperative of happiness from governing us towards a Huxleyan "brave new world," in which a "welfare regime" could prevail that seems less and less utopian.

El Gobierno del Bienestar: ¿Hacia un "Mundo Feliz"?

RESUMEN

En este artículo se describe el fenómeno del "gobierno del bienestar", que comprende el uso de la felicidad como herramienta de poder utilizada por organismos gubernamentales, no gubernamentales, y organizaciones públicas y privadas de todo el planeta. A partir de una exploración cronológica de las políticas globales contemporáneas y a través de las prácticas felicistas que podemos encontrar en los diferentes ámbitos de nuestra vida cotidiana se explica que la felicidad se está convirtiendo en un dispositivo de control social y que se está institucionalizando mediante su 1) Universalización, 2) Privatización, 3) Cientificación, y 4) Cajanegrización. Finalmente, se exponen las consecuencias de todo ello con el objetivo de evitar que el imperativo de felicidad nos gobierne hacia un "mundo feliz" huxleyano en el que podría imperar un "régimen del bienestar" que cada vez parece menos utópico.

The 21st century has seen the emergence of a concept called "happiness" whose main function is to govern societies. We understand "happiness" as an indicator of the development of nations and we promote it from its most applied aspect, as we turn it into an endeavor that prioritizes the maximization of both productivity and profitability. Furthermore, we have turned its research into an academic field that shapes the knowledge society and has submerged various areas of daily life in a scientific turn. In short: "happiness" is our atmosphere. We find it everywhere but it is nowhere to be found. We are turning it into an institution, so today it is already acting as a control device that serves to manage societies, relationships between people, and ways of being and showing up in the world.

As Franco Berardi (2003, p. 29) states, "a promise of happiness runs through mass culture, advertising, and economic ideology itself. In the common discourse, happiness is no longer an option, but an obligation; it is the essential value of the merchandise we produce, buy, and consume". Our present time is characterized by a regime called neoliberalism, which instead of hindering or subduing, seeks to activate, motivate, and optimize. Instead of repressing, it allows, and instead of repelling, it seduces through a new form of intelligent (smart) power that stands out for its positivity and focuses on generating positive emotions so that we submit to it voluntarily. Michel Foucault used the term "governmentality" to refer to the process by which the state molds the subjectivities of its citizens in order for them to develop practices that favor its programs (Ortiz, 2017). But the public "state" is no longer the only one that holds power; now power is also exercised by private institutions, non-governmental organizations, and large multinationals. In this new paradigm we are governed by devices that not only control people's lives through their bodies, but also through the management of the psyche. In the words of the philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2014), we are faced with a "technique of domination that stabilizes and reproduces the dominant system through psychological programming and control". And along the same lines, Edgar Cabanas (2020) qualifies the type of culture that is being imposed as an ideology of "happyism", as a business, as a type of imperative discourse that produces adverse effects at the psychological and social level. There are even proposals that argue that the current suffering is due to the very pursuit of happiness as an imperative (Fagundes et al., 2018).

This article is framed in the previous debate, and its objective is to make explicit how public and private, governmental, and non-governmental institutions use "happiness" to exert power over the populations of different countries through an evaluation of their emerging trends. Through a critical analysis of their discourses and practices in the daily lives of citizens, the aim is to analyze what the devices of the institutionalization of happiness have in common and to verify whether a political discourse that forces us to be happy is spreading. Therefore, we examine the types of mechanisms used by global organizations to (re)produce a happiness imperative that is (re)shaping the new social imaginary of well-being. This analysis ultimately aims to achieve an ethical purpose that would involve promoting a scientific, political, and social reflexivity in the face of an exercise of governmentality (governance of mentality) mainly promoted by the positive discipline of neoliberal society.

The Governance of Happiness

Let us begin this text with several historical vignettes. In 1972, in response to criticism of his country's economic poverty (Otálvaro, 2014), the king of Bhutan created the Gross Domestic Happiness (GDH) index in order to be able to explain the human development of societies beyond economic terms such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In 2011, the UN unanimously adopted General Assembly resolution A/65/L.86, submitted by Bhutan, calling for a "holistic approach to development" aimed at promoting sustainable happiness and well-being (UN, 2011). This was followed the next year by a meeting of world experts, spiritual leaders, and leaders of civil society to develop a new economic paradigm based on sustainability and well-being (Rizvi, 2012). In this way, the pioneering work of the Government of Bhutan to develop a development index that had happiness as a priority was disseminated globally.

Although certainly the objectives of Bhutan and the Buddhist worldview of happiness are much broader than those of Western literature and understanding, in 2013 happiness already became a matter of State in Venezuela with the creation of the "Vice-Ministry of the supreme social happiness of the people". Paraphrasing Venezuelan economist and public policy expert Ángel Alayón, no longer does happiness only belong to the academic sphere relating to self-help and self-improvement, but it has also become a branch of political science and economics (Pardo, 2013). Despite having obtained the recognition of the Guinness World Record in 2008 as the 'happiest' country in the world, Venezuela was included in 2019 in the list of countries with the highest number of suicides, and in 2023 it is the least happy in the Americas, ranking 88th out of a possible 137 according to the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2023).

In 2016, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) created the "Ministry of Happiness" with the aim of generating "social good and satisfaction as core values" in the country. Concrete steps were taken, such as developing a survey to determine how employees felt, the degree of satisfaction in public offices through emoticons, and even the creation of a "happiness patrol" formed by policemen who, instead of issuing fines, handed out gifts to drivers who did not violate the rules (RT, 2017). However, the initiative had opponents who advised that its authorities should also take care to respect human rights. In the end, with the changes announced in 2020, the "Ministry of Happiness" that was originally created to make the country one of the five happiest in the world, was renamed and became the "State Ministry for Government Development and the Future" (El Diario, 2020). Also in 2016, India's second most populous state—with 70 million inhabitants—created its own happiness index promising social programs that included yoga, meditation, and religious pilgrimages, as well as the proportion of psychologists to advise people how to be "always happy" (Marszal, 2016). Despite being one of the poorest states in the country and having the highest suicide figures among farmers, and although it is a state affected by high rates of malnutrition, maternal and infant mortality, as well as a high number of rapes, the state minister and author of the initiative Shivraj Singh Chouhan appointed Lal Singh Arya as "Minister of Happiness" to ensure "contentment in the lives of common people". But Arya had a shaky start in his new position,

as soon after his appointment he was arrested on charges of murdering a Congress leader. In 2018, Arya stated that his department had prepared a report to increase the happiness quotient of people with inputs from experts from the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Mauritius, and Bhutan, who would have helped officials structure the department. He also said that "we were planning to implement it this time" (Venugopal, 2018), but he was not reelected in the elections that same year, and the idea promoted by Minister Chouhan faded away (Tiwari, 2018). As of today, the happiness program in India is run by volunteers, who are calling for more support and resources to reach all districts in the central state.

Meanwhile, in Copenhagen you can already visit the "Museum of Happiness", paying to learn how world governments are adapting well-being as a goal for society. The fee to enter the museum is paid by the Happiness Research Institute, an independent think tank that explores why some societies are happier than others with the aim of "informing decision-makers about the causes and effects of human happiness, making subjective well-being part of the public policy debate and improving the overall quality of life for citizens around the world". Just as Nordic culture has adapted to the physical context, its happiness is at the same time an adaptation to its culture; a happiness embedded in the capitalist system.

Similarly, France convened a panel of experts led by two Nobel Prize winners in Economics to create a system to measure the level of happiness of the population in order to design public policies based on indicators such as being able to pay for a vacation or having eaten whatever you wanted during the last two weeks, which was copied by the United Kingdom (Pardo, 2013).

Spain has been the latest country to join the concern for happiness: in April 2017, the forum organized by *Nueva Economía e Innovación Social* [New Economy and Social Innovation] opened the first center for measuring the GDH. According to the director of the "NESI Forum" Diego Isabel La Moneda; the economy must contribute to improve happiness and be at the service of people, not the other way around (Servimedia, 2017). On the other hand, Felipe Viveros, European coordinator of the Bhutanese Center for Gross Domestic Happiness, commented that current systems such as GDP were created at the beginning of the century and therefore need to be updated to be at the service of people and the planet.

Towards a "Brave new World"[1]

As can be seen, "happiness" is rapidly becoming institutionalized all over the world, even though it is obvious that many human rights issues have yet to be resolved. Therefore, the following question becomes pertinent: Why is happiness currently being talked about in areas such as economics or politics? The answer lies in the establishment of a new type of governmentality or regime of governance.

Any social science dictionary tells us that to institutionalize is to create norms that can be repeated in time and space. And this is precisely what the happiness discourse does; using an extensive and articulated body of knowledge, it structures how we understand and experience the great new phenomenon of having to be happy, now in an institutionalized way. Through marketing and propaganda, the new concept of "happiness" is distilled into every corner of everyday life to do business, to increase performance, and to gain power.

Self-Help: The (Self-)Cure of the 21st Century

In the above context, known as the "happiness turn" (Ahmed, 2010), the practices and discourses of positive psychology, coaching, and self-help have proliferated. By resorting to them we self-administer well-being, we try to temporarily calm a malaise that we have not yet clearly identified, and we weave a modus vivendi that gradually makes the pursuit of happiness its central axis, the selling of which has created a multimillion-dollar market of its own. In this sense, Brito et al. (2020) insist on the normalizing effect that "self-help" has on the subjectivities of neoliberal citizens. As Cabanas and Huertas (2014) explain, both positive psychology and self-help defend the search for happiness as something inherent to the human condition.

And that's precisely what self-help bestsellers do, like the one by Neil Pasricha (2016), in which he proclaims that he aims to "find the exact equation of happiness," and attempts to do so with the following proposition: BEING HAPPY → GREAT WORK → GREAT SUCCESS. "What is the first thing you must do before you can be happy? Be happy. Be happy first." In short, he sells us a lie based on a fallacy: happiness is achieved with... happiness. The rigorous reflection of Pérez-Álvarez (2016) showed that indeed "felicitous is fallacious"[2], and that the theoretical weakness of positive psychology is just as present in the "happyist" commodification of self-help. Mo Gawdat, former commercial director of Google, explains in his book that "the simplest way for an engineer to express the definition of happiness is a mathematical expression: the happiness algorithm" (Gawdat, 2018). Happiness $\geq$ Your perception of events - Expectations. "Meaning that if you perceive something equivalent to or better than your expectations, you are happy; or, at least, you are not unhappy." Victor Küppers, a speaker who masterfully imparts the dogma of positive psychology, also has his own formula: $V = (K + S) \times A$. Where K is Knowledge, S is Skills, and A is Attitude. V is a person's Value. The founder of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, proposed in his book "Authentic Happiness" an equation that attempted to solve the conundrum "Can you be happier in a lasting way?" It went like this: $H = S + C + V$. "In which H is your enduring level of happiness, S your set point, C the circumstances of your life, and V voluntary variables" (Seligman, 2002, p. 79). Interestingly, years later he changed his own formula.

How to be Happy: An Overly Positive Education

Obviously, education is a very important area for the institutionalization of happiness. Thus, we have gradually entered a new form of "immaterial production" in which not only technical knowledge (hard skills) and the possession of information are valued, but also emotional competencies (soft skills). What is most valued, today—because of their capacity for development, their inimitability, and their "competitive advantage" (Luthans et

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[1] Translator's note: The title of "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley is translated as "Un mundo feliz" [A happy world] in Spanish.

[2] The original words here in Spanish are "Feliz es falaz", which translates as "happy is fallacious".

al., 2007)—are the psychological (or personal) resources of individuals, such as attitude, emotional intelligence, personal strengths, and psychological capital. For some authors, all this shows that we have entered a new type of capitalism that, beyond information (Zuboff, 2015), focuses and operates on the emotions (Illouz, 2019).

The Master of Applied Positive Psychology program at the University of Pennsylvania was the first in the world to offer a degree in this field of study under the supervision of Dr. Martin Seligman, founder of the discipline of positive psychology and creator of the program. Since then, a multitude of similar master's degrees have proliferated in different parts of the world such as England, South Africa, Australia, and Europe. Interestingly, all of them opt for an online model that allows lifelong learning in positive psychology anywhere in the world without leaving home, as long as you can pay the university fees that range from 2,650 euros to 71,944 U.S. dollars.

The same academic institutions are behind the creation and commoditization of more affordable options for the general public such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on happiness. The University of California created the first eight-week online course, called The Science of Happiness, which is currently offered through the EdX platform. Yale University offers its course, The Science of Well-Being, through Coursera. The prestigious Harvard University did not take long to consolidate positive psychology classes with Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar, founder of the Happiness Studies Academy through which he sells the Certificate in Happiness Studies and the Master of Arts in Happiness Studies at Centenary University.

In addition to all this, the obsession with the study of happiness has already filtered into primary and secondary education with proposals such as The Happier School Program in the United States, the Happy School Program in Australia and New Zealand, or the *Aulas Felices* [Happy Classrooms] program (Arguís et al., 2010) and the *Programa de Felicidad en las Escuelas* [Happiness in Schools Program] in Spain.

A Happy Worker is a Productive Worker

Happiness, well-being, and the emotional are the new playing field for capitalization and wealth generation: large corporations and institutions invest in emotions, seek their profitability, accumulate them, and sell them. They use them as a product to generate a surplus value in addition to that generated by information and the circulation of goods. In line with neoliberal capitalism, psychological capital is located in positive organizational psychology, that is, in the world of work and organizations, which is where the most money moves. Under the Happy-Productive Worker theory (Lucas & Diener, 2003), it is proposed to work happily to improve productivity and "gain a competitive advantage" (Luthans et al., 2007). This translates into the emergence of a new work ethic in which the employee is the one who should consider work as a space for self-realization and development of personal skills (Cabanas & Sánchez-González, 2012). Entrusting the individual with the entire management of his or her internal world benefits the company because it involves less investment in external control and supervision, while the autonomy of the worker is presented as related to his or her well-being and personal satisfaction (Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2018).

In fact, positive psychology establishes a link between mental health and success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) and explains that health is closely linked to capital, justifying in literally economic terms what is called an Operational Return on Investment, that is, an amount of monetary resources that is saved in the use of health services or that returns in other ways, as in the case of increased productivity in companies. According to the World Economic Forum, the value of this return is calculated at 2.97 euros per euro invested in Happiness Programs in companies. In this new paradigm, Maslow's Pyramid has been inverted (Cabanas & Sánchez-González, 2016), since being happy is today a necessary basic requirement that every worker must show in order to be hired and to achieve success. Unfortunately, this logic is part of an economic, social, and cultural phenomenon that extends far beyond business.

The Leisure Business: The Happy-ism of Privacy

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) anticipated decades ago that the characteristic of modern societies would be an excess of communication, generating, paradoxically, with this activity an absence of creativity and a widespread normalization of socially accepted behaviors, such as giving the appearance of well-being and happiness. It is evident that constant communication facilitates the continuous (re)construction of symbols and meanings, but what is more relevant is that it also creates the permanent need for the very exercise of such communication (*communicatio*; to put in common). This leads to what Han (2013) calls the "dictatorship of transparency", which is the essential characteristic of our present time. In it, we voluntarily make ourselves visible and all the information we produce through each of our daily actions through the technological devices that accompany us (cell phones, smart watches, biometric bracelets, etc.) is collected and segmented to build global psychographies that are projected into the future. This Big Data promotes that our health is constantly measured and that everything becomes some kind of data through reminders, publications, advertisements, and apps. For example, an app like *Happify* installed on your smartphone can launch a pop-up that tells you that you have to perform some daily well-being practice, and after that, it allows you to publish (*publicus; make public*) the fact that you have done it. The movement called *Quantified Self*, which aims to increase physical, mental, and spiritual performance through self-measurement is a good example of this (Lupton, 2016; Nafus & Sherman, 2014). Knowing oneself, self-help, and self-care are precisely the things that generate material and elements to continuously communicate and exhibit oneself to others. From the point of view of some authors (Illouz, 2019; Lazzarato, 2012), this need involves nothing more than the implementation of a new mechanism of self-exploitation that has in the generation of information the main vehicle and in our own subjectivity the beginning and end of the horizon of that process. This permanent generation of information about ourselves that is expressed in computer applications that we use every day such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, etc., and that opens a space for total communication is like the panopticon (the all-seeing eye) described by Foucault (2007) as a mechanism of control. The only difference is that

now the gaze of a physical eye does not operate, but rather the constant production and circulation of information among very broad communities of individuals and institutions. An integral commodification of existence is taking place through campaigns such as those of Nocilla with its "happiness of the good kind" or Coca-Cola with its "uncover happiness" that use "happiness" to promote their products. In addition, we also see that cinema, art, series, and travel offers have joined this positive trend as the discourse of well-being (or "being well") is booming more than ever. As we have observed, leisure has become business, and our private life has also become controlled by "happiness".

Happiness as a Device of Governmentality

The examples point to the fact that happiness has taken root in all areas of contemporary daily life. And those roots are becoming a true device of governmentality through the 1) universalization, 2) privatization, 3) scientification, and 4) blackboxing of happiness.

The Universalization of Happiness

As the previous historical vignettes show, public and private organizations have been making happiness a universal standard and goal for years. However, happiness is not understood in the same way in different parts of the world, and not all people seek it, nor do they all do so in the same way. We have been led to believe that the pursuit of happiness is a universal imperative, so solutions have been created to satisfy this generated need.

Because of this (self-)imposed obligation by governments, by institutions, and by "happiness scientists", mechanisms are being deployed on a global scale that promote the generation and massive collection of data on the emotional states of countries and individuals in order to create even more tools for social control.

The simple and obvious observation that while first world countries seek and sell happy experiences, developing countries still struggle for survival practically anchored in medieval situations, shows that this is a concept that is difficult to universalize.

The Privatization of Happiness

Paradoxically, this universalization falls into the hands of a few: large corporations and private institutions. Happiness "for all" is opening an important economic niche in the 21st century, and for this reason it is essential to universalize it, while keeping the product privatized and under the control of large corporations.

As we have seen, all kinds of institutions do this. Governments use "happiness" as a populist policy to positively unmark their proposals and give them a touch of added value with the excuse of trying to make their citizens happier. That is the governance of happiness: it deprives the people of it in order to then grant it from a position of power. Obviously, private institutions have also realized how profitable it is to capitalize on intangible products such as the emotions, and they are privatizing "happiness". With the excuse of researching it, self-styled "Happiness Institutes" are being created, which are nothing more than groups of self-proclaimed independent "experts" whose self-imposed mission is to inform decision-makers about the causes and effects of human happiness,

to make subjective well-being part of the debate on public policies and to improve the general quality of life of citizens around the world.

In academia, the implicit logic is to be trained in happiness in order to be able to teach other people how to be happy. Therefore, the following question should come as no surprise: What do all happiness training courses have in common? The answer is that they are all endorsed by the institutions themselves (i.e., they are unofficial courses) and mostly supported by private universities. Having to pay exorbitant tuition to study how to be happy is the same as having to buy happiness, a privatization that not everyone is able or willing to accept.

The Scientification of Happiness

If anything characterizes our present time, it is that science has become an endeavor that prioritizes the maximization of profitability. The thirst for research has shaped a new knowledge society that has submerged essential areas of life in a scientific turn, and it can exercise power over these areas to manage societies, relationships between people, and ways of being in the world. Specifically, as the study and dissemination of happiness is left to a mere few, the science of happyism must recognize that the constructs it creates and promotes may cause undesirable effects. To mitigate these effects, it is necessary that the way of producing, conceiving, and transmitting knowledge be done within an ethical and political prism.

Undoubtedly, positive psychology is prescriptive since with its scientific study of happiness it anticipates needs and tells us how we should live. But as has been shown, this so-called "science of happiness" suffers from important theoretical weaknesses Pérez-Álvarez (2016). To begin with, happiness is a syncategorematic concept, i.e., its meaning depends on other terms, and this is the gap that positive psychology is attempting to fill with its scientific experiments. Moreover, happiness is not a static object of study of natural science, it is something human that should be observed at least under the gaze of the social sciences. In short, there is no need for a "science of happiness" for the common sense advice that it "discovers", but its proponents insist on scientifying it so that we buy their results.

In fact, Barbara Fredrickson herself, one of the most renowned researchers in positive psychology, recognized the failure of mathematical equations misapplied to her field (Fredrickson, 2013). The question we should ask ourselves is not whether there is a happiness algorithm or not, but whether the mere act of formulating it this way could be a mechanism to sell the aforementioned happiness imperative. The great miscalculation of self-help is to try to give mathematical solutions to problems that are not mathematical, because it falls into a generalism that instead of clearing up unknowns, multiplies doubts. Besides, what are the consequences of trying to calculate the value of people? What is clear is that positive psychology makes a strong commitment to and promotion of the importance of psychological capital and its scientification.

The Blackboxing of Happiness

Bruno Latour (2021) uses the term "blackboxing" to describe the process by which something becomes invisible because of its

own success. That is to say, when a fact is culturally consensual and well established, as is the case of "happiness" rooted to the core of today's society, we focus only on the benefits it generates and not on the mechanisms that make it work. Thus, paradoxically, any concept studied under the umbrella of "science" becomes more opaque the more successful it is.

And since the triumph of the governance of happiness has become more than evident (literally, government models are being patented to create happier societies) in all areas of everyday life, and since everyday life is not problematized because it is intrinsically taken for granted by the fact of being common and ordinary; "happiness" has become clearly blackboxed. This process of automation of successful mechanisms must be studied within sociology or, preferably, within the social psychology of science and technology to understand how "the human" and the "non-human" establish the boundaries between "the social" and "the natural", interactions that day by day build and maintain the categories to which we are subjected and from which it is difficult for us to escape.

We should try to unblackbox happiness by posing complex hypotheses about its operating systems and being more reflective about its modes of application and implications. In the case of "happiness", it is legitimate and necessary to ask whether the results obtained by the institutions that promote it are "constructed" or "real", since there always has been and there always will be a connection between politics and natural science.

Conclusions

Universalization, privatization, scientification, and blackboxing constitute four mechanisms that close the process of institutionalizing happiness and turn it into a new device of governmentality. This "governance of mentality" is a positive prison without walls, which reigns over our minds to inoculate a self-slavery of performance and self-improvement through consumerism and entertainment. The current mechanisms used to make us pursue "happiness" are too much like the "soma" of the "brave new world" predicted by Aldous Huxley (1932) in his dystopian novel. The governance of happiness is the perfect covert dictatorship because everyone wants it and because it can be used—and it is used—to justify oppression (Ahmed, 2010) and to maintain social control without opposition. But the happyist discourse is not presented equally across the international political map, but rather it is molded to meet the objectives of each nation, which is precisely the argument used to dodge democratic debate in the name of well-being, even if human rights are violated. Taking into account all of the above, we can fear with some certainty that the virulent devices to control our physical health, such as the "Covid Certificate", will expand and mutate into a "Happiness Certificate" that will also control the mental health of the individual on a global scale: towards a world where we are only allowed to be happy.

But who would want such a world, and for what purpose? People and organizations that promote happiness approach it from a privileged, rather comfortable position, which makes them understand it in a certain way that is neither relevant nor applicable to everyone. We have reached this point because these discourses are underpinned by certain interests that serve to obtain something that human beings have longed for since time immemorial and that

comes from our anthropological origins: to have power and maintain control, in other words, to govern. And it has not been until today that we have realized that the best form of governance is through happiness. The whole market of self-help, coaches, and wellness products pursues economic profit by profiting from the thirst for happiness that they themselves have created. There are also social status interests that use the supposed "science of happiness" to give institutional renown to their companies or educational centers. And also political interests such as the deactivation of unions and revolt, which facilitates the manipulation of a population focused on its permanent emotional evaluation. As has been demonstrated, the happyist discourse provokes, in psychosocial terms, power relations that not only affect the politics and economy of certain countries, but have also modified the ethical standards of the current period throughout the world.

Even so, the collapse of the myth of happiness should not lead to a destructive nihilism but should serve to create a more sensible and serene individuality and society, setting aside the tiresome search for something that we ourselves have created to govern ourselves. Precisely, the aim of this research has been to describe and explain the power relations of this new "brave world" for the sake of the community, so that individuals can make their own decisions with the maximum information available. These conclusions can lead us to a deeper understanding of the discourses and practices of a great variety of fields, but the truth is that the very way of analyzing them goes beyond psychology, it even goes beyond a single specific field; governmental psychopolitics is everywhere, that is precisely its aim; it has made happiness its slave and master simultaneously, promoting and perpetuating itself for the sustainability of the system in which it—governmentality, not happiness—has self-constituted itself.

Future lines of research will have to learn to cross borders—both cultural and disciplinary—in order to cover as fully as possible such a complex subject as happiness. The diffractions and reflections of this study could be applied mainly to the daily lives of all those people who—directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously—are affected by the *modus operandi* of the "governance of happiness". The application of the proposed solutions would help to achieve a true liberation from the individual responsibility imposed on us, ultimately achieving a "depsychologization" and a "de-subjectivization" of the guilt of not meeting the standards of neoliberal society, of the weariness of the society of transparency, and of the unhappiness of the endless pursuit of happiness.

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Conflict of Interest

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