

Subjective Well-Being Trajectories of Street-Involved Youth: Considerations of a Longitudinal Study

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Abstract

The street life is part of a larger process of vulnerability. Many youths use the streets as an escape from poverty, abuse and violence. However, a focus on risks may neglect positive factors that have the potential to promote healthy development. Accordingly, we examined trajectories of street-involved youth with different subjective well-being (SWB) profiles. Interviews conducted at three time points with six-months intervals included a semi-structured life experience interview (e.g., leaving home, street life, and school experience) and well-being measures. Cluster analysis identified three groups namely average SWB, positive SWB, and negative SWB. Within each SWB profile, two participants were selected to a multiple case study. The results revealed that positive SWB group had connections with other environments (family and institutions) beyond the street, while youth with negative SWB reported low social support and strong involvement with the street. Negative SWB group were formed by girls who reported family conflict, emotional, physical and sexual violence and adjustment difficulties. Finally, this study suggests that well-being research can contribute to protective practices, also indicating to the need to strengthen family and institutional ties as a strategy for the youth development. The longitudinal approach points that early interventions can anticipated positive developmental outcomes.

Keywords: Subjective well-being, street-involved youth, case study.

Bem-Estar Subjetivo na Trajetória de Jovens em Situação de Rua: Considerações de um Estudo Longitudinal

Resumo

A vida nas ruas trata-se de um processo de vulnerabilidade. Jovens usam as ruas como fuga da pobreza, abuso e violência. Contudo, o foco nos riscos pode negligenciar fatores positivos com potencial para

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promover o desenvolvimento saudável. Destarte, investigou-se trajetórias de jovens em situação de rua com diferentes perfis de bem-estar subjetivo (BES). Entrevistas realizadas em três momentos, com intervalos de seis meses, incluíram um roteiro semiestruturado de experiência de vida (e.g., saída de casa, vida na rua e experiência escolar) e medidas de bem-estar. A análise de cluster identificou três grupos: BES médio, BES positivo e BES negativo. Selecionou-se dois participantes de cada grupo para um estudo de casos múltiplos. Identificou-se que o grupo BES positivo manteve vínculos com a família e instituições além da rua, enquanto o BES negativo relatou baixo apoio social e forte envolvimento com a rua. O BES negativo compôs-se de meninas com conflitos familiares, violência emocional, física e sexual e dificuldades de adaptação. Sugere-se que a pesquisa sobre o bem-estar pode contribuir para práticas de proteção, indicando a necessidade de fortalecer os laços familiares e institucionais como estratégia para o desenvolvimento. A abordagem longitudinal evidencia que intervenções precoces podem antecipar resultados positivos no desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave: Bem-estar subjetivo, jovens em situação de rua, estudo de caso.

Bienestar Subjetivo en la Trayectoria de Jóvenes en Situación de Calle: Consideraciones de un Estudio Longitudinal

Resumen

La vida en calle es un proceso de vulnerabilidad. Jóvenes usan las calles como escape de la pobreza, abuso y violencia. Pero, centrarse en riesgos puede descuidar de factores positivos con potencial de promover un desarrollo saludable. Para tanto, se investigó trayectorias de jóvenes en situación de calle con diferentes perfiles de bienestar subjetivo (BS). Entrevistas realizadas en tres ocasiones, a intervalos de seis meses, incluyeron un guion semiestruturado de experiencia de vida (e.g., salida de casa, vida en calle y experiencia escolar) y medidas de bienestar. Análisis de cluster identificó tres grupos: BS medio, BS positivo y BS negativo. Dos participantes de cada grupo fueron seleccionados para un estudio de caso múltiple. BS positivo mantenía lazos con la familia y instituciones más allá de calle, mientras que BS negativo informaba bajo apoyo social y fuerte participación en calle. BS negativo consistió en niñas con conflictos familiares, violencia emocional, física y sexual y dificultades de adaptación. Se sugiere que la investigación del bienestar puede contribuir a las prácticas de protección, lo que indica la necesidad de fortalecer lazos familiares e institucionales como estrategia para el desarrollo. El enfoque longitudinal muestra que intervenciones tempranas pueden anticipar resultados de desarrollo positivos.

Palabras clave: Bienestar subjetivo, jóvenes en situación de calle, estudio de caso.

The perceptions of children and adolescents of their lives have increasingly been an important indicator of development and well-being (Benninger & Savahl, 2017). Emotions and feelings experienced in the circumstances of life are called affect, which can be positive or negative, depending on whether the event experienced is considered pleasurable or not by the person themselves. In combination with affect dimension, life satisfaction integrates the subjective well-being construct (SWB), and concerns the cognitive assessment that individuals make about their own global life and

/ or specific domains (family, school, community etc.). Thus, SWB refers to the way people think and feel about their lives, in the affective (positive and negative affects) and cognitive (life satisfaction) dimensions. It should be noted that SWB is not limited to the absence of negative affect but includes positive measures of affect and satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

Although the positive or negative evaluation of events is based on judgments made from subjective criteria, there are increasing studies that seek to identify indicators that influence

people's understanding of what a "good life" is. In a recent review on SWB, it was pointed out that 30% to 40% on average of the individual variance of differences in well-being are attributed to personality factors (e.g., extroverted individuals are happier and less anxious and worried); while about 60% to 70% of well-being is attributable to the effects of the environment, such as satisfaction of basic needs like food and shelter (Diener, Oishi, & Tay, 2018). Thus, it is noted that genetic factors and social conditions influence well-being.

Previous studies have investigated the perception of children and adolescents about life events related to SWB (Giacomoni, Souza, & Hutz, 2016; Lima & Morais, 2016a; Navarro et al., 2015). For instance, good relationships with family and friends and leisure activities were related to positive affect by both in the student population and with street-involved youth, while disagreements with family and friends were related to negative affect. Besides these, the schoolers and street-involved youth mentioned other events specific to their reality. Those schoolers cited the death of people close to them, deprivation of basic needs and concern for health, and those street-involved referred to the prejudices of society, punishment for disobeying rules, conflicts with institutional professionals, and physical and sexual violence.

In addition to considering personal characteristics and experiences in assessing well-being, it is important to check the social and cultural differences of the factors that influence their levels. A study with 10- and 12-year-old children and adolescents compared different psychometric well-being scales between 15 countries (Casas, 2015). The results pointed to clear differences in the evaluation of well-being among countries and variations according to age, suggesting that the ages and linguistic and socio-cultural contexts influenced well-being measurements. It was also observed that critical changes in the lives of participants (e.g., moving homes, changing schools, changing parents or caregivers with whom they live) were associated with lower levels of well-being in

different places, except for Uganda (Montserrat Dinisman, Baltatescu, Grigoras, & Casas, 2015). Uganda is considered a low-income developing country (\$547 GDP - Gross Domestic Product per capita), so that changes experienced by youth may have been changes to better living conditions, improving their well-being.

This issue was also addressed in the street-involved youth. Prior studies conducted in Brazil indicate that street-involved youth describe their lives positively, reporting more life satisfaction and positive affect than negative even that the street life expose them to multiple development risks (Lima & Morais, 2016b). This finding suggested that the changes occurring in their lives, including departure from home to the streets are understood as new and better life opportunities compared with a previous family context of conflict, violence and poverty (Raffaelli, Morais, & Koller, 2013).

The endeavor to investigate the determination of biological, economic and environmental factors on well-being is based on a multidimensional approach. In this view, this current study has a conceptual background provided by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological perspective (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The bioecological theory define that the development is a function of the mutually influence of four dimensions: person (characteristics of the individual), process (interactions between the individual and the environment), context (physical and social settings which developing individuals are situated) and time (continuities and changes in development). Development is, therefore, a procedural phenomenon of a longitudinal nature, which extends throughout life, through historical time, past and future.

The focuses on the daily life, activities and interactions in which youth are engaged constitutes an important research methodology involving youth in vulnerable situations (Rosa & Tudge, 2017). Another methodological emphasis is the longitudinal dimension that allows a temporal analysis of factors related to well-being in an investigation over time. Longitudinal

analysis extends prior findings by providing answers to existing gaps in the developmental area represented by most of cross-sectional studies. For example, the longitudinal design allows examine ecological transitions and other factors that may influence well-being over time. In addition, the longitudinal study offers a complex view of the development, indicating patterns of stability and change across life course (Gutman, Peck, Malanchuk, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2017). This is particularly important for specific populations such as street-involved youth who develop in atypical contexts. The qualitative approach also has been utilized to a rich understanding of the lived experiences of street-involved youth and the mechanisms that allow them to survive under conditions of poverty and adversity (Asante, 2015). For example, the drug use is a health risk indicator with incidence associated to other behavior problems such as perpetration of physically violent behavior, property offences and physical victimization (Heerde & Hemphill, 2015). However, street-involved youth reported that drugs was used to help them cope with their difficult situations although substance use may endanger them of engaging in criminal behaviors. Using these frameworks, this current work aimed to conducted longitudinal multiple case study of street-involved youth with different SWB profiles. Therefore, this longitudinal study employed a multi-method approach that expects identify SWB profiles of street-involved youth and describe lived experiences of them. Specifically, it was intended to describe individual and contextual factors over time, as it recognizes multidirectional interactions among youth, development contexts, and well-being indicators. The longitudinal multi-method approach to research will enable a richer understanding and exploration of the trajectories of participants.

Method

This is a multi-method sequential study (Creswell & Clark, 2013), which was character-

ized by conducting a quantitative exploratory analysis to identify groups based on SWB levels, followed by a multiple case study to describe lived experiences (Yin, 2010). This consisted of the presentation of the cases, using them to illustrate the discussion of the research topics starting from the triangulation of the situations and behaviors of the cases. Data were collected as part of a larger study conducted in three Brazilian state capitals (Fortaleza, Porto Alegre, and Salvador) to investigate the developmental impact of street life.

Participants

The total of 113 street-involved youth ($N = 113$; M age = 14.18 years; 80.5% male, 91% non-white) is part of an extensive study about the impact of street life on the development in three Brazilian capitals. This sociodemographic characteristic reflects the population of young people on the streets in Brazil. The sample were recruited from Fortaleza ($N = 45$, 39.8%), Salvador ($N = 40$, 35.4%), and Porto Alegre ($N = 28$, 24.8%). After six months, 71.7% ($n = 81$) were interviewed at Time 2 and, after 12 months, 62% ($n = 70$) were interviewed at Time 3. In order to identify the SWB profiles, 104 participants ($M = 14.22$ years, $SD = 2.4$; 81.7% male) who completed all SWB measurements at Time 1 were included. Following the qualitative analysis of this study, six street-involved youth were selected - two of each group formed by the different profiles of SWB namely average SWB, positive SWB, and negative SWB. The sociodemographic data and the location of the participants by group and time of research are described in Table 1.

Instruments

Life Experience Interview (Raffaelli, Koller, & Morais, 2007). Applied in Time 1 to describe the life trajectory, this interview addressed themes such as: (a) personal and family history; (b) leaving home (or staying too long on the street or having a risky experience on the street); (c) street life (current or previous);

Table 1
Description of Participants with Different Profiles of Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Participants	Age	Gender	Location of Participant		
			Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Average SWB					
P1	17 years	Male	Street	Street	CPPL ³
P2	17 years	Male	Open shelter ¹	Institutional Shelter ²	Institutional Shelter
Positive SWB					
P3	10 years	Male	Institutional Shelter	Institutional Shelter	Institutional Shelter
P4	12 years	Male	Institutional Shelter	Institutional Shelter	Street
Negative SWB					
P5	15 years	Female	Institutional Shelter	Educational Center	Educational Center
P6	14 years	Female	Institutional Shelter	Institutional Shelter	CREAS ⁴

Notes. ¹ Open shelter is a temporary institution in which the child / adolescent has the freedom to move through different spaces (e.g., street, shelter, family) depending on the rules of the institution and the desire of the young person. ² Institutional shelter is a protective measure based on a judicial order that consists of the removal of the child or adolescent from their family of origin and starting to live in an institution. ³ CPPL - Provisional Deprivation of Liberty. ⁴ CREAS - Specialized Referral Center for Social Assistance.

(d) school and work experience; and, (e) history of institutionalization.

Tracking. Composed of systematic records of the data obtained during the three data collection times regarding the participant's life situation (e.g., personal characteristics, involvement with drugs, relationship with school, family and institutions). Included were written descriptions, speech excerpts of the participants, impressions and feelings of the researchers, from their first contact with the participants until the closing of the data collection.

Subjective Well-Being. To assess the affects, the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS-C; Laurent et al., 1999; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was adapted by Raffaelli et al. (2007). This is a two-factor scale (Positive Affect, 17 items, alpha = 0.87, Negative Affect, 17 items, alpha = 0.88), to which participants respond by indicating from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) about how much recently they have felt joyful, participative, sad and humiliated, for example. In order to access life satisfaction, we used the Life Satisfaction Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) adapted by Koller and Hutz (1996; alpha = 0.72). Composed of 5 items, participants indicate from 1 (strongly

disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) the amount they agree with statements such as "Is your life close to your ideal?". In addition to the self-reporting scales, the participants' personality and well-being records were filled out, which contained dimensions such as interested, calm, depressed, attractive, and insecure.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures were structured considering the characteristics of Brazilian street-involved youth. As is typical in this population, they spend a delimited period in a specific environment, circulating between the street, family, friends and institutions (Rizzini & Couto, 2018). To address this challenge, the data were collected in five stages: (1) training of research teams for theoretical, methodological and ethical capabilities; (2) mapping of children and adolescent protective networks; (3) ecological engagement approach (Koller, Morais, & Paludo, 2016), which consisted of the insertion of researchers into institutions and public spaces (e.g., squares), enabling the researchers to approach youth; (4) data collection and monitoring; and (5) systematization of data, in which qualitative and quantitative data

were organized, gathering information about life trajectory, life street, school, institutional and family experiences. These steps enable researchers identify youth who fit the study's inclusion criteria and minimize sample loss (see Santana, Raffaelli, Koller, & Morais, 2018 for details of each stage). For eligibility, youth should be currently or recently living on the street (institutionalized for less than 12 months), which includes sleeping on the streets, working or street walking, and / or engaging in illicit or risky activities (e.g., use / sale of drugs and commercially sexually exploited).

The life experience interview was conducted individually, with an average duration of 40 minutes, recorded and transcribed for analysis. The application of the scales was performed in another meeting in the presence of researchers (to clarify doubts and offer instructions), avoiding the fatigue of the participants and ensuring their attention. Tracking was completed by researchers during data collection intervals. Each participant had their data sheet in an online database, which included dated records, names of the researchers responsible and updates of information obtained by weekly contact and telephone calls with participants, families, pairs and professionals about their institutional activities, escapes from institutions, criminal behavior, hospitalization, returning home, among others. The records were organized and shared among the researchers through the Moodle platform. The tracking enables researchers follow the participants over time, collecting information about current localization, and missing data, such as phone number exchanges, moving to another city to escape death threats, and death of one adolescent due to drug trafficking.

Participants who responded to all the SWB measurements compose three SWB profiles identified from a cluster analysis with a non-significant difference between cities. From these, two young people within each group were selected for convenience. This selection occurred among participants from Fortaleza in an intentional sampling and following the criteria

of sampling closure by theoretical saturation (Creswell & Clark, 2013). This approach requires that researchers recruited participants who had informative data from the different SWB profiles, offering insights and perspectives that were more relevant to the research questions and objectives. In addition, the maximum variation criterion was used to guarantee different conceptions of the investigated phenomenon. For example, the choice of girls in the SWB negative group was favored because they predominantly belong to this group, as well as being a poorly accessed population in the surveys of street-involved youth.

Data Analysis Procedures

To identify the SWB profiles, clusters were formed based on the standardized scores of life satisfaction, positive and negative affects. The Ward method with squared Euclidean distance was used as a measurement of proximity and inspection of dendrogram branches and analysis of variance was performed for selection and verification of cluster variability. Three groups were identified: (1) average SWB: average level of life satisfaction, positive and negative affects ($N = 56$; 49.6%); (2) positive SWB: high scores of life satisfaction and positive affect and low scores of negative affect ($N = 21$; 18.6%); and (3) negative SWB: low rates of life satisfaction, positive and negative affects ($N = 27$; 23.9%). The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used with a significance level of $p < .05$. The means and standard deviations of the SWB groups were presented in the three times in Table 2.

Afterwards, the qualitative analysis of the data followed the methodology of the multiple case study, using the cases for emerging collective discoveries in the understanding of the phenomenon investigated (Creswell & Clark, 2013). Thus, for each selected participant (two from each group), the data were transcribed for the description of their life trajectory. After this first step, their raw data coded and transformed into the analyzed content with the collection of information

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations of the Different Subjective Well-Being Profiles (SWB) over the Three Research Periods

Variables (score z)	Average SWB ^A	Positive SWB ^B	Negative SWB ^C
T1			
Life Satisfaction ¹ (1-5)	-0.01 (0.83) ^{B,C}	0.88 (0.48) ^{A,C}	-0.59 (1.04) ^{A,B}
Positive Affect ¹ (1-5)	0.33 (0.68) ^{B,C}	0,77 (0,46) ^{A,C}	-1.33 (0.5) ^{A,B}
Negative Affect ¹ (1-5)	0.47 (0.81) ^{B,C}	-0.89 (0.6) ^{A,C}	-0.31 (1.02) ^{A,B}
T2			
Life Satisfaction ¹ (1-5)	-0.09 (0.95) ^B	0.47 (1.13) ^A	-0.16 (0.97)
Positive Affect ¹ (1-5)	0.44 (0.87) ^{B,C}	0.75 (0.61) ^{A,C}	-0.80 (1.1) ^{A,B}
Negative Affect ¹ (1-5)	0.15 (0.97) ^B	-0.45 (0.91) ^A	0,03 (1,12)
T3			
Life Satisfaction ¹ (1-5)	0.06 (0.93) ^C	0.48 (0.97) ^C	-0.61 (0.91) ^{A,B}
Positive Affect ¹ (1-5)	-0.03 (1.04) ^B	0.64 (0.79) ^{A,C}	-0.53 (0.68) ^B
Negative Affect ¹ (1-5)	0.12 (1.02)	-0.37 (1)	-0.06 (0.89)

Note. The subscribers reflect differences between groups performed by ANOVA ($p < .05$). ^A = Average SWB, ^B = Positive SWB, ^C = Negative SWB. ¹Entries are based on standardized scores.

about the individual and contextual aspects of the youths' life, such as life street, housing place, behavior problems, connections with the street, family and institutions and circulation between these environments. These contents were analyzed through a triangulation of the data, that is, the main themes that were identified were connected to develop a main theme and verify different perspectives of the investigated phenomenon. Then the refinement of the interpretation and triangulation of the data were validated by two trained researchers.

Ethical Aspects

All the procedures necessary for research with young people in situations of social vulnerability were followed correctly. Specifically, this study was approved by the Ethics Committee of University of Fortaleza (Protocol No. 397/2011), Federal University of Salvador (Protocol No. 04.11.73), and Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Protocol No. 2011023).

Results

Description of the Participants' Life Trajectory of the Average SWB Group

Participant 1. Participant 1, male and 17 years old, lived with his grandmother when he started going to the streets at age 5. Searching for freedom and fun, he began his experience on the street, getting involved with gangs, using drugs and stealing. In his trajectory he attended two institutional shelters and two other social assistance services. While still in Time 1, the participant returned home, after a long period on the street and, determined not to return to the street, worked in a bakery with long hours and low wages. He felt happy about his mother's home and the affection he received from certain relatives, admitting concern for friends who remained on the street, a place that, in his words, "is getting more dangerous every day". During this period, the participant had normal weight and good health and hygiene conditions. He was calm, attentive, and tired from the day's work.

In Time 2, the teenager returned to the streets after eight months at his mother's house. He was a little distressed and had lost weight. However, he was friendly and made fun of some close friends. He stated that he would not spend much time on the street, that he left the house because "he became angry" in an argument with the mother of his son. He was homesick and wanted to go back, but there were "some things to deal with on the street first". The participant stated that he was dependent on drug use. He said that he did not like to study, but that he enjoyed working. At Time 3, the participant reached the age of majority and was caught red-handed stealing a cell phone. He was interviewed while serving time in a closed correctional facility and was sad and weak. He had no news of his family members who did not visit him due to lack of money. He was described as relieved by the presence of the researcher, who represented the opportunity to contact someone outside the prison and would be able to contact his family members.

Participant 2. Participant 2, male and 17 years old, lived with his mother, stepfather and two brothers with whom he had constant fights. He began going to the streets at age 9 to supplement family income and after becoming involved in the use of drugs, moved away from his family and community due to death threats from a trafficker. Throughout his career, the adolescent was hosted in different institutional shelters and underwent treatment for chemical dependency in a children's hospital. At Time 1, he had normal weight and good health and personal hygiene, which was maintained by bathing in the sea when he was on the streets or at the open shelter where he spent some days and nights, attempting to improve his health conditions. He had sporadic contact with family members, mainly via telephone and had a strong connection with the social assistance support network, for having used these spaces since his childhood and for his regular participation in the proposed activities. In Time 2, the adolescent was referred to an institutional shelter. Despite reducing his drug use, the teenager avoided the

institution, breaking rules to steal and use drugs. Although he was happy with his routine, and the professionals and friends in the institution, he had to be moved on again, because the institution was closed due to financial problems brought on by lack of government funding. In Time 3, the adolescent continued to be participative and engaged with socio-educational projects, but stated that he was not satisfied with the relations with the professionals of the new institution. He was humiliated by social educators who did not believe the teenager was going out into the streets to perform activities other than stealing and using drugs. He was excited about working as a young apprentice in a fast-food chain. He was worried about his reaching the age of majority due to uncertainties about where he would go after leaving the shelter, because he knew he could no longer remain in the child and adolescent protection network. But he had a positive outlook for his future. He wanted to go back to studying at EJA (Youth and Adult Education), get a driver's license and rent a house to build his family.

Description of the Participants' Life Trajectory of the Positive SWB Group

Participant 3. Participant 3, male and 12 years old, lived with his mother, father and nine siblings before going to the streets. His father was aggressive, heavily beating the participant, who was saddened by the behavior of his father who was a crack user. He started going to the street at the age of 8 in the company of an older brother to supplement the family income. Even when he did not want to go out on the street, his older brothers forced him to go and ask for money. As his connection with the street grew and he began experimenting with drugs, he also began stealing, selling solvent and glue and cleaning cars. Despite the reported conflicts, the adolescent was satisfied with the family and felt very affectively close to them. In the institution where he was sheltered, two of his brothers lived with whom he had a close relationship.

Sporadically, his mother and grandmother visited them. In Times 1, 2 and 3, the adolescent

maintained a stable routine. He was enrolled in the same institution, where he studied, was participative, involved in the proposed activities, was always playing with his friends and had a good relationship with professionals. He was extroverted, achieving and maintained good relationships with everyone around him. He had slight conflicts with his peers, because he did not hesitate to express his opinions, but reported that he soon made up with his friends again. The teenager did not use drugs during the time he was in the institution, but said that when he returned home on vacation, he would go to the streets to solvent abuse.

Participant 4. Participant 4, male and 12 years old, prior to leaving home, lived with his father, mother and five siblings. He started going to the street at age 10 to play and complement the family income, cleaning the windows of cars and selling sweets (on buses and in bus terminals). He did not like to return home, saying that he “had nothing to do” like watching television, so he started sleeping on the streets. In addition, he had conflicting relationships with his father, an alcohol and crack abuser, and with his aunt who lived next door and treated him violently, screaming and beating him. Subsequently, the teenager reported becoming involved in drug trafficking. In Time 1 and 2, the teenager was very receptive, friendly, trustworthy and showed interest in the research. He had a younger brother in the same institution where he was welcomed, where his mother was also a cook, which helped them to maintain a strong and good bond with the family. He also had a good relationship with his peers and the institution professionals. He was very loving. It was common to see him talking, playing, singing and hugging his friends and especially his brother. The affection he had with everyone around him was very visible. As stated by the participant, although he felt good on the streets, in the institution he had better living conditions, engaged in different recreational activities and studied. At Time 3, he had run off and was found at a bus terminal, stealing and using drugs. He was in the company of an older brother who had recently come to visit him at

the institution. The teenager demonstrated poor hygiene conditions and had health problems with visible skin lesions and was not wearing his glasses (he had a high prescription) as they had been broken. He showed no interest in returning to the institution shelter. Also it was not possible to continue the research, because he was in an altered state of consciousness due to the use of crack.

Description of the Participants' Life Trajectory of the Negative SWB Group

Participant 5. Participant 5, female and 15 years old, began her relationship with the street at the age of 6 as a means of escape from the physical, sexual and psychological violence she suffered in the family. Since her childhood, the adolescent was sheltered in social assistance institutions, passing through six different shelters. On the streets, she wandered mainly by the seashore, where she asked for food from restaurants, stole and sold drugs. Her father was murdered when preventing a robbery and her mother was a crack user and died of a heart attack. The teenager reported that her mother beat her and that she had a conflicted relationship with her stepfather who was an alcoholic, and “interfered with” (sexualized behavior) and physically harassed her. After the death of her mother, the adolescent went to live with her two older sisters and then with her aunt. The participant reported that her family did not care about her, since her sisters overloaded her with household chores, screamed and beat and her aunt psychologically violated her.

At Time 1, the adolescent was housed in an institution where she participated in the institutional activities that involved the reconstitution of her life history, games, reading and films. However, she had a very conflictive relationship with some teenagers from the shelter. She was in good health, had normal weight and personal hygiene, which was maintained throughout the research period. Although she reported that when she does not eat properly and uses drugs she needs to be hospitalized for having

anemia. She has used cocaine and marijuana, but said she had never used crack cocaine because it was “frowned upon” by street peers. Her first sexual intercourse was at 9 years of age. She also reported having had suicidal thoughts and behavior. In Time 2, she ran away from the institution, returning to the streets and going to the home of people nearby. Soon after, she committed a petty crime and was referred to an educational center. She was encouraged by the visit of the researcher, because until that moment only the occupational therapist of the previous institution had visited her. She reported a series of negative emotions due to the long period she was isolated due to an act of great aggression against another girl. At Time 3 she remained dissatisfied with her situation at the educational center and she complained that on visiting days her family would never visit her. Her adaptation improved after she was put into a dormitory which was shared with other youth. She started a beauty and aesthetics course and was studying, but said she still cannot do the activities herself, because she cannot concentrate easily.

Participant 6. Participant 6, female and 14 years old, did not remember the age she was when she started leaving the house and going to the street, but she remembered that she was small. Her departure from home happened as an escape from the conflicts and violence experienced in the family context. Her stepfather was an alcoholic and physically assaulted her and her mother. To stay on the streets, she slept on the promenade of the seashore, where she also begged and stole money and food. She has had no contact with and no support from the family for eight years. The support received was mainly from her friends, professionals from the institutions and neighborhood. She attended different institutions, from which she ran away, returning to the street or to the house of friends who lived in her neighborhood. The teenager suffered sexual abuse and at thirteen she had her first sexual intercourse. Throughout the research, she had sex with different partners of both genders. At Time 1, the adolescent was in satisfactory health, but often had fever, headache,

diarrhea and a cough. When she approached the research team, she would be welcoming and introduce the other girls from the institution with whom she had good relations, but stating that with others she had a conflictive relationship. In the meetings, she showed her poetry, presenting the research team with some examples. She talked about her need to communicate with other people. Sometimes she was very sad and did not like to talk about the reasons that made her depressed. When she felt better, she commented her grievances and sorrows that concerned the events of the past and her uncertainties about the future. Between Time 1 and Time 2, she ran away from the institution and went to live with a friend. She preferred not to talk about how they were doing, but mentioned that she was using drugs to “forget her problems”. At Time 2, she returned to the Sheltering institution. She was inattentive to the research questions and said she was very upset because she could not find the professionals and friends with whom she has had a good relationship. At Time 3, she ran away from the institution again and was participating in a socio-educational action at Specialized Referral Center for Social Assistance (CREAS), but she was not attending the services and could not be located through the provided address and phone number.

Triangulation of Data Based on the Trajectories of Street-Involved Youth with Different SWB Profiles

The average SWB group consisted of youth who initially used the streets for freedom, to have fun and to work, being lured into the streets by drug use and trafficking. Their contact with family was sporadic and the family ties were preserved, but weakened. Working youth reported fatigue due to difficult working conditions, low wages and long hours of work, although they expressed satisfaction in earning money unrelated to begging or theft. It was observed that between the two young people that integrate this group there was a moderate movement between different environments (street, family and institutions).

The youth of the Positive SWB group initially used the street to work, aiming to complement the family income. Both were involved in drug trafficking and use, but they had connections to other spaces, establishing a moderate relationship with the street. We found that these young people had a more stable routine during the research, suggesting that the established links with people and contexts may have favored their adaptation and continuity in the sheltering institution. In this group, family relationships were strong and preserved. The relationship with friends and institutional professionals was also significant.

In the Negative SWB group, in contrast to the other groups, female youth predominated. They used the street to escape from their families, which were characterized by high levels of conflict and emotional, physical and sexual violence, as well as the use of drugs by parents (crack and alcohol). Relations with the street were assessed as strong and family relations as broken. They had an average relationship with the institutions, participated in the activities offered and had a good relationship with some girls, but with others the relationship was conflictive. In addition, a high circulation among different environments (street, family and institutions) was observed in these participants.

Discussion

This study aimed to conduct longitudinal case studies of street-involved youth with different SWB profiles, considering multidirectional interactions among youth, development contexts, and well-being indicators. This work adds to the existing literature by exploring the positive aspects of street-involved youth and not only the negative consequences of street life. Taking together, the findings demonstrated the importance of investigate different SWB profiles, identifying the diversity of street-involved youth and indicating factors that have the potential to promote healthy development, such as supportive relationships, access to jobs and plans for the future.

Regarding the individual factors, the results showed that the youth with positive SWB profiles were found to be more confident, friendly, participative and extroverted, while the youth with low SWB showed distrust, sadness, and depression, with incidence of suicidality. Previous studies have highlighted personality traits (neuroticism, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experiences namely Big Five Factor Model) in the understanding of why some people experience higher well-being than others (Woyciekoski, Natividade, & Hutz, 2014). Among high school students in public and private schools, there was an association between neuroticism and negative affect and between extraversion and positive affect (Noronha, Martins, Campos, & Mansão, 2015). It should be emphasized that personality traits can influence SWB, through behavior and developmental results. Thus, SWB can also influence personality traits by providing an incentive for certain patterns of behavior (Soto, 2015).

This study showed that young people with positive SWB profiles reported strong family and institutional relationships, while youth with low SWB reported low social support and a strong connection with the street. Overall, the results indicate that high levels of well-being can beneficiated the street-involved youth to adapt well even under challenging conditions. Family and peer relationships, school satisfaction and a safe community environment significantly influence the levels of well-being and mental health (González-Carrasco, Casas, Ben-Arieh, Savahl, & Tiliouine, 2019; Lawler, Newland, Giger, Roh, & Brockvelt, 2017; Lee & Yoo, 2015). The contextual factors (life events and social support) are commonly mentioned by youth when exploring their own perceptions of well-being (Lima & Morais, 2016a; Navarro et al., 2015). This result is also found in quantitative study that evaluate satisfaction in different domains of life (school, family, neighborhood) (Schütz, Bedin, & Sarriera, 2019); and when sociodemographic characteristics and personality traits are controlled (Schotanus-

Dijkstra et al., 2016). As noted, this study revealed that SWB levels of youth are related to the development contexts in which they are embedded in an interdependent interaction, in such a way that persons and environments are mutually implicated (Rosa & Tudge, 2017). This conception is anchored in a bioecological perspective, which understands the developing person as a complex system, whose fundamental components (biopsychosocial characteristics and their processes of interaction with the environment) are involved across life course (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

The circulation of street-involved youth with higher levels of SWB between environments suggests that mobility is an alternative strategy to improving life conditions. For example, the participant 2 alternated the street with the open shelter to improving his health. However, high circulation needs contextualization. Circulation through different contexts has evidenced an escape of environments that involve risks and conflicting relationships, as identified among the youth of the Negative SWB group. Previous studies with adopted children and adolescents who advanced to the end of the school period (recognized as highly important for school achievement) have identified that the transitions and instability that young people are subjected to can influence their well-being, as seen in this study in the negative SWB group (González-Carrasco, Casas, Viñas, et al., 2017; Schütz et al., 2019).

There is no consensus on the differences between the genders in the SWB literature. However, in general, boys tend to have higher SWB levels than girls (González-Carrasco, Casas, Malo, Viñas, & Dinisman, 2017; Lee & Yoo, 2015). In this study, girls predominated in the negative SWB group. Gender differences reflect the vulnerability of girls on the street, as well as family situations of intense violence and other risks that lead girls to the streets. In a study with different scales of well-being, it was identified that the gender does not have a significant effect on SWB, only a weak significance is related to

the satisfaction of life in general (Casas et al., 2015). The findings suggested that girls are more sensitive to external variations, and thus report and internalize stressful events more than boys, especially interpersonal events with family and friends, and are more vulnerable to develop depressive symptomatology (Lima & Morais, 2016a; Montserrat et al., 2015). Further studies can deepen gender differences in order to develop specific protective strategies for boys and girls, considering their possible social and cultural differences.

Some limits were identified in this study. For example, other individual traits such as personality traits, self-esteem, and meaning in life have not been investigated and may have a relevance in the different SWB profiles of street-involved youth. In addition, it was not possible to find two of the participants in Time 3, although the larger study had a good sample retention (Santana et al., 2018). Finally, the sample was selected for convenience and did not include youth from other capitals where the larger survey was also conducted. Therefore, it is believed that future studies can focus on the investigation of social and cultural issues of different geographic regions, advancing the contextual understanding of SWB of street-involved youth.

The findings showed that participants with low SWB levels had more negative outcomes over time (two participants undergoing socio-educational measures of deprivation of liberty at Time 3), suggesting that well-being research can contribute to protective practices in anticipation of potential developmental outcomes. This study reinforces the calls for investment in the professional qualification and design effective programs and interventions. The positive development framework avoids practices based on judgments and stereotypes that victimize the street-involved youth; and attract strategies of promoting a healthy development besides reductions of behavior problems. Regarding this, the findings from this study highlight the need to strengthen family and / or institutional ties is an effective effort to achieve the best results for youth development. Moreover, for

advances in the understanding and promotion of SWB, it is suggested that future research would benefit from considering other positive variables (e.g., meaning in life and life projects) of street-involved youth that may affect results of health and well-being in this population. Finally, the identification of the factors that affects the well-being in different contexts, recognizing the diversity of street-involved youth can help in the enhancing of how we can best deal with adversity and promote well-being for healthy development.

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