



School and Neighborhood Relationships that Affect Well-Being Based on Chilean Children and Adolescent's Understandings

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Accepted: 14 December 2021 / Published online: 29 January 2022
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Abstract

This article studies the perceptions that Chilean children and adolescents hold about the personal and distinctive qualities of their relationships in both the school and neighborhood contexts associated with the experience of well-being using a qualitative methodological framework. It takes as its foundation the relevance of studying well-being from an ecological perspective to help identify and differentiate the processes and dynamics that take place in the multiple contexts of daily life and delves into their effects on the well-being experience of children and adolescents. A sample of 21 children and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 15 was used to obtain the data through semi-structured interviews and then analyzed by thematic, which identified five categories associated with the relationships the participants have at schools and in the neighborhoods that affect their well-being. The categories are organized according to their characteristics and properties along a continuum between well-being and dissatisfaction. One conclusion is that feeling a sense of belonging, closeness, support and safety both among peers and with adults in the school and neighborhood contexts is pertinent to the well-being of the children and adolescents. Another key finding is the importance of motivating and entertaining teaching–learning relationships in school settings, as well as feeling pleased and satisfied with the physical and material conditions of their neighborhoods and schools.

Keywords Childhood · Understandings of well-being · School · Neighborhood · Relationships · Qualitative methodology

This work is part of REGULAR FONDECYT Project No. 1180607 “A longitudinal study of individual- and school-related factors to predict the path of subjective well-being during adolescence,” which is funded by the National Research and Development Agency (ANID in Spanish, National Research and Development Agency).

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1 Introduction

In recent decades, the guidelines of international agencies (OECD, 2013) and the academic world (Savahl et al., 2015) have highlighted how important it is to study well-being in children and adolescents (C&A) as well as the need to consider it when developing policies and programs for the child and adolescent population. This is because the literature provides broad and consistent information about the effect of well-being on development. Therefore, studying the well-being of children contributes to making them visible as a social group and recognizing that they are affected differently from adults (Gaitán Muñoz, 2006; Tonon et al., 2017a).

The literature reports that high levels of well-being are linked to various indicators of positive human functioning. They contribute psychological strengths for integral development (Jiang et al., 2013) and are a key component and determining factor for the social integration of C&A (Zappulla et al. 2014; Domínguez-Guedea & Diaz-Loving, 2016). Additionally, the literature reports that low levels of well-being and life satisfaction are related to depression and suicidal ideation, and they are reported as a factor that influences externalizing behaviors including criminal conduct, aggression, victimization, problematic Internet use, substance abuse and high-risk sexual acts (Shek & Liang, 2017). Thus, the study of well-being contributes key information for preventive social health interventions and early risk detection (Puente-Díaz and Cavazos, 2013). It also helps develop actions for increasing and improving well-being in the overall child and adolescent population, enriching the approaches that have only focused on evaluating problematic behaviors or pathological dimensions (Gadermann et al., 2016).

1.1 The Relevance of an Ecological Understanding of Well-Being in Children and Adolescents

In recent years, various authors have stressed the need to progress toward an ecological understanding of well-being that deepens the description and analysis of the relational dynamics and structures that occur within the multiple daily contexts of C&A and resulting effects on well-being (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Newland, 2015). From this perspective, it is understood that C&A well-being is an experience of subjects that inhabit social orders in which issues such as relationships with adults and the naturalized ways of understanding and defining roles and rules of conduct are crucial determinants (Fattore & Mason, 2017; Fattore et al., 2019).

One notable perspective is White's (2017) that describes the indissoluble relationship between individual and collective. It conceptualizes well-being as something that emerges from common lived experiences, arising through shared processes that are rooted in life with others. This suggests that the relationships of a life together are the means through which the assets (psychological, social, symbolic and material) necessary for well-being are distributed and exchanged. These are also the spaces where the experience of well-being emerges, takes form and expands (White, 2017). Viewed through such perspectives, well-being first happens as part of the dynamics of a relational exchange with others to then emerge and acquire

meaning internally. Thus, the individual experience of well-being is rooted in a specific and particular context of relating to others, which prevents its generalization or wholesale transfer to other contexts (White, 2017).

Among the multiple research lines developed from this perspective, the need to study C&A well-being determinants in terms of the interactions that take place in the school context (Casas et al., 2014) and settings such as the community or neighborhood (Sarriera & Bedin, 2015) both stand out. This is because these two dimensions are relevant components of the mesosystemic context that could help explain well-being and the dynamics of its determinants in C&A in a more comprehensive, robust way (Moore et al., 2019; Newland, 2015; Oyarzún et al., 2019). Furthermore, there is less understanding of their position and significance to this age group's well-being.

Available evidence provides information about key effects of school dynamics on life satisfaction (Do Santos et al., 2013; Lee & Yoo, 2015). Specifically, it reports on the effect of a positive school environment (Smith & Reid, 2018; Steinmayr et al., 2018), teacher-student and student-student interactions (Kusuma Wijayanti et al., 2020), a sense of belonging to the school, the perception of an emotional connection and bonds with other students (Prati et al., 2017), or the degrees to which group norms and values are shared, educational expectations are met, and group belonging is experienced (Pettillo et al., 2015). The evidence also shows that stress and academic pressure affect "being well" (Oyarzún et al., 2017; Navarro et al., 2015) and describes the existing relationship between well-being and the perception of social support from teachers and classmates as well as the perception of competition at school (Alcantara et al., 2016; Cuadros & Berger, 2016; Tian et al., 2016).

Regarding the utility of studying the ecological context of the neighborhood, the literature emphasizes the weight of positive relationships between the neighborhood experience and well-being. Various investigations report on the effects that the feeling of community belonging and involvement (Delgado et al., 2012; Alfaro et al., 2017; Guzmán et al., 2019), the satisfaction with the neighborhood (Oyarzún et al., 2019; Varela et al., 2019), neighborhood safety (Ramírez et al., 2017; Sarriera et al., 2020) and the relationship with the natural environment (Wiens et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2019; Malberg Dyg & Wistoft, 2018) all have on well-being. Likewise, the security experienced in the neighborhood, as reported by Tonon and Mikkelsen (2021), is an issue that also contributes positively or negatively to well-being. Therefore, the neighborhood has a significant effect on the well-being of children, mainly when witnessing these safe spaces and in contact with nature (Galli et al., 2017).

1.2 The Relevance of Qualitative Studies of Well-Being in Children and Adolescents

In recent years, qualitative methodologies have acquired new importance in the study of children (Moore et al., 2019), along with a push to research well-being in C&A through the systematic study of the understandings, notions and perceptions about their well-being and the features and specifics of the contexts affecting it (Fattore et al., 2019). The naturalized ways of understanding and defining relationships,

roles and rules of conduct that organize daily life and their mediation in the experiences of well-being (Bilbao-Nieva, 2021; Fattore et al., 2019) have also been studied.

Such research has furnished knowledge about the ways of comprehending, understanding and assigning meaning to the experiences and situations in C&A daily life that are usually difficult to access using quantitative frameworks (Carrillo et al., 2021). They have also helped move beyond childhood research trends that favor indicators based on adult conceptions (Casas, 2012) by retrieving the personal voices and perspectives of the C&A about the issues affecting them. This helps reduce the limited incorporation of their own subjectivity into research about their well-being (Carrillo et al., 2021; Newton & Ponting, 2012). All of this is of great consequence for developing more suitable indicators for the study and analysis of well-being that integrate beliefs, assessments and experiences that are influential and important, but not easily accessible through traditional instruments and methods (Camfield et al., 2009; Newton & Ponting, 2012).

1.3 Qualitative Studies about Well-Being and School

Research into school and well-being generated through qualitative frameworks highlights the impact of relational processes and dynamics both with peers and adults, as reported by the study of Akkan et al. (2019) and the recent systematic literature review by Carrillo et al. (2021). They state that the impact of school relationships on well-being occurs with the group of C&A regardless of their differences in class, gender and other diverse traits (Akkan et al., 2019). Additionally, relationships that favor well-being have qualities in common such as providing protection, safety, affection and support in daily tasks, along with favoring respect and active participation in the school context (Carrillo et al., 2021).

That said, when comparing studies in different contexts, the literature shows the intercultural variability observed in the qualities and characteristics of the relational processes and dynamics that are pertinent to well-being at school. Studies with European children (Thoilliez, 2011) report that well-being is mainly related to academic achievement with sadness associated to exam failure. Studies with 15-year-old Slovak students report that they consider their relationships with classmates crucial for their experiences of well-being, so the promotion of group cohesion by teachers is important. They also highlight the value of receiving guidance in terms of developing their communication and interpersonal skills (Blaskova & McLellan, 2017). Studies conducted in a Canadian context reported that in the understandings of school-age children, well-being is related to the quality of the relationships with their teachers, who are recognized as essential interlocutors and promoters in their learning processes. Children greatly value their caring and concern, being offered creative ways to learn, and being listened to and supported (Huynh & Stewart-Tufescu, 2019). A study with Chilean children of low socioeconomic level indicates that the most relevant aspects in their well-being at school are feeling cared for and supported by significant adults, having entertaining and participatory educational

activities, feeling supported in their personal life projects and having opportunities for personal and family progress (Alfaro et al., 2021).

1.4 Qualitative Studies on Well-Being and the Neighborhood

The studies about the effect of the neighborhood environment on C&A well-being have brought attention to central dimensions of local contexts such as personal and social bonds, key cultural characteristics, and material and infrastructural aspects (Ergler et al., 2017; Poulain et al., 2020; Raffestin, 2012). This research shows that neighborhood environments are more than just physical places and instead constitute spaces for social relations that are valued and experienced through feelings, group or collective memberships, and the commitments made in relationships with others (Cresswell, 2014; Massey, 2005; Ergler et al., 2017) within the context of cultural and social orders of belonging (Coulton & Spilbury, 2014; Fegter & Mock, 2019).

These studies underscore the importance of considering the participants' knowledge and experiences of the places they inhabit as well as the feelings that are formed concerning these settings (Ergler et al., 2017) and how they affect and modify (refigure) their experience of well-being in close connection with broader discourses about citizenship or their "roots", cultural identities, and aspects of their own agency (Fegter & Mock, 2019). This subjective experience and these processes of assigning meaning to the environments have also been reported by studies such as those of Fegter and Mock (2019), Christensen and O'Brien (2003), and Formoso et al. (2010). For example, physical and material environments are resignified as spaces for cultural or identity encounters among peers, cross-generational encounters and also with the social network, or simply as spaces for entertainment, recreation and play, as reported by Douglas et al. (2017) or Ward Thompson et al. (2015).

The foregoing backdrop calls attention to the importance of studying these qualities and how they differentiate relational processes with other people that take place in the ecological contexts of the school and neighborhood and affect well-being through the lens of the Chilean children's own perceptions. To this end, the following specific objectives are intended: (1) Describe, based on the children's perceptions, the distinctive and prominent qualities that characterize the dynamics of relationships with others and with the background environment in the school context that affect their well-being experiences; (2) Describe, based on the children's perceptions, the distinctive and prominent qualities that characterize the dynamics of relationships with others and with the background environment in the neighborhood that affect their well-being experiences.

2 Method

2.1 Approach

This study is part of a broader research project of mixed design that studies the trajectories of well-being throughout adolescence. In view of this report's objectives,

a qualitative design was used to access the understandings of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participant C&A, considering subjectivity as a valid means for studying human practices (Guardián-Fernández, 2007). The thematic analysis method was used to examine the material (Mieles Barrera et al., 2012).

2.2 Participants

21 children and adolescents (C & A) from the Metropolitan and Bío–Bío Regions in Chile participated, including 10 females and 11 males. There were 10 fifth-grade (age 10–11) and 11 ninth-grade (age 14–15) participants. According the exploratory nature of the study and in order to achieve variability in the sample, the initial aim was have 24 participants in order to have at least 2 cases from each grade, gender, and socioeconomic variability. However, due to accessibility issues, finally the sample consisted of a total of 21 subjects.

2.3 Data Production Technique

Semi-structured interviews were carried out to delve into both responses and emergent topics (Gaínza Veloso, 2006). An individual technique was chosen, as it enabled going deeper into the unique experiences and generating a climate of trust that encouraged a more intimate and profound conversation. The interview was developed based on a script that addressed topics that include the notion of well-being and discontent, areas of well-being, well-being trajectories, the role of gender and material aspects.

To stimulate the conversation, the participants were asked to make a drawing of the experiences, feelings, things, relationships and places that made them feel good and bad and how they were interrelated. After the activity, there was a conversation about the elements included in their drawings. In order to evaluate the pertinence of the themed script and the use of drawings, a pilot of the data production technique had been previously conducted with five children.

2.4 Field Work Procedure and Ethical Safeguards

Socioeconomically diverse educational establishments were contacted and institutional participation consent was sought. Those who would be invited to collaborate were randomly selected from a list of fifth and ninth graders. Information about the study was sent to them and their guardians. Passive consent was obtained from the guardians and informed consent was obtained from the participants. The interviews were conducted at the educational establishments in a quiet, private place enabled for this purpose. They were subsequently literally transcribed, safeguarding anonymity by means of acronyms and identification numbers. The data production process was performed simultaneously with the analysis in order to include the relevant topics that emerged during the interviews. The transcriptions were entered into the MAXQDA software version 2018.2, which was used to facilitate the data management and analytical process.

2.5 Data Analysis Strategy

A thematic analysis was conducted in order to identify and analyze patterns of topics present in the data that were pertinent to answering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A detailed reading of the interview transcriptions was completed first, and relevant quotes were selected from each one. Live coding was done based on the quotes, and the codes were then organized into significant themes for the study. Code hierarchies were generated, which were then arranged into more abstract categories. This process was constantly reviewed and triangulated by the research team, consisting of a process of review and group discussion of the codes and categories elaborated as well as in the hierarchy of these.

2.6 Rigorous Criteria

To ensure the study's scientific rigor, the criteria of transparency, density, depth and intersubjectivity were incorporated (Krause, 1995). In order to achieve density and depth of the data, an exhaustive preparation and piloting of the interviews was conducted, as well as a detailed analysis of each one that was in turn continuously triangulated by the research team for both the intra- and inter-case codings. The triangulation process also sought to meet the intersubjectivity criterion in order to prevent bias and reach consensus on analytical resolutions and criteria.

3 Results

The analysis was organized based on the relevant thematic of the respondents' perceptions that describe the dynamics and processes in relationships with others associated with their well-being in the school and neighborhood contexts. Variability continuums for the relationships were determined according to the intensity with which they affect their experience of being well and/or satisfied with their life.

The analysis identified five central variability continuum categories, three of which refer to the school setting, one to the neighborhood setting and one to both. The five variability categories are: (1) "Peer group belonging and integration vs rejection and bullying at school"; (2) "Closeness and trust vs indifference and distance from the teachers at school"; (3) "Entertaining and motivating teaching relationships vs those that demand performance and obedience at school"; (4) "Closeness and coexistence with others in the neighborhood vs insecurity and fear of others"; (5) "Enjoyable and satisfying relationships with the school and neighborhood environments vs dissatisfaction with their physical and material conditions". Below is a summary table of the categories elaborated (Table 1).

Table 1 Synthesis of variability continuum categories elaborated in base of interviews coding process

Variability continuum category	Context	Variability	Main topics
Peer group belonging and integration vs rejection and bullying at school	School context	Belonging and integration Rejection and bullying	Affective closeness and cordiality; Share interests; Get support and Recognition and respect Jealousy and Physical aggression
Closeness and trust vs indifference and distance from the teachers at school	School context	Closeness Indifference and distance	Mutual acquaintance; Caring feelings; Positive protection and Instrumental support Remoteness from daily life and Unawareness
Entertaining and motivating teaching relationships vs those that demand performance and obedience at school	School context	Entertaining and motivating teaching relationships Exigency obedience	Stimulating learning activities High demands for performance; Social control; Sanctions and Coercion of personal expressions
Closeness and coexistence with others in the neighborhood vs insecurity and fear of others	Neighborhood context	Closeness Fear	Bonding; Sharing in daily life; Confidence and Safety Other experienced as distant and Other experienced as strangers
Enjoyable and satisfying relationships with the school and neighborhood environments vs dissatisfaction with their physical and material conditions	School context	Satisfaction and Enjoyment Dissatisfaction	Physical proximity; Green areas; Comfort of the infrastructure and Quality infrastructure Unsuitable conditions and infrastructure for school activity
	Neighborhood context	Satisfaction and Enjoyment Dissatisfaction	Green areas; Quiet areas; Well-kept areas and Infrastructure able to use safely Poor quality of public areas; Poor maintenance of public areas and Garbage and Pollution

3.1 School Context

(1) Variability continuum category: Peer group belonging and integration vs rejection and bullying at school. In the participants' understandings about well-being, relationships with peers at school emerge as a relevant dimension. They are characterized along a continuum that starts with relationships of group belonging and integration in which feelings of affective closeness and cordiality among classmates are experienced in a way that allow them to feel they are part of the group, sharing interests, receiving help when needed, feeling understood, accepted and respected by everyone in daily life inside and outside of school. The opposite pole of this continuum is characterized by relationships of rejection and bullying by classmates marked by the presence of fights and conflicts that range from temporary ones that may involve the interruption of communication, ill-treatment, anger and jealousy to those marked by physical aggression or may even include experiences of systematic bullying expressed in physical assault that the children ultimately describe as emotional suffering.

The relationships located at the first pole where well-being is created can be appreciated in the following participant quotes:

P¹: (...) There are friends at school that make me feel good, that understand me, the same friend in my class, my girlfriend, my classmates...

I: And what do they do that makes you feel good?

P: The same as my family members who are understanding. That is what's most outstanding about them, that they are understanding and friendly (I17,² male, age 10).

P: [Referring to how school contributes to their experiences of well-being] (...) I can go to school, as all my friends will be there. My friends will be at school. When I get to class, I know they will be there, and we will keep talking. We will get through it. I mean, we will keep helping each other out with our school subjects, because more than school helping you, your friends help you be at school. I feel proud that a friendship like that can help you get through school (I4, male, age 15).

At the other pole of the variability continuum, relationships with peers that negatively affect well-being come through and are associated with rejection and bullying, as described in the following quotes:

P: [Referring to fights with friends that cause them distress and sadness] Yes, today, this year, at the start of the year... some girls didn't get along with others and a girl in our group got together with them, and when they came to the table at the cafeteria, because we almost always sit at the cafeteria, the others left and I stayed there, and... My friend was sad because I got together with them. She was kind of jealous, something like that I guess. Then she got sad, and we fought until the next day... (I2, male, fifth grade).

¹ The letter P refers to the participant's response, and the letter I refers to the question or comment from the interviewer.

² The number next to the letter I refers to the interview number.

I: What things don't make you feel good?

P: It doesn't make me feel good when people tease me about my weight, when they say that, when they push me. It overwhelms me a lot when a group of people are talking about something else and I want to talk to them, and they say no, go away, that bothers me... Many classmates used to tease me, from the same class, in third, fourth grade.

I: And that made you feel bad?

P: Yes.

I: And what did you feel?

P: I got sad, I kept it all in, when I exploded, I would hit the guys and run off and then start crying because I didn't think first, and I would think, ok, now I'm getting suspended (I17, male, age 10).

(2) Variability continuum category: Closeness and trust vs indifference and distance from the teachers at school. In the understandings of the study's C & A participants, relationships with others at school that are highlighted as relevant for their well-being experience consider ties with the adult world, mainly with the figure of the teacher. These relationships are placed along a variability continuum according to how they affect well-being. One end of this range has experiences of closeness and trust characterized by mutual acquaintance, caring feelings, a positive protection attitude and instrumental support provided by teachers. The opposite pole is marked by relational experiences with teachers characterized by indifference and distance experienced as unawareness and remoteness from daily life and little relevance to the students' personal affairs, valued by the C & A as irrelevant and insignificant to their well-being.

As observed in the account, relationships with teachers that give rise to well-being refer to:

P: [Referring to teachers that make them feel good] ... Those teachers ... they are the ones with whom I get along best (...) we are like friends ... we have known each other since we were little. They've known me since I was very little, so they know my quirks and whatever. I don't know, I think they are good people (I20, male, age 14).

I: What aspects of your relationship with the teachers do you like?

P: When they help me do things I don't understand, or when M. [the teacher] makes a proposal to us on Mondays, which is 20 minutes of recess at the end, and then he plays with us, too. He also helps us with the things we need, and lots of other things... (I11, female, age 10).

At the other pole of the continuum are relationships with the teachers' world that, according to the understandings of the C & A, are characterized by indifference and a lack of personal closeness, as shown in the following participant quotes, which are experienced as irrelevant and insignificant to their well-being:

I: ... The teachers are not here either [in reference to a triggering drawing],³ so I can understand that the teachers are not connected to you to feeling well?

³ During the interview they were asked to draw the experiences, feelings, things, relationships and places that made them feel good and bad. See [data production technique](#).

P: The truth is I don't feel that. I feel they are my teachers who teach me, and that's it. And even if they say that they will always be there to listen to you and all that, I feel that that's not really how it is. No matter how often they say it... and you don't really have the confidence to... For example, I don't trust my teachers enough to tell them my problems, so I tell them to my mom. Then I feel better because it is a freer and more personal space (I6, female, age 14).

I: [Referring to the fact that the child points out the need to ask the teacher for help to resolve the feelings of discomfort experienced from being teased by their classmates] ...Are you close to the teacher?

P: No, not very close.

I: How is the trust level between you?

P: Not so good, no. With the previous teacher, yes.

I: And you had told him that this was going on?

P: No... but, I mean, no, but I did get along with him well. With this one, I still don't know him much....

I: Ok. And if you knew him better, would you be able to tell him?

P: Yes.

I: So, that part is missing?

P: Yes (I2, male, fifth grade).

(3) Variability continuum category: Entertaining and motivating teaching relationships vs those that demand performance and obedience at school. In the understanding of the participant C & A, well-being is associated with teaching relationships at school that motivate them, entertain them, and include stimulating learning activities that allow them to concentrate and learn. Conversely, teaching-learning relationships that negatively affect well-being experiences are characterized by high demands for performance and obedience with disciplinary rules focused on academic grades and social control as well as sanctions and the coercion of personal expressions experienced as limitations to their freedom and autonomy.

Regarding entertaining and motivating teaching relationships associated with well-being, the participant students point out:

P: [Referring to a diverting teaching style as an aspect of school that makes them happy] Yes, I do think that they make me happy.

I: In what sense?

P: In that they teach us in a fun way.

I: ... What is teaching in a fun way?

P: Generally, the math teacher, for example, when you go... When we have to review what we had learned, she makes these cartoons, funny faces and stuff, lots of things that are fun (I14, male, age 10).

P: [Referring to school as an important place that produces well-being and emphasizing that they really like the teachers] There are some teachers that I probably like more than others because they teach you, I don't know, math and at the same time, they make jokes, for example, so then I get more involved, and I participate in class. And after joking around for a while, we start with the lesson, and then I am already focused, because I like to horse around a lot, so

if they joke me, I will pay attention to the teacher. Since he is nice, I will listen to him (I20, male, age 14).

At the other pole we find relationships centered on the requirement of a certain level of performance and obedience at school, as illustrated in the following accounts:

P: ... I feel overwhelmed at school because I have to finish papers, write down everything the teacher writes on the board, study for tests, constantly think about whether I'm passing or not, thinking about answers that may be right or not. In short, at school I feel overwhelmed, and at home I don't... (I17, male, age 10).

P: It's just that school is no longer an area where I feel good, so to speak, because it doesn't give me any space where I can be free or be myself, because the school has rules for you.

I: It has rules?

P: So, you don't always like to follow the rules, I like to be freer, like in my room. So it's like, I don't know, I feel repressed sometimes (I6, female, age 14).

3.2 Neighborhood Context

(4) Variability continuum category: Closeness and coexistence with others in the neighborhood vs insecurity and fear of others. Based on the C & A understandings, their well-being runs along a continuum ranging from relationships of closeness and coexistence with others in the neighborhood linked to bonding and sharing on a daily basis with feelings of trust and confidence in others, to the opposite pole characterized by relationships that generate feelings of threat, fear, risk and insecurity with other people who experienced as distant and strangers. This latter type of relationship is signified as one that negatively affects well-being.

In the C & A accounts, neighborhood experiences that generate well-being refer to and highlight trust and daily closeness with people in the neighborhood, as in the following quotes:

I: What in your neighborhood makes you feel good [alluding to the drawing about the things that generate feelings of well-being]?

P: Let's say that it's closed off from the outside, and the houses don't have fences, so you can go and ask if so-and-so can come out to play, and they say yes, or if you want you can go into the house, so we all know each other and go places together or play (I12, male, age 10).

P: ... [alluding to the drawing about the things that produce well-being] I live in a condominium, so when I go out with my pet, I take her to the park, which is down below. So that's why I put trees [in the drawing], because there are trees there, so I play with her there, and when I go out with my girlfriends to talk, it is also in that area, because I also have friends there in the condo (I6, female, age 14).

On the other end of the continuum, relationships with other people in the neighborhood that negatively affect their well-being refer to insecurity and fear of others, as observed in the following accounts:

I: How do you think that the physical environments that you move through... affect or impact your well-being? ...

P: It affects me a little because I am afraid of the gunshots. Sometimes it's dangerous (I1, female, age 10).

I: Ok. Why do you think that [neighborhoods perceived as unsafe] affects your well-being?

N: Well, most of all because, let's say, people move around of course, and sometimes you have to go through those same places. In this case, let's say at night. (...) I think that you would not feel very safe transiting through those areas that way. You think that your safety will be compromised at some point by someone from there (I13, male, age 15).

3.3 School and Neighborhood Context

(5) Variability continuum category: Enjoyable and satisfying relationships with the school and neighborhood environments vs dissatisfaction with their physical and material conditions. In the C & A understandings, well-being is associated with the aesthetic, physical and habitability conditions of the environment in which they live every day, both in the school and neighborhood contexts. The relationship with these conditions emerges along a continuum ranging from enjoyment and satisfaction to dissatisfaction.

At the pole of satisfaction with and enjoyment of school, there are aspects related to a positive assessment of the physical proximity between home and school and having well-kept and aesthetically beautiful green areas. The quality and comfort of the infrastructure, suitable physical spaces and having furnishings that facilitate school life and learning processes are also positively assessed. In the neighborhood case, this pole includes experiences of enjoyability and satisfaction with the material and aesthetic conditions of the public space, associated with having natural spaces or green areas that provide contact with nature, quiet and well-kept areas with adequate infrastructure, and being able to safely go about daily activities with others.

At the pole of dissatisfaction in the case of the school environment, accounts emerge that refer to unsuitable conditions and infrastructure for school activity, considering both the learning activities and daily activities of the C & A, including functionality and aesthetic aspects. At the same time, in the C & A understandings about their well-being in the neighborhood context, the pole of dissatisfaction with the environment features valuation and aesthetic dimensions related to the poor quality and maintenance of public areas including the presence of garbage, pollution or neglected streets and spaces.

In the C & A accounts, the experiences of satisfaction with the school and neighborhood refer to aesthetic, value and functional aspects such as:

P: I think it affects a lot.

I: Why?

P: Because it is very different having a school that's always pretty than having one that is, I don't know, all scribbled on with lots of broken things that cannot be used for what they're supposed to be (I19, female, age 14).

I: How do think they affect your well-being?

P: I think they impact a lot because at school, as I said, I like the facilities a lot. It has games, a court, it has a gym, a cafeteria, a library. It has practically everything to make me be happy (I20, male, age 14).

I: ... And places [that you like and make you feel good in your neighborhood], you mentioned the wetland, which is a place...

P: Happy.

I: Happy, for you?

P: Yes, and for my brother.

I: And what's that place like ...?

P: ... Um, there are bridges where you can feed the fish, ducks. There are also, there are buildings next to it, but also next to it there are some... mm, a hill, and sometimes we roll down the hill, and sometimes we walk my dog, yeah... (I2, male, age 10).

I: Hey, what's your neighborhood like, where you live?

P: It's big, with trees, I also like it because it's kind of big, it has space like when you go to a park; instead of being in the middle of the street and it being really unsafe where a car can swerve and crash. It has a fence, and inside there is gravel, so there is like a sidewalk inside the park (I11, female, age 10).

On the other hand, the dissatisfaction pole is illustrated in the following accounts.

I: How would you say that these things related to the physical environment affect your well-being?

P: They affect it in the sense that I have to wait in lots of queues for the microwave, or because the cafeteria is super small and cannot fit the entire high school, and things like that. It's not that I want everything to be at hand, but still for it to be more available, because sometimes you have to wait for 10 minutes or 20 for a microwave, and sometimes you get a broken microwave, and things like that (I15, female, age 15).

P: [Alluding to what they don't like about their neighborhood] Because there are bridges, and you can see the pollution from the bridge.

I: Mm, you see it in the water?

P: Yes.

I: Ok. What do you see? Garbage?

P: Garbage. Coca-Cola bottles and cans, lots of cans and bags.

I: That's bad...

P: Yes. But now they put trash cans.

P: Ok. And how do you feel when you see that?

P: Sad. It's just that I wouldn't like someone to get my house dirty... I wouldn't like it.

I: Mm... So, you would like for this place to be clean.

P: Yes (I2, male, age 10).

P: Actually, everything affects it [referring to their well-being], for example, you live in a building that's nice, maybe you feel good, other times when you go through a street in bad condition, then it affects you. For example, if you are on the bus and everything is bouncing around all over the place, you don't like it of course. That's why you have to take good care of the physical environment. It has to be, how can I say it? Like user-friendly, and it must also look good, make you feel good things, of course (I13, male, age 15, ninth grade).

4 Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this research was to study the perceptions and understandings of well-being based on accounts of Chilean children and adolescents within a framework of ecological context of the school and neighborhood. One objective is to contribute to a notion of well-being viewed as a contextualized construction in which their relationships and bonds as well as the needs being met all play a role. We also sought to understand how the children and adolescents described and characterized the distinctive and prominent qualities of relationships with others and their surroundings that affect their experiences of well-being at school and in the neighborhood.

The results show that based on the studied C & A understandings, their well-being is specifically and particularly affected by four main qualities of their relationships that are part of the school and neighborhood contexts. They also show that it is affected by their satisfaction with the infrastructural conditions of schools and neighborhoods.

The relationship qualities that affect the well-being of the C & A in the school context are characterized by having experiences that vary with respect to three major continuums. First, they are characterized by a variability between two poles, one being the presence of feelings and experiences of belonging and daily integration with peer groups, and another by experiences of interpersonal conflict that range from situations of tension and issues of a temporary nature and low intensity to ones that include relationships of harassment that produce emotional suffering. Second, the school relationships that are relevant to well-being occur along a continuum that ranges from one end of the pole with experiences of closeness, trust and mutual acquaintance with the adult world, mainly with the figure of the teacher. The opposite pole is centered on experiences of remoteness from daily life in which these bonds are felt as personally distant and valued as irrelevant and insignificant to well-being. Third, the school relationships that affect well-being are characterized by having teaching and learning relationships that go from one pole where they are experienced as entertaining, motivating, and stimulating facilitators of learning, to another in which they are experienced as excessive academic performance demands coupled with disciplinary rules perceived as limiting freedom and autonomy.

The relationships that affect the well-being of the C & A in the neighborhood context are characterized solely by the presence of bonds that go from one pole in which feelings of trust and security in daily coexistence with others are predominant to the other in which feelings of threat, fear and insecurity with others, who are experienced as strange and distant subjects that negatively affect well-being,

are predominant. This is consistent with reports from Tonon & Mikkelsen (2021) and Galli et al. (2017) that visualize the neighborhood as an important factor in the well-being of children, especially in those spaces where they feel safest.

The results of this study also show that in the understandings of the C & A, well-being is associated with the aesthetic, physical and habitability conditions of the school and neighborhood context along a continuum that ranges from enjoyability and satisfaction to dissatisfaction. The satisfaction and enjoyability pole comprises aspects related to having green spaces that provide access to nature, the aesthetic and attractive conditions of the spaces, and the quality of the infrastructure available for daily life in these areas. Conversely, the dissatisfaction pole includes poor quality infrastructure, a lack of nature, and the improper maintenance or neglect of the public spaces.

Three aspects stand out when we examine these results overall. First, in the understandings of the Chilean C & A who participated in the study, the main qualities of relationships with others that are significant and positively affect their well-being, regardless of whether they are with peers or adults or take place at school or in the neighborhood, are associated with experiences of closeness and proximity and feelings of belonging and trust in others. Additionally, at the opposite pole, the relationships that negatively affect their well-being are characterized and marked by the presence of qualities related to situations of mistreatment or rejection, and/or the fear of it, the absence of a connection, and experiences of indifference.

Second, the results show that it is important for well-being that relationships with the school, and particularly those related to teaching and learning, are motivating and stimulating. In contrast, they show the negative effect that relationships with an excessive requirement of academic performance and obedience at school that overrides autonomy have on well-being. Third, the importance of the aesthetic, physical and habitability conditions of the environment in which they spend their everyday life is also noteworthy in the C & A understandings of their own well-being, both for the school and neighborhood context. In this regard, three specific aspects are particularly relevant; that the public spaces are green with access to nature, their aesthetic qualities, and the quality of infrastructure.

These results further the discussion and progress in the ecological understanding of well-being, contributing with the description and analysis of dynamics that take place in daily life contexts such as the school and neighborhood and their importance in C & A life satisfaction experiences. They also contribute to the study of the ways of understanding and assigning meaning to the daily experiences of the C & A as a form of systematic study for the understandings, notions and perceptions of well-being and the characteristics and particularities of the related contexts that affect it, as developed so far in this field of research (Carrillo et al., 2021; Fattore et al., 2019). They retrieve the voices and perspectives of children and adolescents, helping to strengthen the incorporation of their own subjectivities into the study of their well-being (Carrillo et al., 2021; Newton & Ponting, 2012).

In particular, the results highlight the relevance of relationships with others discussed by previous studies that report on the effects of interpersonal school dynamics on satisfaction with life (Lee & Yoo, 2015; Kusuma Wijayanti et al., 2020) both

regarding relationships among peers and with the adult world (Akkan et al., 2019; Carrillo et al., 2021; Kusuma Wijayanti et al., 2020). Thus, they corroborate the importance that supportive relationships with teachers and classmates have for well-being as shown in the works of Alcantara et al. (2016) and Tian et al. (2016). This adds to the evidence that school relationships that favor well-being are characterized by providing protection, respect, safety, affection and support in daily tasks in addition to encouraging active participation in the school context (Carrillo et al., 2021). They also highlight how valuable it is that these relationships offer creative ways of learning and encourage addressing their school-related needs (Huynh & Stewart-Tufescu, 2019). Likewise, they underscore the impact academic pressure has on the students' well-being experience (Navarro et al., 2015; Oyarzún et al., 2017) as reported by studies with European children (Thoilliez, 2011) that show that well-being is related to academic achievement and sadness is associated with failure in school.

Another area to which these results contribute is the importance that a sense of belonging, an emotional connection and ties with other students have for well-being, as reported by the works of Petrillo et al. (2016) and Prati et al. (2018). This stresses the utility of group cohesion and interpersonal communication at school, reported in the works of Blaskova and McLellan (2017).

Lastly, regarding the school context, this study highlights the importance of the characteristics and degrees to which rules and values related to goals and educational expectations are shared (Prati et al., 2018) as well as naturalized ways of understanding and defining relationships, roles and rules of conduct that organize daily life and how they mediate well-being experiences (Bilbao-Nieva, 2021; Fattore et al., 2019).

The results of this study also corroborate the importance that coexistence, integration and neighborhood satisfaction have for C & A well-being, reported in works such as those of Guzmán et al. (2019) and Oyarzún et al. (2019) and the relevance of experiencing neighborhood safety reported by Sarriera et al. (2020) and Ramírez et al. (2017) and the contribution of access to and connection with natural environments, as reported in various articles (Wiens et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2019; Malberg Dyg & Wistoft, 2018). This draws attention to the importance of personal and social ties and the material and infrastructure aspects reported in other recent papers (Poulain et al., 2020; Ergler et al., 2017), as well as the neighborhood territory (Tonon et al., 2017b).

A prominent contribution of this study's results is that neighborhood environments are exhibited as spaces for social relations, and as such, are loaded with multiple and varied feelings such as group or collective belonging, security, trust or fear, or indifference regarding others, which coincides with the works of Ergler et al. (2020). These relationships and feelings constitute key aspects in the experience that C & A have with their neighborhoods, and they have key impacts on the well-being and/or life satisfaction they experience. Thus, one of the most relevant results of this study is that it makes evident and highlights the importance of the experiences, emotions and affections that C & A have regarding the places and daily life environments they inhabit, providing evidence on how this affects and modifies the experience of well-being in physical settings.

It is interesting to note how, despite the fact that both the neighborhood context and the school context are relevant for the well-being of children and adolescents, the weight that these take in their stories is different, being the school environment an area that acquires greater relevance. This could be due to several factors that would be interesting to investigate in the future, for example, the number of hours that children spend in their schools, or the loss of community ties typical of current forms of social organization.

Lastly, bear in mind that the results are not generalizable to other populations or sociocultural contexts, as we specifically sought to examine a particular socio-cultural reality in a given context, as is the case of schools and neighborhoods in Chile. However, we believe that this can help move towards studies that address this topic given the reality that the experience of well-being is specifically constituted within the context of the relationships in which it is present (Wyn et al., 2014). Therefore, this manner of addressing the phenomenon can provide relevant information about schools and neighborhoods that might be useful for making pertinent decisions to strengthen C & A well-being.

Authors' Contributions Not applicable

Funding This work is part of REGULAR FONDECYT Project No. 1180607 "A longitudinal study of individual- and school-related factors to predict the path of subjective well-being during adolescence," which is funded by the National Research and Development Agency (ANID in Spanish, formerly called CONICYT in Chile).

Data Availability (data transparency) The authors declare that they have a record of all the data used in this manuscript, which have been saved as files in Maxqda software.

Code Availability (software application or custom code) The authors declare the use of the Maxqda 2018.2 software.

Declarations

Additional declarations for articles in life science journals that report the results of studies involving humans and/or animals.

Ethics Approval (include appropriate approvals or waivers) The authors declare that the research was approved by the ethics committee of the Universidad del Desarrollo, Chile.

Consent to Participate (include appropriate statements) Educational establishments were contacted and institutional participation consent was sought. Subsequently, passive consent was obtained from the guardians of childrens and informed consent was obtained from the participants.

Consent for Publication (include appropriate statements) The authors give their consent to publish this research to the journal Child Indicators Research.

Conflicts of Interest/Competing Interests The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

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