

Author's response

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Title: Colombia: Unlivable but Happy. Fool's Paradise?

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1 Response to Editor

Dear Professor Burger,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a revised draft. We list below in inline format our brief responses to reviewers' comments and attach at the end tracked changes that show precisely the additions and deletions.

Best,
Authors

2 Response to Editor

Reviewer 1 sees many merits in this paper, but signals also several feeble elements, in particular, the lack of a clear contextualization of the Columbian case, the under-representation of a strong and convincing methodological framework, the lack of clear arguments on the Columbian happiness paradox, and a weak Abstract and concluding part. Reviewer 2 appreciates the paper, but raises several critical comments, in particular, the less clear conceptualization of SWB and related concepts, the lack of a clear focus, as well as the lack of a coherent architecture of the paper, and a weak prospective outlook.

TODO

3 Response to Reviewer #1

This is a fascinating study, and it is well-fitted for the special issue.

thank you!

"Colombia: Unlivable but Happy. Fool's Paradise?" examines the paradoxical relationship between subjective well-being (happiness) and objective measures of quality of life in Colombia. The authors argue that despite Colombia's poor performance on various livability indices, Colombians report high happiness levels, suggesting that factors beyond economic prosperity and safety contribute significantly to well-being.

n/a

The following revisions would enhance this interesting work further:

1. The manuscript benefits from a broader and more nuanced theoretical framework that comprehensively integrates existing literature on subjective well-being. This should include discussions on how the Colombian context might differ or align with other global contexts where similar paradoxes are observed. The manuscript should explicitly address how the Colombian case contributes to or challenges existing theories of happiness and well-being.

guess livability theory or sth, already there, maybe just signal better and or earlier

other latin countries are arguably similar--again already there, but signal stronger or earlier

2. While the paper is rich in qualitative descriptions and theoretical discussions, it lacks detailed methodological information about how subjective well-being is measured and compared across different countries. For the paper to have a more robust empirical footing, it would be beneficial to include more details on the survey instruments, sampling methods, and statistical analyses used to assess and compare happiness levels. Realizing this may be hard at this stage, some local empirical studies or information on governance and policymaker instruments could support findings instead.

this is actually good point!

3. The paper suggests that Colombia's high happiness levels in the face of poor objective quality-of-life measures might challenge the emphasis on economic development and infrastructure in determining well-being. However, it does not sufficiently address potential counterarguments or alternative explanations for the observed phenomenon.

well again already there! wearing pink glasses etc; again highlight better and say specifically counterargument/alt explanation

4. The abstract and conclusion hint at valuable lessons that the world could learn from Colombia regarding happiness and quality of life. The revised manuscript should elaborate more on these lessons, providing specific policy recommendations for Colombia and other countries. This would enhance the manuscript's relevance to policymakers and practitioners in the field of development and well-being.

yes todo add section at the end: takeaway for policy and proactice and summirize stuff there

5. The literature review should be updated to include recent studies on subjective well-being, particularly those focusing on Latin America and other regions with similar socio-economic challenges. This will help situate the study within the current state of research and highlight its contribution to ongoing debates.

ok fair enough do quick google

Minor Revisions: 1. Some sections of the manuscript would benefit from editing for clarity and coherence. Efforts should be made to ensure that the argument flows logically and that key points are articulated. The report could benefit from including tables that summarize essential findings and comparisons, which would help readers better understand the information presented. Additionally, the conclusion section must be improved to summarize the study's key findings, theoretical contributions, and practical implications more effectively.

yeah again add sec on takaway for policy and practice

2. The concluding section should be strengthened to more directly summarize the study's key findings, theoretical contributions, and practical implications. By addressing these revisions, the manuscript will contribute to the literature on happiness and quality of life, offering insights into the Colombian context and a broader understanding of the factors that contribute to human well-being.

ditto see above

4 Response to Reviewer #2

The paper explores the "Latin American phenomenon," where Latinos, particularly in countries like Colombia, exhibit high life satisfaction despite challenges such as underdevelopment, social conflict, and poor policy outcomes. The authors argue that traditional measures of livability based on money, consumption, and infrastructure overlook crucial factors. They emphasize that basic commodities are sufficient to satisfy human needs and well-being, while non-commodities like personal freedom and social connections play a significant role. The article suggests that excessive pursuit of commodities, as seen in highly developed nations, may hinder happiness due to overemphasis on unimportant aspects and inhuman environments. The authors propose that Colombia offers valuable lessons for the world and discuss alternative explanations for the apparent contradiction in the country's happiness amid adversity. The possibility of "ignorance is bliss" is also considered. The paper concludes by pointing towards future research directions in understanding this phenomenon.

n/a

Overall assessment and major issues: This paper is of potential added value as their focus is unlike many other articles on subjective well-being (SWB).

yes, thank you, that was one of the goals

While appreciating the effort invested in this paper, in its present condition, I do not consider the manuscript as suitable for publication. Extensive revisions are necessary. Therefore, I recommend rejecting the paper at this time. I encourage the authors to address the outlined concerns and resubmit the revised version for further consideration. I will briefly explain the reasons that lead me to this assessment regarding the quality of the paper.

see below

- The paper briefly introduces various forms of assessing well-being (affective, evaluative, and eudaimonic), referred to as "measurements" by the author. Subsequently, the author mentions sub-concepts such as life satisfaction as an indicator for the evaluative assessment of well-being. The section concludes with, "In this article, we use the concept of subjective WellBeing (SWB) to encapsulate the different accepted metrics in the field. When necessary, we make the distinction between them." (p. 2) As a reader, the relationship between the individual concepts remains unclear. Is SWB synonymous with well-being, and does it encompass all three forms of elicitation (evaluative, affective, and eudaimonic)? The distinction between theoretical concepts and measurement instruments is not apparent, leaving questions about how the theoretical concepts relate to each other. The author notes that "the measurement of SWB has become a relevant component of policymaking" in the introduction. What is the measurement of SWB?

ok fair enough, clarify, rev1 makes similar point

- The terms life satisfaction, subjective well-being, quality of life, and livability of the environment are used interchangeably and inconsistently, causing confusion regarding whether they hold the same theoretical-conceptual meaning and share the same operationalization. Clear definitions of concepts and their respective measurement tools are needed. This section requires a thorough explanation to understand the later arguments regarding lower levels of SWB.

see previous point

- The paper lacks a clear objective and does not critically reflect on the paradox of high life satisfaction despite a country's poor livability.

i guess state early on explicitly whats the objective: to examine the paradox; guess add also that outline: how we do that section by section

- The promised direction for future research, mentioned in the abstract, is underdeveloped and actually absent in the paper.

maybe already there; make sure there, do it, guess may have separate section; like rev1 what col may learn and other countries similar like latin am; and dissimilar ones like us that can learn from it

- The paper's structure is questionable, consisting of 12 pages with an equal number of sections, lacking a coherent thread. It seems more like a compilation of anecdotal evidence, albeit entertaining. The headings are not helpful in conveying the paper's structure. The authors should opt for concise and more informative headings. For instance, it is not clear what the authors mean by "SWB and Development." What type of development is being referred to? Numbering of individual sections is missing.

ok number sections; have them more descriptive

a sidenote: few pages (12) relative to the number of sections was a bit of an optical illusion: margins were 1cm, font 10pt, and spacing 1.4; now we made it more standard 2cm margins, 11pt font, and 2 lines spacing and

While the paper could benefit the scientific community, it requires substantial theoretical embedding, a clear argumentative structure, and explicit recommendations for the research agenda. Currently, the paper is not in a publishable state.

see above; and yes, in this revision we have strived to rewrite in a way to benefit ARIQ reader

5 Tracked Text Changes

(see next page)