

## **PERSONAL HAPPINESS: DOES HEALTH AND FAMILY COMMUNICATION HAVE MORE INFLUENCE THAN QUANTITY OF MONEY AND MATERIAL GOODS?**

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From extensive research on the phenomena of *sympatía* in Latin American countries, many characteristics, such as friendliness and a positive attitude, were identified. However, despite such positive attitudes, very few studies measured levels of happiness and satisfaction in these communities, specifically Costa Rica. This study measured happiness levels during March-April 2012 in San Ramón, Costa Rica. Created questionnaires measuring happiness levels were distributed to 197 participants (104 M, 92 F, 1 Unknown). A validated survey showed homogeneity to my created questionnaire ( $P < 0.0001$ ). Mean responses relating happiness to "good health" (=4.73) and "family communication" (= 4.58) were greater than responses of "quantity of money made each month" (= 3.49) or "owning material goods" (= 3.49) ( $P < 0.05$ ). Mean responses of "having a national army" (= 1.73) were smaller than responses to "living in nature" (= 4.62). Participants value health and family communication over material possessions and wealth.

Overall family wellness is vital in the Costa Rican culture, and many participants claimed having good health determines working and socializing habits. Living amongst nature is also highly valued, which might be the excessive exposure to sun that promotes vitamin D production, potentially decreasing depression. Costa Rica does not have a national army, which could influence such a small mean. Not many participants felt happy about available medications, and can be explained by on the fact that many Costa Ricans prefer herbal and natural resources instead of medications. On terms of gender and sexuality rights, most participants did not support the idea of homosexuality, and while equal gender rights was supported, more women than men felt happier by this concept ( $P = 0.0004$ ). The major limitation for this study was limited time, area, and the number of participants.