The Mexican Recipe for Life Satisfaction
Gender Differences in the Role of Age and Education

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ABSTRACT
The project examines the effects of age and education on the wellbeing of Mexican adults. The study further explores the gender variations in patterns of self-reported life satisfaction focusing on differences between independent models for women and men. Among the few studies on life satisfaction in Mexico, this is the first to employ a sociological and demographic perspective. Using nationally representative data on urban-dwellers 18 years and older (Self-Reported Wellbeing Module of 2018: N = 4,860), bootstrapped ordered logistic regression analyses compare the odds of reporting higher life satisfaction among women and men from different age and education groups. Evidence indicates that women are consistently more likely to report lower levels of life satisfaction as they grow older compared to men, for whom adversary effects on life satisfaction appear until reaching 50 years of age. Multivariate analyses also reveal that women are generally more likely to report higher levels of life satisfaction as their educational attainment increases, while the modest effects for men disappear when controlling for other factors like income. Findings highlight the importance of discussing the gendered nature of wellbeing.

BACKGROUND
Most of the research on life satisfaction in Mexico comes from a psychological conceptual framework (Velasco Matus, Pedro Wolfgang Villanueva Orozco, Rivera Aragón, and Díaz Loving 2016; Velasco Arellanes, Vera Noieiga, and Tirad Median 2019) or is concerned with survey methodology (Leyva, Bustos, and Romo 2016). The above highlights the presence of a hole in the sociological and demographic literature on wellbeing in Mexico; this is not a minor issue. Mexico in the home of over 129.2 million inhabitants who represent 1.7% of the world population. Moreover, it is ranked as the 23rd happiest country for the period 2016-2018 (Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs 2019) despite its poor performance in indicators such as education, GDP, and income inequality, which are usually linked with wellbeing measurements and assessments.

DATA & METHODS
Data comes from the survey Self-Reported Wellbeing Module (BIARE) designed and conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico. With the purpose of generating internationally comparable data, INEGI’s survey designs follow the framework proposed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2017. Since 2012, INEGI has employed BIARE to measure the current wellbeing of the Mexican adult population operationalized as self-reported life satisfaction.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for female and male minors under their watch

Table 2. Observed life satisfaction and selected scores by sex, 2018

Figure 1. Location of Mexico in the globe and sampled urban areas within the country, 2018

IN GENERAL, EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT INCREASES LIFE SATISFACTION FOR MEXICAN FEMALES, WHILE INCOME NEUTRALIZES THE EFFECTS OF EDUCATION FOR MALES

LIMITATIONS

Data
Few respondents reported having graduate or professional education (females: 56; males: 56) which compromises the reliability of the estimates associated with that category in both models. Participants might adjust their responses given the presence of an interviewer (e.g., they could lie about their income or even their life satisfaction score).

Methods
The proportional odds assumption of the ordered logit models might be inappropriate.

Additional analyses, as well as further guidance from previous studies, is needed and will be part of the next steps.

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