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CULTURE AND HAPPINESS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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ABSTRACT. In a broader context, the pursuit of happiness has become one of the most important goals of a modern human. Despite substantial research on this topic, few studies have examined the links between happiness and cultural dimensions and none have looked at the Member States of the European Union in this context. This study was an attempt to fill this gap by examining the relationship between the rankings of the 26 EU Member States on the World Happiness Report and Hofstede's six cultural dimensions. Pearson correlation coefficients and linear regression coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships via the use of the SPSS software. The results show a relatively strong positive relationship between happiness and Indulgence and Individualism, while the relationship between happiness and the co-integration of the cultural dimensions of Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance is relatively strong but negative. No correlation is found between happiness and the Masculinity and Long-term Orientation dimensions. Thus, a permissive and individualistic social environment is the main contributor to happiness in each nation, while excessive social uncertainty and power distance are the main detractors. Overall, these cultural dimensions must be given more attention if the European Union is to have happier Member States.

Introduction

The importance of life satisfaction and happiness is becoming increasingly apparent today. Nothing proves this more than the fact that many international organisations are conducting research in this area. The Better Life Index (2025), published by the OECD, assesses the life satisfaction of the inhabitants of the Member States. Eurostat (2025) has published its Personal Well-Being indicator three times so far in 2013, 2018 and 2022 and the European Social Survey (2025) has also asked several times in recent years - although not annually - how happy the citizens of the European countries consider themselves. In this context, it is surprising that there has not yet been a study on the happiness of EU Member States in relation to their cultural dimensions. This may be due to the fact that not all EU Member States are members of the OECD (see Cyprus, Croatia, Malta, and Romania) and that neither Eurostat nor the European Social Survey carry out their surveys every year. In the last ten years, the World

Happiness Report (2025), published in cooperation with Gallup, has covered all EU Member States. However, even the World Happiness Report data have not been compared to Hofstede's data on cultural dimensions (Individualism, Indulgence, Long-term Orientation, Masculinity, Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance). As there are only a few studies in the literature individually and they are either from different perspectives (Achim et al., 2016; Hysa & Mansi, 2020; Kasman & Kasman, 2020; Androniceanu, 2022; Akgun et al., 2023;) or their research angle does not reflect the concerns of the Member States (Veenhoven, 2012; Steel et al., 2018; Mushtaq & Siddiqui, 2020; Rajkumar, 2023; Li et al., 2024), the present effort aims to fill the respective gap.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss whether happiness can be observed across nations and whether cultural dimensions can be used as an indicator of people's wellbeing. The research is aimed at identifying a possible link between cultural dimensions and happiness in the countries of the European Union. The paper presents a comparative case study in relation to Hofstede's six cultural dimensions and to the latest data provided by the World Happiness Report.

The research questions therefore focus on cultural differences as well as those related to happiness. They have been formulated in such a way as to provide an opportunity to explore the cultural dimensions that generate the strongest impact on happiness:

Q1: Do Hofstede's cultural dimensions have any influence and, if so, what is the role of each of them on the happiness of EU Member States as indicated on the World Happiness Report?

Q2: Which of Hofstede's cultural dimensions have a positive and which have a negative impact on the happiness of EU citizens?

The research seeks to answer the respective questions through the examples of 26 EU Member States. It tries to show which cultural dimensions have the greatest impact on people's happiness in the European Union. For the sake of evaluating the strength of the respective correlations the relationship between happiness and culture was analysed by using the Pearson correlation coefficient with a dual probe followed by the interpretation of the specific data. Furthermore, linear regression equations have been set up to explore the relationship between cultural dimensions and the happiness index. Followed by a theoretical overview focusing on happiness and cultural dimensions in the European Union, the author will introduce the respective research methodology, present and analyse the given results, and summarize the findings.

1. Literature review

1.1. Happiness in the European Union

Richard Easterlin has examined the relationship between happiness and GDP both among and within individual countries through time in several papers (1974, 1995, 2005). While Easterlin shows little significant evidence of a link between aggregate income and average happiness, Stevenson and Wolfers (2008) found that people living in better material circumstances also enjoy higher subjective well-being, and that the steady rise in living standards has led to higher subjective well-being. Nevertheless, other research results have supported and confirmed the existence of a paradox (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Responding to his critics, Easterlin (2017) admitted that the paradox has been confirmed leading him to conclude that if a society had to choose between GDP and happiness, it would choose the latter (Easterlin in Rojas, 2019). Kahneman and Krueger (2006) identified only one of 11 factors considered strongly correlated with life satisfaction and happiness, namely material well-being

(Kulcsár, 2020). Ng and Diener established in 2014 that a nation's GDP per capita decreases the correlation between such factors as autonomy and social support, financial satisfaction, and various subjective well-being outcomes (positive feelings, negative feelings, life evaluation). Inglehart and colleagues (Inglehart et al., 2008) found that economic growth and GDP per capita explain 50% of the differences in SWB (subjective well-being) across countries.

Regarding Gross National Happiness, in 1972, Bhutan's Fourth King declared Gross National Happiness (GNH) more important than Gross Domestic Product. (Givel, 2023, p.1). According to Veenhoven (2007 in Nath, 2018) Gross National Happiness (GNH) measures the quality of living in a country in a more holistic way (than GNP), and considers that human society undergoes beneficial development when material and spiritual growth go hand in hand, complementing and reinforcing each other. GNH is a multidimensional approach to development that seeks to achieve a harmonious balance between material well-being and the spiritual, emotional and cultural needs of society (Gross National Happiness Commission, 2015 in Givel, 2015). The Gross National Happiness Index includes nine factors: Time use, Cultural diversity and resilience, Psychological wellbeing, Community vitality, Ecological diversity and resilience, Living standards, Health, Education, Good governance (Gross National Happiness Index webpage, 2024).

According to Buttrick and Oishi (2023) the income level of a country shows correlation with its happiness. Although rich Americans still work long hours, they probably have more control over how they spend their time than poor Americans. Better quality social relationships, as well as greater opportunities to spend money on others and greater autonomy in how they use their time, may provide an overall explanation why higher incomes are associated with greater happiness. People tend not to judge their happiness in terms of absolute income, but rather compare it vertically and horizontally with others (Hu, 2023). High income can only contribute to life satisfaction, but not happiness. Income itself is important, it should not be discounted, but it is not the only criterion when making decisions (Stober, 2023). Regarding the size of the government, going below a certain threshold leads to a reduction in people's happiness (Mahmouei & Razmi, 2023). People are not happier in welfare states than in equally wealthy nations where the "caretaker fatherly state" is less accessible. Nor does happiness inequality appear to be smaller in welfare states (Veenhoven, 2000 in Veenhoven, 2020).

As for the connection between religion and happiness, religion plays an important role in Happiness as demonstrated by the rate of happiness among followers of Buddhism compared to that of other religions. Givel, (2022) and Givel, (2015) focused on especially Mahayana Buddhism, which holds that happiness and compassion come from an awareness of suffering in oneself and in others. Accordingly, education can help in eliminating the immediate distractions related to suffering. Demenech and colleagues analysed the connection between stress and happiness (Demenech et al., 2022). They showed that the happiness levels of both rich and poor respondents' decreased as stress levels increased. In their conclusion, stress plays an important role in the relationship between income and happiness. While there is some evidence that money can influence happiness, achieving and experiencing the latter appears to be highly dependent on the given individual stress level. In multivariate studies happiness was significantly independently associated with younger age, satisfaction with health, satisfaction with household income, trust in the community, satisfaction with democracy and religious belief (DiCosimo & Kelly, 2022). Bergsma, Buijt and Veenhoven (2020) concluded that a form of happiness training is advisable for individuals seeking a more satisfying life. Since happier workers tend to be more productive, organizations would be wise to provide such training programs and techniques for their employees.

The publications cited above show that happiness has been explored by many people and in many different ways. Below, the results of the most recent "happiness" research for the

EU Member States are presented. Helliwell and co-authors (Helliwell et al., 2023a) identified the following six components of the World Happiness Report: 1. Gross domestic product 2. Social support 3. Healthy Life Expectancy 4. Freedom to make Life Choices 5. Generosity 6. Perception of Corruption. The World Happiness Report 2023 looked at 155 countries and ranked them according to their happiness levels. The average scores of the World Happiness Report pertaining to the European Union between 2020 and 2022 are shown in Figure 1.
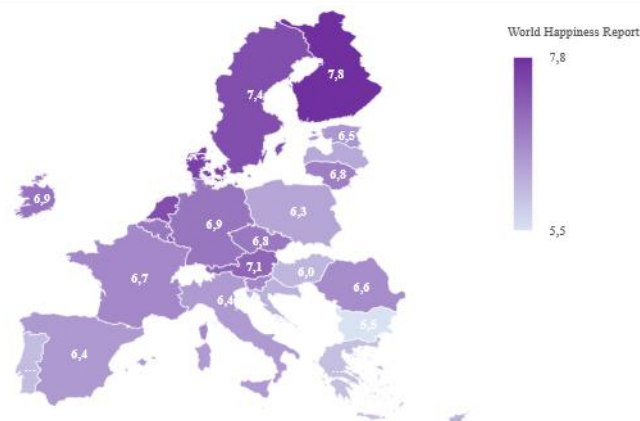
* Based on a three-year-average 2020-2022.

Figure 1. Scores of World Happiness Report pertaining to the European Union
Source: Author's own compilation by the help of the Excel program in 2024 based on database: Helliwell et al., 2023b, p.34-35.

In recent years, numerous studies have been conducted on the well-being of European Union member states. One of these studies (Achim et al., 2016) concludes that well-being is an important determinant of the shadow economy in EU countries. The impact of well-being on the shadow economy is larger in former EU member states than in new EU member states. Another study (Hysa & Mansi, 2020) shows that the relationship between education and satisfaction is stronger and more positive in the Western Balkans, but lower for the more educated in EU countries. Androniceanu, Georgescu and Sabie (2022) find that in EU countries the link between digitalization and prosperity is clear. Pełka (2019) examined whether selected European countries show similar patterns of happiness. The first and happiest group under consideration contains the core members of the European Union (e.g. Germany, United Kingdom, etc.). The second cluster is made up of the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Hungary, Poland, etc.). The third cluster includes eight countries (e.g. Portugal, Slovenia, etc.).

Contemporary cultural diversity contributes to individual life satisfaction, according to research across several European countries (Li et al., 2024). The study of Artan, Demirel, and Hayaloğlu (2022) focusing on 12 EU countries confirm the positive impact of increased trust in government concerning economic growth and well-being. Easterlin and O'Connor (2022) examined10 countries in Northern, Western, and Southern Europe and concluded that generous welfare programs are the obvious key to well-being; a research team (Akgun et al., 2023) focusing on 27 EU member states arrived at the conclusion that due to both taxes and inflation rates the current level of economic well-being is higher. They found that the level of economic outcomes is positively related to the happiness index rate (HIR), while the overall employment rate has a significant negative impact on the HIR. Another group of researchers (Degutis et al.,

2010) found that in case of EU member states the level of GDP is positively related to the level of life satisfaction. This relationship is particularly strong in Eastern European countries, but also remains positive in many rich EU countries. A study (Kasman & Kasman, 2020), also based on data from EU member states, shows that income inequality and unemployment have a significantly negative impact on well-being. A study of a representative sample of 28 European countries (Zagorski et al., 2013) shows that an increase in GDP per capita has a significant impact on subjective well-being, economic status, quality of life and health. The World Happiness Index has a significant relationship with the Charitable Aid Foundation (CAF) or Global Philanthropy Index (Mushtaq & Siddiqui, 2020, p.50). Another study emphasizes that denying or down-playing the importance of authentic positive relationships, appreciation, empathy, compassion, and acceptance, undermines important elements of well-being and is a critical issue for the human experience. A general cultural and social shift may be needed in many parts of the world to place a higher value on these elements (Spowart, 2022). One analysis investigated the reasons why Scandinavian countries ranked high in the ranking of the world's happiest countries. The results showed that the Scandinavian model is characterized by extremely well-developed social policies that provide high benefits (income redistribution), active participation of citizens in the creation of a common identity, job security, and a developed, dynamic, and vibrant civil society (Đorić, 2021).

1.2. Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the European Union

Hofstede, who is one of the most frequently quoted social scientists and who achieved the greatest results in his academic work by comparing the cultures of different nations, has created six dimensions that are culturally distinct (Hofstede, 1980, 2011, 2024; Hofstede & Minkov, 2013):
1. Power Distance: which refers to different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality.
2. Individualism versus Collectivism: this dimension refers to the integration of individuals into major groups.
3. Masculinity versus Femininity: this dimension implies a division of emotional roles between the sexes.
4. Uncertainty Avoidance: relates to the degree of stress in a society faced with an unknown future.
5. Long-term versus Short-term Orientation: relates to people's choice of focus of effort (future versus present/past).
6. Indulgence versus Restraint: it refers to the fulfillment of basic human needs for the enjoyment of life versus strict social control.

Some studies have been published that focus on Hofstede's cultural dimension related to Happiness (not only in the European Union). One of these researchers, Finuras (2020) found a significant and strong negative correlation between the Global Happiness Report country scores and the Power Distance index and a significant and strong but positive correlation between the Global Happiness Report country scores and Hofstede's Individualism index. Taras and colleagues (2010) argue that Hofstede's cultural values were most strongly linked to emotions (such as happiness), followed in order by attitudes, behaviour and work performance. According to a recent study (Elkoutour & Abboubi, 2024), although not covering EU countries, happiness at work correlates positively with Masculinity and negatively with Uncertainty Avoidance. Alparslan, Yastioglus and Tag (2021), in a study of data from 98 countries, also confirmed a negative significant relationship (-0,551) between Power Distance and World Happiness Report data, while a strong positive significant relationship (0,526) was identified between Individualism and the World Happiness Report data. Steele and colleagues (2018)

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reached similar conclusions. Overall, happier countries have lower values for Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance, but higher scores for Femininity and Individualism. Furthermore, they find that these effects are associated with political and economic institutions, but partially independent of them (Steel et al., 2018). In partial agreement with his own study, Dulababu (2017) reached the same conclusion in 2017. His study of 66 countries found that countries with individualistic cultures had higher levels of well-being than those with team-oriented cultures. He also confirmed that countries with low Power Distance cultures had higher levels of happiness than those with high Power Distance cultures. Furthermore, countries with high Uncertainty Avoidance cultures have higher levels of happiness than countries with low Uncertainty Avoidance cultures.

A study (Rajkumar, 2023) that examined the impact of Covid-19 in relation to changes in the World Happiness Report (78 countries) found that among cultural dimensions, Long-term Orientation was positively correlated with changes in subjective well-being, while Indulgence was negatively correlated with this variable. A study (1997) found the following relationships between subjective well-being (SWB) and Hofstede's dimensions: 1. lower Uncertainty Avoidance was a good predictor of higher SWB levels in a country, 2. Masculinity was positively associated with SWB in poorer countries and 3. higher SWB levels were found in countries with a higher proportion of female population. This is somewhat inconsistent with the following statements: Masculinity was consistently negatively associated with SWB indicators, but not all reached statistical significance (Steel et al., 2018). It should be noted, however, that average self-reported happiness varies considerably from country to country. These differences cannot be attributed to mere measurement bias, nor can they be explained by cultural differences in life evaluation. Rather, the observed differences in well-being indicate that not all societies are equally responsive to universal human needs (Veenhoven, 2022).

2. Methodological approach

Based on the results of the research presented in the literature review and the fact that no such research has been carried out for the Member States of the European Union, the following research questions have been formulated (as already stated in the introduction):

Q1: Do Hofstede's cultural dimensions have any impact and, if so, what is the role of each of them on the happiness of EU Member States according to the World Happiness Report?

Q2: Which of Hofstede's cultural dimensions have a positive and which a negative impact on the happiness of EU citizens?

On the basis of the above research questions, the following hypotheses have been formulated regarding the 26 Member States of the European Union:

H1: *There is a negative significant relationship between the World Happiness Report, the cultural dimensions of Masculinity, Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance.*

H2: *There is a positive significant relationship between the World Happiness Report and the cultural dimensions of Individualism, Indulgence, and Long-term Orientation.*

The present research relies primarily on secondary data sources to verify the above hypotheses, the primary reason being that such a large amount of data collection on such a large sample size of individual Member States would be beyond the scope of this study. The secondary data sources, the most recent data available for both databases, are as follows: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Database (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2015) and the World Happiness Report Database (Helliwell, 2023a, p.34-35). Table 1. shows the values of Hofstede's cultural dimension and the World Happiness Report's values for the 26 EU member states. In the case of Cyprus, such data are not available and therefore the given values are not representative of all 27 member states.

Table 1. Hofstede's cultural dimension values and the World Happiness Report's values in the 26 EU Member States*

Country**	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long-term Orientation	Indulgence	World Happiness Report (on a three-year-average 2020-2022)
Austria	11	55	79	70	60	63	7,10
Belgium	65	75	54	94	82	57	6,86
Bulgaria	70	30	40	85	69	16	5,47
Croatia	73	33	40	80	58	33	6,13
Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	70	29	6,85
Denmark	18	74	16	23	35	70	7,59
Estonia	40	60	30	60	82	16	6,46
Finland	33	63	26	59	38	57	7,80
France	68	71	43	86	63	48	6,66
Germany	35	67	66	65	83	40	6,89
Greece	60	35	57	112	45	50	5,93
Hungary	46	80	88	82	58	31	6,04
Ireland	28	70	68	35	24	65	6,91
Italy	50	76	70	75	61	30	6,41
Latvia	44	70	9	63	69	13	6,21
Lithuania	42	60	19	65	82	16	6,76
Luxembourg	40	60	50	70	64	56	7,23
Malta	56	59	47	96	47	66	6,30
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	67	68	7,40
Poland	68	60	64	93	38	29	6,26
Portugal	63	27	31	104	28	33	5,97
Romania	90	30	42	90	52	20	6,59
Slovakia	104	52	110	51	77	28	6,47***
Slovenia	71	27	19	88	49	48	6,65
Spain	57	51	42	86	48	44	6,44
Sweden	31	71	5	29	53	78	7,40
Average	52	57	46	73	58	42	6,64
Deviation	21,35	17,11	25,67	22,23	16,88	19,30	0,56

* *Note*: The highest scores are highlighted with red and the lowest scores are highlighted with blue.
** *Note*: Cyprus has a 6,13 score on the World Happiness Report scale (data according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions do not exist in case of Cyprus).
*** *Note*: Slovakia's survey information for 2022 is not available. The respective average is based on the 2020 and 2021 surveys.
Source: Author's own compilation in 2024 based on database: Hofstede & Hofstede, 2015 and Helliwell et al., 2023b, p.34-35.

The collected data was analysed and evaluated by Excel and SPSS programs in order to establish the average and the deviation of the sample. Furthermore, I relied on the Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis as well.

3. Results

This chapter presents the main findings of the research. Figure 2 presents the results of the linear regression between the cultural dimensions and the Happiness Index.
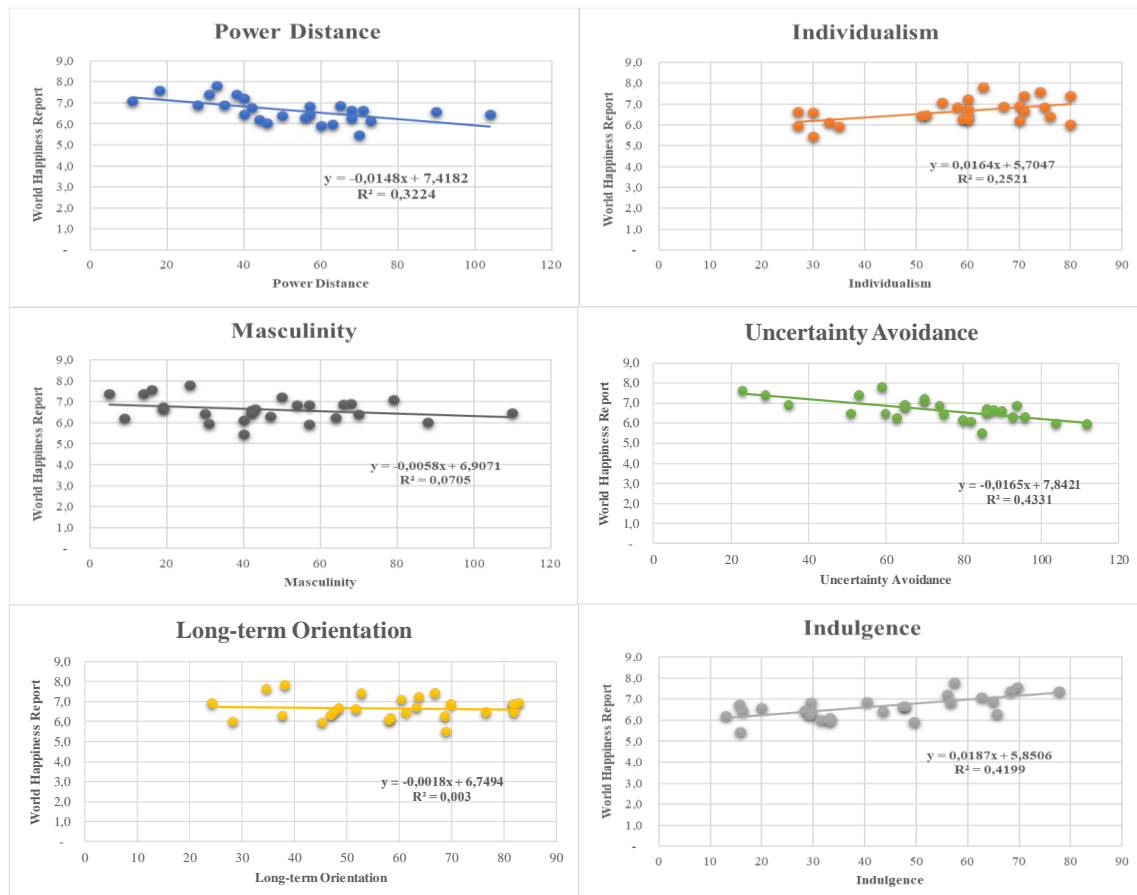
* Hofstede's cultural dimension values in 2015. The World Happiness Report's values on a three-year-average 2020-2022.

Figure 2. The results of the linear regression calculations between Hofstede's cultural dimension values and the mean values of the World Happiness Report*
Source: Author's own compilation by the help of the Excel program, 2024 based on database: Hofstede & Hofstede, 2015 and Helliwell et al., 2023b, p.34-35.

The R^2 values of the linear regression analyses show that the strongest relationship with the World Happiness Report data is formed between Uncertainty Avoidance (R^2=0,4331) and Indulgence (R^2=0,4199), while the weakest relationship is displayed in connection with Long-term Orientation (R^2=0,003).

The strongest movement or progression of the World Happiness Report with at least a one per cent significance level can be discerned along the following dimensions: Indulgence (0,645) and Individualism (0,501). In a negative direction with at least a one per cent significance level it shows close correlation with Uncertainty Avoidance (-0,659) and Power Distance (-0,568). No significant relationship was found between happiness and Masculinity (-0,265) and Long-term Orientation (-0,054). There are some closer correlations just between the dimensions of Hofstede with at least one per cent significance level: Power Distance – Uncertainty Avoidance (0,540), Power Distance – Individualism (-0,543) and Individualism – Uncertainty Avoidance (-0,528).

The values of the Pearson correlation coefficients are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Pearson correlation coefficients between Hofstede's cultural dimension values and the World Happiness Report's values in the 26 EU Member States****

		Power Distance	Indivi-dualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long-term Orientation	Indulgence	World Happiness Report
Power Distance	Pearson Correlation	1	-,543**	,265	,540**	,127	-,486*	-,568**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,004	,190	,004	,536	,012	,002
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
Individualism	Pearson Correlation	**-,543****	1	,056	-,528**	,209	,333	,501**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,004		,786	,006	,306	,096	,009
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
Masculinity	Pearson Correlation	,265	,056	1	,194	,109	-,127	-,265
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,190	,786		,341	,597	,536	,190
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
Uncertainty Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	**,540****	**-,528****	,194	1	-,025	-,332	-,659**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,004	,006	,341		,904	,097	,000
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
Long-term Orientation	Pearson Correlation	,127	,209	,109	-,025	1	-,401*	-,054
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,536	,306	,597	,904		,042	,795
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
Indulgence	Pearson Correlation	-,486*	,333	-,127	-,332	-,401*	1	,645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,012	,096	,536	,097	,042		,000
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
World Happiness Report*	Pearson Correlation	**-,568****	**,501****	-,265	**-,659****	-,054	**,645****	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,002	,009	,190	,000	,795	,000	
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*** Highlighting the highest positive (with blue) and highest negative values (with red).
**** Hofstede's cultural dimension values in 2015. The World Happiness Report's values on a three-year-average 2020-2022.

Source: Author's own compilation by the help of the SPSS and the Excel programs, 2024.

4. Discussion

In order to fully understand the impact of culture on happiness, this paper examined the Member States of the European Union in that context. One hypothesis of the study is that there is a negative significant relationship between the World Happiness Report and three cultural dimensions such as Masculinity, Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance. As the results of the statistical analyses confirmed the respective hypothesis for two dimensions and refuted it for one dimension, it was only partially accepted as no such relationship was found for the Masculinity dimension. The results of this study reveal a significant and relatively strong negative correlation between the value of Uncertainty Avoidance and the score of the World Happiness Report and between Power Distance and the score of the World Happiness Report. This means that nations that are less accepting of the unequal distribution of power and may fight against it can expect to be happier than those that are more tolerant of power imbalances. This is confirmed in the case of Power Distance by a previously mentioned study (Finuras, 2020) which also found a negative relationship for the Power Distance dimension in the World Happiness Report based on the results of a study of more than 90 countries. The same conclusion was reached by Alparslan and colleagues in 2021. Steel and colleagues (2018) also find a negative correlation for the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension beyond Power Distance, which is in line with the results of the present study. According to Dulababu (2017), countries with lower Power Distance are predisposed to higher happiness, while countries with higher

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Uncertainty Avoidance are much happier than their counterparts with lower scores, which somewhat contradicts the results of this research.

The other hypothesis of the study is that there is a positive significant relationship between the World Happiness Report and the other three cultural dimensions. As the results of the statistical analyses confirmed the hypothesis for only two dimensions and refuted it for one dimension, the hypothesis related to Individualism, Indulgence and Long-term Orientation was also only partially accepted, as no such relationship was found for the Long-term Orientation dimension. Data show a positive, and also relatively strong and significant correlation between Indulgence and the score of the World Happiness Report along with a positive relation between Individualism and the score of the World Happiness Report. This means that people can expect greater happiness in countries that focus on individual and family well-being and allow the free satisfaction of desires and feelings. For the Individualism dimension, they are also in line with the results of Finuras (2020) and confirm a positive relationship with the World Happiness Report data, as did the aforementioned Alparslan and colleagues' results (2021) in their study of 98 countries. Here, however, Steel and colleagues found a positive correlation not only for Individualism, but also for Feminism, which partially confirms the results of the present study. Dulababu's examination of 66 countries (2017) also revealed that nations with a culture of Individualism had a higher level of happiness.

However, since in this study no significant relationship was found between happiness and Masculinity and Long-term Orientation, the results suggest that there is a correlation between the happiness of each nation and the given cultural differences. Consequently, countries are happier that are less accepting of Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance, and also are more individualistic and more permissive of Indulgence. Cultural differences are, of course, not a direct cause of happiness in each country (as they depend on the factors described above), but they certainly have an impact on the well-being of their citizens. Four of Hofstede's cultural dimensions therefore show a relatively strong relationship with happiness.

5. Conclusion

This research focuses on an area that is a popular topic in many ways, namely happiness. However, from the perspective that it has just been examined, no study has yet been carried out. Although happiness is one of the most commonly used terms in relation to people's well-being, the impact of the cultural dimensions of happiness on the achievement of this goal has not yet been examined for the Member States of the European Union. The results of the present research, based on Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, provide a novel picture of the current state of the relationship between happiness and national cultures.

In order for a country's population to become a happier nation, according to Hofstede's model the following cultural conditions need to be created. First of all, there must be more room, more opportunity for individualistic aspirations to unfold and develop, which implies a *higher value of Individualism*. Secondly, there must be more permissiveness in the well-being of individuals, more importance given to and space allowed for individual freedom, friendship, the expression of instincts, which is the *advanced level of the value of Indulgence*. Thirdly, such values as tolerance of ambiguity, trust in the unknown and openness should be propagated and consolidated, which imply the reduction of *Uncertainty Avoidance*. Last but not least, fourthly, there is a need to become less accepting of unequal power sharing and more critical of excessive power seeking, which means *narrowing the Power Distance*. The ideas highlighted in italics above summarise the main messages of the paper.

Limitations of the study

The main limitation of the research is the sample size. It is not possible to draw far-reaching conclusions for only 26 EU Member States.

The study focuses on a happiness index, the World Happiness Report's Happiness Index. The inclusion of other well-being indicators (e.g. Human Development Index) or happiness indexes (e.g. Eurostat or European Social Survey happiness indicators) would reduce the limitations of the article in this respect.

A further limitation of the study is that it only examines Hofstede's six dimensions of happiness, although there are other researchers who have explored other dimensions of happiness related to cultural differences.

Further possibilities for research

It would be worth extending the sample to all countries in the world for which Hofstede's cultural dimensions and World Happiness Report data are available. The planned analyses using these data should provide a much more accurate picture of the relationship between cultural dimensions and happiness.

It would also be worthwhile to include other cultural dimensions and not just Hofstede's dimensions. They could help to extend the scope of the research, increasing its current reliability and breadth. These broadened fields of research could be based, for example, on the models of Inglehart and Welzel or Trompenaars.

Quantitative research could be complemented by qualitative research methods (e.g. interviews with intercultural professionals from the nation in question) that could confirm or refute the results of quantitative research.

Acknowledgement

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