#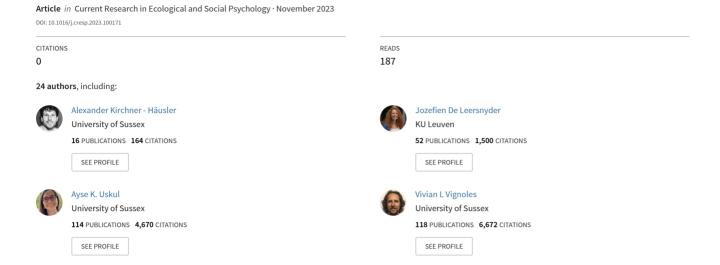 Cultural Fit of Emotions and Subjective Well-Being: Replicating Comparative Evidence and Extending it to the Mediterranean region

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Cultural fit of emotions and subjective well-being: Replicating comparative evidence and extending it to the Mediterranean region☆

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ABSTRACT

Greater "emotional fit" with one's cultural group is often associated with positive psychological and relational outcomes. However, the few empirical studies on this link have been limited to the comparison of Anglo-Western, independent, and East Asian, interdependent cultural contexts. In the current paper, we conceptually replicated findings from three studies on the link between emotional fit and well-being in Anglo-Western and East Asian contexts, using different methods and more comprehensive samples. Moreover, we expanded emotional fit research to the understudied Mediterranean region, characterized by an emphasis on "honor" and a distinct blend of independence and interdependence. We collected data from $N = 3{,}097$ participants from 12 countries and asked participants to report their emotional experience in 10 hypothetical situations and to rate their well-being in different domains. Our results largely replicated established positive links between emotional

fit and well-being in the Anglo-West and East-Asia, as i) experiencing more culturally valued emotions (from which we infer cultural fit) was linked to better general well-being; ii) actual, calculated emotional fit in relationship-focused situations predicted better relational well-being; and iii) only in East Asia calculated emotional fit in culturally central contexts predicted psychological well-being and thriving. Our exploratory analyses on the Mediterranean region showed a non-homogenous pattern: while general well-being was consistently most strongly predicted by the intensity of disengaging emotions, relational and psychological well-being were differentially predicted by calculated emotional fit in relationship-focused situations across different Mediterranean sub-regions. The current work consolidates insights into how our well-being is shaped by the interplay between culture and emotional fit and strengthens evidence that there may be 'universalism without uniformity'.

Cultural fit of emotions and subjective well-being: Replicating comparative evidence and extending it to the Mediterranean region

Remember the last time you shared your anger about your boss with a colleague, who quickly started raging with you, or that time when all your friends laughed at a joke, but you were the only one who did not consider it funny. While the former example of 'emotional fit' can make us feel good, boost our relationships, and create a sense of connectedness and social validation, the latter example of 'emotional misfit' can make us feel bad, harm our relationships with others, and create a sense that we are out-of-place. When repeated and occurring across different social situations within one's own cultural context, these experiences of high (or low) emotional fit can impact our well-being (Miyamoto et al., 2019). Yet, empirical evidence on the link between emotional fit and well-being is still scarce, rendering more research necessary to fully understand *if* and *how* emotional fit and misfit is associated with well-being.

Several past studies have established a positive link between emotional fit (i.e., experiencing emotions that match the normative pattern within a cultural group) and well-being. Specifically, individuals' higher emotional fit with their own cultural group has been linked to higher relational well-being (De Leersnyder et al., 2014), psychological well-being (Cho et al., 2018; De Leersnyder et al., 2015), somatic health (Consedine et al., 2014) and collective aspects of well-being such as collective self-esteem (Cho et al., 2018). Yet, a caveat is that most of these studies have focused on samples from North America/Western Europe and East Asia – cultural contexts that are characterized as promoting 'autonomy' or 'independence' versus 'relatedness' or 'interdependence' concerns, respectively (Kağitçibasi, 1996; Markus and Kitayama, 2010). No study so far examined the role of emotional fit in well-being in other world regions, such as the Mediterranean and Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) - regions that are thought to promote a distinct blend of both independent and interdependent concerns (Uskul et al., 2023; San Martin et al., 2018; Kağitçibasi, 1996; Vignoles et al., 2016, 2023) stemming from an emphasis on 'honor' as a core guiding principle of social life.

In the current paper, we pursued two central aims. First, we aimed to consolidate insights in the literature on culture, emotion and well-being by conceptually replicating previous findings from studies in Anglo-Western and East Asian settings that focused on the positive link between emotional fit with one's cultural group and well-being. Second, we aimed to expand the cultural space of emotional fit research to the Mediterranean region that has been largely understudied in comparative psychological science (e.g., Thalmayer et al., 2021). As we detail below, the link between emotional fit and some facets of well-being has been found to vary across both situational and cultural contexts characterized by an emphasis on either independence or interdependence. By adding cultural contexts that promote and maintain a unique blend of these cultural concerns, the current study is well-positioned to provide greater theoretical and empirical insight into the relationship between emotional fit and well-being.

Culture and emotions

Emotions are inherently social phenomena that reflect and highlight values, needs, and concerns, and help us negotiate and shape relationships with others in fulfilling and appropriate ways (Barrett, 2013; Mesquita, 2010; Parkinson, 2012). A multitude of studies that accumulated over the last three decades has demonstrated that individuals' emotional experiences are attuned to their socio-cultural context (see e.g. De Leersnyder et al., 2021; Mesquita, 2022; Tsai and Clobert, 2019 for reviews): as the most central concerns, values, and relational goals vary between cultural groups, so do the most prominent, frequent, and beneficial emotions experienced in these cultural groups. For example, socially disengaging emotions (also often called autonomy-promoting emotions), such as anger, pride, or feeling full of esteem that reflect a concern for autonomy and independence (De Leersnyder et al., 2018; Kitayama et al., 2000), tend to be experienced more frequently and intensely in Western contexts that emphasize concerns for autonomy or independence (Boiger et al., 2013, 2014; Kitayama et al., 2006). In contrast, socially engaging emotions (also often called relatedness-promoting emotions), such as shame, closeness, and friendly feelings that reflect a concern for relatedness and interdependence with others, tend to be experienced more frequently and intensely in East Asian contexts that emphasize concerns for relatedness or interdependence. There is thus systematic cultural variation in emotional experience such that people experience the emotions in line with their culture's central concerns more frequently and intensely.

Furthermore, people's *patterns* of emotional experience – i.e. how they feel across a set of emotion items in particular types of situations – also vary systematically across cultural groups: people tend to experience patterns of emotions that show a higher similarity or 'fit' with their own culture's normative (average) pattern of emotions than with those of another culture. Specifically, two studies (De Leersnyder et al., 2020) that compared the patterns of emotional experience for specific types of situations across European American and Korean samples (Study 1) and across Belgian and Turkish samples (Study 2) found that individuals' patterns of emotion correlated more strongly with the normative patterns of their *own* cultural group than with those of the other cultural group. Thus, people within a specific socio-cultural context tend to not only experience emotions that are congruent with their culture's central concern for independence or interdependence (which we denote as 'inferred cultural fit') – but also tend to show fit with their own culture's normative patterns of emotion (which we denote as' actual, calculated cultural fit' as explained below).

Emotional fit and well-being

In line with the idea of emotions reflecting and supporting cultural ways of being, it has been proposed that fitting in relatively more with one's emotional environment should help individuals successfully navigate the central demands and tasks of their culture (e.g., Miyamoto et al., 2019) and thus be linked to better psychological and social outcomes or 'well-being'. Within the domain of well-being, several sub-facets have been identified and validated across the world, such as physical well-being (i.e., physical pain, need for medication etc.),

psychological well-being (i.e., positive self-regard, no depressive feelings etc.), relational well-being (i.e., satisfaction with social relationships, social support etc.), and environmental well-being (i.e., safety of one's neighborhood, having sufficient financial means, etc.) (Skevington et al., 2004; The WHOQOL Group, 1995); facets that are often assumed to reflect 'general well-being'. In addition, the concept of 'subjective well-being' is often used to refer to one's general mood (Eid and Diener, 2004) or positive feelings (i.e., happy, calm, etc.) in a specific situation (e.g., Kitayama et al., 2006).

Subjective well-being and two facets of well-being – relational and psychological well-being – have been theorized to be associated with people's emotional fit with culture. Specifically, it has been argued that increased similarity in emotional experience may stand for a shared evaluation of events (shared appraisals) and a shared intention to act (shared action tendencies), which may foster positive interpersonal interactions and coordinated action (e.g., van Kleef and Fischer, 2016), feelings of belonging (Hogg and Terry, 2000), and an increased understanding of others' and their own behavior (Edwards and Cable, 2009) – processes that may result in higher relationship satisfaction and social support and thus higher relational well-being. Moreover, emotional fit with one's cultural group may result in a higher sense of social validation or 'shared reality' (Higgins, 2016) as well as in lower stress (Dressler, 2012), which are feelings that either boost one's self-esteem and self-satisfaction or decreases depressive feelings and thus plays a role in shaping psychological well-being. All of the processes mentioned here may also result in more general positive feelings in a particular moment and fit may thus boost subjective well-being as well.

In line with this theoretical reasoning, a number of studies have empirically supported the positive link between emotional fit and these different facets of well-being (Cho et al., 2018; Consedine et al., 2014; De Leersnyder et al., 2014, 2015; Kitayama et al., 2006). For example, focusing on the alignment between specific types of emotions and cultural concerns, Kitayama et al. (2006) asked European American and Japanese college students to report on their past emotional experiences by rating a number of specific and general emotion items in a series of specific situations. The authors focused on the extent to which well-being was a function of those emotions that reflected and supported the respective cultural concerns of interdependence and independence in the two countries, which we consider 'inferred cultural fit' as the similarity or alignment was inferred rather than calculated. They found that participants' situational subjective well-being (as measured by general positive emotions of happy, calm, and elated) was most strongly predicted by the extent to which they had experienced the emotion type that best aligned with their culture's central concerns. Specifically, participants' general positive emotions were most strongly and positively linked to positive disengaging emotions (such as pride and superiority that highlight autonomy or independence) in the U.S., yet to positive engaging emotions (such as closeness and friendly feelings that highlight relatedness or interdependence) in Japan.

Furthermore, and focusing on actual, calculated fit between an individual's and a culture's normative patterns of emotion, De Leersnyder et al. (2014) found that relational well-being was higher if individuals showed higher emotional fit with their cultural group (calculated as the correlation of individual emotion profiles with the cultural average profile) in those situations that highlighted interpersonal relationship. This finding held across European American, Korean, and Belgian samples, and even after controlling for a general well-being index. For the same cultural groups, these authors also found that higher emotional fit predicted greater psychological well-being (e.g., absence of depressive thoughts, satisfaction with self), but only in those situations that allowed for the realization of the culture's most central concerns (De Leersnyder et al., 2015). Specifically, European American's psychological well-being was positively linked to emotional fit in situations that promoted autonomy and independence at work, while Korean's psychological well-being was positively linked to emotional fit in situations that promoted relatedness and interdependence in family contexts.

These latter findings again held true after controlling for a general well-being index and hint at a pattern of "universalism without uniformity" in which emotional fit with one's cultural group is more likely to be linked to psychological well-being if it occurs in those (culturally varying) situations that afford one to be a good cultural member.

In sum, there are good theoretical arguments and growing empirical support to lay the grounds to predict a positive association between individuals' emotional fit with culture and several facets of well-being, particularly in those situations that highlight culturally central concerns. As shown above, growing support for this idea comes from both research that provides inferring fit by studying the emotion types that match central cultural concerns or not, as well as from studies calculating actual fit in patterns of emotion by correlating individual and normative patterns of emotion in specific situations. Yet, research on emotional fit has almost exclusively drawn upon samples from Western and East Asian cultural regions and has largely overlooked other world regions that may represent different cultural models and systems (Krys et al., 2022; Uskul et al., 2023; Vignoles et al., 2016). In the current research we therefore aimed to expand the cultural space of emotional fit research to the Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean and MENA regional context

The cultural contexts along the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea span three different continents: Europe (e.g., Italy, Greece), (North) Africa (e.g., Morocco, Egypt) and Asia (e.g., Turkey, Lebanon), with the latter two groups making up the Middle East and North African (MENA) region. Throughout history, different parts of the Mediterranean region have been intricately connected via ancient trade routes and the Persian, Hellenistic, Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Arab and Ottoman empires, each leaving their stamp on this region in a myriad of ways and shaping today's cultural composition of the Mediterranean peoples. Against this background, it may be no surprise that anthropologists and cultural psychologists have identified both distinct and shared cultural meanings, practices and associated psychological tendencies across different groups in this region. One cultural concern generally assumed to be shared between different cultural groups in the Mediterranean region is the strong concern for 'honor' (Mosquera et al., 2002; Peristiany, 1966).

Honor has been characterized as "the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of society" (Pitt-Rivers, 1965, p. 21). It represents the idea that the worth of a person in honor contexts stems from both individual (i.e., their self-view and personal traits) as well as relational sources (i.e., their reputation in the eyes of others; Leung and Cohen, 2011). In order to claim honor, individuals have to exhibit certain positive personal characteristics (e.g., strength, morality, esteem for oneself), but also closely monitor their social reputation and conform to socially prescribed norms and behaviors ("the honor code", e.g., defending oneself against insults, protecting family reputation). As such, honor is a competitive social resource that has to be actively claimed by a person, but also something that is granted to a person through the respect of others and can be easily lost if one fails to live up to societal expectations (Uskul et al., 2012).

This distinct emphasis on both the individual and its personal image as well as relationships and the social image has often been taken as a defining aspect of contexts with high concerns for honor (Cross et al., 2014; Leung and Cohen, 2011; San Martin et al., 2018). Hence, these cultural groups are thought to be associated with a combined emphasis on independence/autonomy as well as interdependence/relatedness, distinct from both Western cultural contexts (that primarily emphasize an individual's autonomy and independence from others) and East-Asian cultural contexts (that primarily emphasize relatedness and interdependence with others). In support of this idea, Uskul et al. (2023) have recently found that, across a variety of implicit and explicit social orientation measures (including the data from the current study), participants from eight cultural groups recruited from the Mediterranean region generally showed stronger independence than did participants

from Anglo-Western and East Asian regions, but *also* greater interdependence than both groups on a few particular culturally meaningful dimensions (e.g., relatedness with family, closeness to groups). Similarly, in a large cross-national study on cultural differences in self-construal, participants from Middle Eastern countries showed a greater emphasis on self-reliance and consistency compared to those from other global regions, but also on connection to others (particularly with family) and harmony (Vignoles et al., 2016).

Another line of research also found that Mediterranean countries consistently showed a distinct pattern of emotional experience that may reflect this unique focus on both independence and interdependence. In contrast to interpersonal situations in Japan that were found to promote shame and thus help protect relatedness, interpersonal situations in Turkey were found to promote both anger (a disengaging, autonomy-promoting emotion) *and* shame (an engaging, relatedness-promoting emotion) which together may help defend and deserve honor (Boiger et al., 2014). Likewise, in contrast to individuals from Northern United States (a context that is mainly concerned about autonomy/independence and dignity) who mainly experienced anger in situations that threaten one's reputation or social image and honor-oriented identity, individuals from Turkey (a context that is characterized by honor concerns that foster a unique blend of independence and interdependence) were found to experience anger *and* helplessness in response to these situations (Cross et al., 2014). Moreover, while individuals from contexts that emphasize concerns for autonomy or independence typically consider threats to the self as being associated with stronger emotional responses than threats directed to one's relationships with close others or ingroups, people from cultures that emphasize honor view honor-relevant situations as having equally strong emotional consequences for both themselves and their family (Mosquera et al., 2002; Uskul et al., 2014). Thus, both self- and relationship goals and thus both concerns for autonomy/independence and relatedness/interdependence may play an important role in the emotional experiences of groups where a culture of honor prevails.

These initial observations concerning the Mediterranean region present an interesting case-in-point for testing and expanding previous insights into the link between emotional fit and well-being to this part of the world. Specifically, the unique emphasis in honor contexts on both autonomy and relatedness allows us to test if culturally diverging patterns may occur in (i) the predictive strength of socially engaging and disengaging emotions for subjective well-being as compared to Western or East Asian contexts (Kitayama et al., 2006), and (ii) in the situational contexts (e.g., individual vs. relationship-focused situations) in which calculated emotional fit may be most relevant for psychological well-being (De Leersnyder et al., 2015).

The present study

The main goal of the current study was to contribute to our understanding of the link between individuals' emotional fit with their cultural environment and their well-being in two different ways. First, in a set of *confirmatory analyses*, we conceptually replicated (Crandall and Sherman, 2016) findings related to the links between different facets of well-being and both the experience of valued emotions from which we can infer cultural fit (using the same measurement tool as the original article by Kitayama et al. (2006)) and calculated fit between an individual's and one's culture's normative patterns of emotion (De Leersnyder et al., 2014, 2015; using a different measurement tool, but the same analytical approach), drawing on samples from similar cultural regions as the original studies (the U.K. and the U.S. from the Anglo-Western region, and South Korea and Japan from the East Asian region). Second, in a set of *exploratory analyses*, we expanded the cultural space of emotional fit research by collecting data from eight countries from the Mediterranean region. We conducted all analyses using data from a large-scale, cross-national study (see Uskul et al., 2023) as part of which participants were asked to report their emotional experience of 12 emotions across a variety of situations that varied in terms of both valence and the cultural concern they highlight most (autonomy versus relatedness). All hypotheses and analyses were preregistered in an independent repository on OSF (https://tinyurl.com/3jynrjk5), and we outline any deviations from the preregistration in more detail in the supplementary materials.

Our **first confirmatory hypothesis (H1)** concerned the link between subjective well-being and culturally valued emotions (as a measure of inferred cultural fit). As a conceptual replication of Kitayama et al. (2006), we expected that higher levels of situational subjective well-being (i.e., mean of happy, calm, elated) and general well-being (i.e., the average satisfaction across life domains) will be most strongly associated by the experience of culturally valued emotions. Specifically, we hypothesized that in Anglo-Western contexts that are commonly characterized by concerns for autonomy and independence, situational and general well-being would be positively predicted by both positive disengaging and positive engaging emotions, but that this association would be stronger for positive disengaging than for positive engaging emotions. We expected this to be the case both when tested using measures at the situational level (**H1a**, linking the intensity of emotion types in a situation to subjective well-being in the situation) and at the person-level (**H1b**, linking the averaged emotional intensity across all situations to a general well-being index). In contrast, we predicted that in East Asian contexts (commonly characterized by concerns for relatedness and interdependence) subjective and general well-being would also be positively associated with both positive disengaging and positive engaging emotions, but that this association would be stronger for positive engaging than for positive disengaging emotions. Again, we expected this to be the case both when tested using measures at the situational level (**H1c**) and at the person-level (**H1d**).

Our **second confirmatory hypothesis (H2)** focused on how emotional fit with one's cultural group would be associated with relational well-being particularly in situations that highlight relationships, as emotions are relational constructs that support relationships in culturally appropriate ways (Mesquita, 2003). As a conceptual replication of De Leersnyder et al. (2014), we expected that in both Anglo-Western (**H2a**) and East Asian (**H2b**) contexts calculated fit (i.e., Fischer-transformed profile correlation) between one's individual and one's own culture's normative pattern of emotions in relationship-focused situations would be associated with greater relational well-being, but that cultural emotional fit in other, non-relationship-focused situations would be not. Since we measured relational well-being at the person level (and not at the situational level), we tested this hypothesis at the person level only.

Finally, our **third confirmatory hypothesis (H3)** concerned the link between cultural emotional fit and psychological well-being and thriving in those situations that allow for the realization of the most central cultural mandate (i.e., autonomy/independence and/or relatedness/interdependence). As a conceptual replication of De Leersnyder et al. (2015), we predicted that calculated fit with the normative emotion pattern of one's cultural group would be linked to better psychological well-being particularly if the fit occurred in culturally central situations. Specifically, we expected that in Anglo-Western contexts better psychological well-being would be predicted by higher levels of cultural emotional fit in situations that highlight the individual and its autonomy (**H3a**). In contrast, we expected that in East Asian contexts better psychological well-being would be predicted by higher levels of cultural emotional fit in situations that highlight social relationships and relatedness (**H3b**). Again, as we measured psychological well-being at the person level, we tested this hypothesis at this level only.

In addition to these confirmatory analyses in Anglo-Western and East Asian contexts, we further explored the same three hypotheses in our sample of Mediterranean countries. Due to the exploratory nature of these analyses, we did not make or preregister any specific predictions involving the samples from this region.

Material and methods

Participants

We recruited 4956 participants from twelve data collection sites located in the Anglo-Western (the U.S., the U.K.), the East Asian (South Korea, Japan), and the Mediterranean and MENA regions (Cyprus [Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities], Egypt, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Spain, Turkey). The data were part of a larger project designed to examine cultural group differences in social orientation and cognitive style in the Mediterranean (see Uskul et al., 2023 for more information). In each site, we aimed for a sample of at least 100 male and 100 female participants; we reached this target for all sites except Egypt, Lebanon, and Northern Cyprus (see Table 1; final sample: 55.25 % female).

Recruitment took place primarily through the subject pools of collaborating institutions. Participants were eligible to participate if they were 18 years or older, were born in the country of data collection, and had lived in the country of data collection for more than half of their lives. In addition, for our final analyses we only included participants who self-identified as a member of the country's majority ethnic group (e.g., White British in the UK) and as either male or female (to allow for any robust gender comparisons), and who passed all four attention checks in the questionnaire. These decisions left us with $N = 3097$ participants in our final dataset. Participants were in their early twenties on average ($M_{Age} = 21.45$, $SD = 4.36$, $Min = 18$, $Max = 71$)[1] and reported their socioeconomic status to be slightly higher than the average of their society ($M_{SES} = 6.05$, $SD = 1.40$; on a scale of $0 = Bottom$ [of society] to $10 = Top$ [of society]).

Procedure

Data collection took place between December 2019 and February 2021 and was completed by participants either on their personal computer (81.05 %) or on a computer in a lab (18.95 %). After giving consent, participants completed a series of tasks. Depending on the data collection site, participants were compensated with course credit or monetary compensation, had the choice to make a financial contribution in their name to a COVID-related charity, or entered a raffle for vouchers from local online vendors (the value of all compensation methods was kept approximately equal across countries).

Measures

All tasks were completed in the official language of the respective country. We first compiled or generated materials and instructions in English, and then translated them into the other languages (Arabic, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Turkish) following a team translation approach (Survey Research Center, 2016). For all measures, we only calculated aggregate or scale values if more than half of the necessary items or situations had been answered by a participant.

Emotional experience

We used a shorter version of the *Implicit Social Orientation Questionnaire* (ISOQ; Kitayama et al., 2006; short version from 2009) to assess participants' emotional experiences across a variety of situational contexts. Participants were asked to read 10 prompts describing situations commonly experienced in daily life (e.g., *you thought about your physical appearance, you had a positive interaction with friends*); these situations were selected to be very general and commonly experienced situations one may encounter regardless of the specific cultural context (Kitayama et al., 2006). For each situation, participants were asked to recall the last time they experienced the escribed situation and to rate how much they experienced twelve different emotions at the time of the situation ($1 = $ not at all to $6 = $ very strongly). The list of emotions included in the task varied in their affective valence (positive vs. negative) and in their social engagement (socially engaging vs. socially disengaging, respectively) (Kitayama et al., 2006): "feelings of closeness with others" and "friendly feelings" (*positive engaging*), "ashamed" and "guilty" (*negative engaging*), "proud" and "self-esteem" (*positive disengaging*), and "frustration" and "angry" (*negative disengaging*). Every situation also included a set of three generally positive (elated, happy, calm) and one negative (unhappy) emotions to assess participants' situational subjective well-being as well as valence of the situation.[2]

We checked all situations for potential signs that participants may not have experienced a particular situation. Less than 1 % of all situations ($n = 134$) were left unanswered by participants. A further $n = 14$ situations showed no variation in emotion ratings and no sensible answer to the included question "Approximately how many days ago was the last time this episode happened?" We therefore excluded these cases from all of our analyses (leaving us with $n = 30,822$ situations for any situation-level analyses).

To validate these emotion dimensions in our own data and test the structure for invariance across our regional contexts, we conducted a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis. We assigned our set of countries into three regional groups (*Anglo-West*: the U.K., the U.S.; *Mediterranean and MENA region*: Egypt, Greece, Greek Cypriot Community, Italy, Lebanon, Spain, Turkey, Turkish Cypriot Community; *East Asia*: Japan, South Korea), and modeled the described, previously validated factor structure at the level of situations (where the meaning of emotions should be most defined), while simultaneously accounting for the nesting of situations within individuals. We tested invariance in two steps: first, we fit a *constrained model*, in which the loadings and intercepts of all items were constrained to be equal across all three groups; second, we fit an *unconstrained model* in which item loadings and intercepts were set free to vary across all three groups. Next, we compared the fit between the two models. We found that the constrained model fit the data well ($CFI = 0.957$, $TLI = 0.943$, $SRMR = 0.044$, $RMSEA = 0.060$) and that an unconstrained model did not provide any substantial increase in model fit ($CFI = 0.959$, $TLI = 0.943$, $SRMR = 0.044$, $RMSEA = 0.060$), suggesting scalar invariance of our situational item structure across regions. *Spearman Brown coefficients* (SBC) indicated that the scale reliabilities were adequate for the four relational emotion factors ($SBC_{PositiveRelatednessPromoting}$: 0.84; $SBC_{PositiveAutonomyPromoting}$: 0.76; $SBC_{NegativeRelatednessPromoting}$: 0.70; $SBC_{NegativeAutonomyPromoting}$: 0.85) as well as the general positive emotion factor (*Cronbach's Alpha* = 0.86; for region-specific estimates please refer to the supplementary materials).

In preparation for the analyses to test H2 and H3, we also categorized the 10 situations of the ISOQ task into relationship-focused, individual-

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[1] As our sample included some older students, we exploratorily conducted a series of analyses testing whether participants who fell outside the interval of 2 standard deviations of the respective country mean age ($N = 121$, or 3.91% of our sample). We found that these cases showed no differences to the rest of the sample on any of our variables of interest with the exception of higher levels of positive engaging ($M_{OlderStudents} = 3.92$, $M_{Rest} = 3.71$, $p < .001$) and positive disengaging emotions ($M_{OlderStudents} = 3.78$, $M_{Rest} = 3.58$, $p < .05$). However, the effect sizes for these differences were very small (*partial* $\eta2_{Engaging} = .004$; *partial* $\eta2_{Disengaging} = .002$) and excluding these cases from the relevant analyses for H1 and H2 did not change the pattern of results. We therefore decided to retain these cases in our analyses.

[2] These general emotion items have been previously included and used as measures of situational well-being (e.g., Kitayama et al., 2000, 2006, 2009). In contrast to the other emotions, these were intentionally selected to "[…] not specify any particular social orientation" (Kitayama et al., 2006, p. 893). As such, they represent more general indicators of well-being, reflecting the idea that positive feelings indicate whether a situation is "helpful or harmful, rewarding or threatening, calling for acceptance or rejection in relation to us" (Barrett et al., 2007, p. 377), or, in other words, how well a situation aligns with our current needs and goals (a fundamental component of well-being).

Table 1

Overview over Data Collection Sites and Recruitment Information.

Country	Men	Women	Age	SES	Language	Institution	Compensation
Cyprus (North)	45	110	24.23 (9.03)	6.40 (1.31)	Turkish	Eastern Mediterranean University	Course Credit, Raffle
Cyprus (South)	103	214	20.89 (2.36)	6.04 (1.19)	Greek	University of Cyprus	Course Credit, Raffle
Egypt	95	110	20.73 (1.56)	6.44 (1.31)	Arabic	British University of Egypt	Donation to Charity
Greece	284	196	23.14 (6.07)	6.04 (1.21)	Greek	University of Crete	Course Credit
Italy	112	135	22.76 (4.07)	5.90 (1.39)	Italian	University of Chieti-Pescara	Course Credit
Japan	105	114	20.47 (1.93)	6.11 (1.48)	Japanese	Kyoto University	Course Credit
Korea	105	101	22.40 (2.82)	6.19 (1.68)	Korean	Sogang University	Course Credit
Lebanon	96	165	19.14 (1.63)	6.70 (1.41)	English	American University of Beirut	Course Credit
Spain	124	116	22.53 (6.02)	5.72 (1.47)	Spanish	University of Granada	Course Credit
Turkey	111	241	20.80 (1.59)	5.64 (1.29)	Turkish	Bolu Abant Izzet Baysal University, Ordu University, Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University	Course Credit
United Kingdom	103	104	20.25 (2.03)	5.60 (1.39)	English	University of Kent	Course Credit
United States	103	105	19.58 (3.32)	6.21 (1.44)	English	Iowa State University	Course Credit
Total	1386	1711	21.45 (4.36)	6.05 (1.40)	–	–	–

focused, and non-specific situations (using the same categorization across all regions in our analyses). We categorized situations as *relationship-focused* if engaging emotions were rated as significantly above average for the sample as well as significantly higher than disengaging emotions ("you had a positive interaction with friends", "you had a good interaction with a family member", "something good happened to a family member of yours"), whereas we categorized situations as *individual-focused* if disengaging emotions were rated as significantly above average for the sample as well as significantly higher than engaging emotions ("you thought about your physical appearance", "you got ill or injured", "you were caught in a traffic jam", "you were overloaded with work", "you had a problem with a family member"); finally, we categorized situations for which both emotion groups were rated as below average as *non-specific situations* ("you read a novel or book", "you watched TV or listened to music").

Emotional fit

In addition to the experience of positive engaging and disengaging emotions, we also calculated for each situation a participant's emotional fit with their own cultural group using their emotion ratings in the ISOQ task. Following guidelines by De Leersnyder (2017), for every participant and for each situation separately, we calculated the level of emotional fit as the correlation between a participant's own emotion ratings of all eight engaging and disengaging emotions in a situation and the culture's normative pattern of emotions that consists of the averaged ratings of the same eight emotions across all other participants from the same cultural group in the same situation. To avoid artificial inflation of the correlations, we each time excluded the participants' own responses from the average normative pattern. To receive robust estimates of emotional fit, we calculated emotional fit only if a participant rated the intensity of all eight emotions and showed variation in their responses (i. e., not all emotions were rated at the same intensity; Carlier et al., 2023); where these conditions were not met, we assigned the participant a missing value for that situation. Moreover, since profile correlations capture similarity in the overall shape of the two emotional patterns, extremely low scores usually indicate that participants did not rate an emotional situation that corresponds to the prompt. A common rule of thumb is to consider all situations with an emotional fit score below two standard deviations of the average emotional fit in that situation as

situations for which the understanding or reading may have failed (Jasini et al., 2019). For this reason, we removed these situations from the data (6.12 %). In preparation for our regression analyses, we fisher-z-standardized the resulting emotional fit scores (De Leersnyder, 2017).

Well-being

At the person-level, we assessed well-being in two ways: First, we used the *Domain Evaluations Scale* as proposed by the OECD Guidelines on Measuring Well-Being (OECD, 2013). This scale represents well-being as a multi-dimensional construct, and participants rated their satisfaction for nine domains of their lives (*standard of living, health, what one is achieving in life, personal relationships, how safe one feels, feeling part of one's community, future security, amount of time one has to do the things that one likes doing, and the quality of one's local environment [*e.g., *pollution, green spaces]*) .[3] Second, we also included an additional item that asked participants how satisfied they were with their "life as a whole". Both the OECD and the single item were all rated using a 10-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 = *not at all* to 10 = *completely satisfied*).

To replicate the analyses of relevant past studies we created four measures of well-being for the separate hypotheses to most closely approximate the measures that were previously used. For our replication of Kitayama et al. (2006), we used the general positive emotion items as captured by the ISOQ (elated, happy, calm) as an index of *situational subjective well-being* at the situational level (H1a and H1c), and used the average across both all life satisfaction domains (excluding "quality of your local environment", as we deemed this unlikely to be meaningfully related to emotional experience) and the single item measure of life (*N* = 10 items; *Cronbach's Alpha* = 0.85) as an index of *general well-being* at

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[3] The original scale included an additional domain related to "job satisfaction". We did not include this item in the data collection of the current study as our target population was students.

the person level (H1b and H1d).[4] For our replication of De Leersnyder et al. (2014), we used the average across the satisfaction ratings of the two domains explicitly related to social relationships ("*personal relationships*", "*feeling part of one's community*"; *Spearman Brown coefficient* = 0.63) as an index of *relational well-being* (H2a and H2b). Finally, for our replication of De Leersnyder et al. (2015), we used the average across the satisfaction ratings for domains related to psychological well-being and thriving ("*what you are achieving in life*", "*how safe you feel*", "*your future security*", "*the amount of time you have to do the things that you like doing*"; $\alpha = 0.70$) as an index of psychological well-being (H3a and H3b). All three well-being measures showed high levels of factorial similarity across Western, Mediterranean, and East Asian region groups (all Tucker's Phi > 0.991).

Results

Analytic strategy

All analyses were conducted with RStudio (v4.0.3; R Core Team, 2014). As outlined in the introduction we tested H1 at both the situational and person level, and H2 and H3 at the person-level. We included socioeconomic status, gender, and age as covariates in all our models. Unless otherwise mentioned, categorical variables were all dummy-coded for regression analyses, and we obtained all regression coefficients by re-coding the respective reference groups (Hayes, 2017). We tested differences in predictor strength within regions using the *multcomp* package (Hothorn et al., 2008). For all analyses, we grouped our samples into five larger regional groups (*Anglo-West*: the U.K., the U.S.; *Latin Europe*: Spain, Italy; *Southeastern Europe*: Greece, Greek Cypriot Community; *MENA*: Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkish Cypriot Community; *East Asia*: South Korea, Japan) based on shared socio-historical characteristics (see Mensah and Chen, 2013), thus treating Mediterranean and MENA regions as three distinct subregions.

Hypothesis 1: culturally valued emotions and well-being

Our first confirmatory hypothesis was related to the idea that higher levels of culturally valued emotions predict higher levels of subjective well-being as measured at both the situational and personal levels (as a conceptual replication of Kitayama et al., 2006)

Situation-level analyses (H1a and H1c)

To test our hypotheses at the situation-level, we conducted a multi-level model (nesting situations within participants), with our measure of general positive emotions as the dependent variable (i.e., situational measure of subjective well-being), and positive disengaging emotions and positive engaging emotions as predictors. Furthermore, for each predictor we also included interactions with cultural region and included random intercepts to account for non-independence of observations.

Results supported hypotheses H1a and H1c (see Table 2): For Anglo-Western samples, both positive disengaging and positive engaging emotions predicted situational well-being; yet positive disengaging emotions (which highlight autonomy and independence) were a significantly stronger predictor compared to positive engaging emotions. In contrast, for East Asian countries both positive engaging and

positive disengaging emotions predicted situational well-being, but positive engaging emotions (which highlight relatedness and interdependence) were a significantly stronger predictor than disengaging emotions.

For Latin European, Southeast European, and MENA regions we found a pattern more similar to Anglo-Western samples: both positive engaging and positive disengaging emotions predicted situational well-being, but positive disengaging emotions were as a significantly stronger predictor than positive engaging emotions. Notably, the three Mediterranean regions showed the weaker predictive strength of positive engaging emotions than Anglo-Western and East Asian regions (with MENA countries as the weakest group), but also showed stronger predictive strength of positive disengaging emotions than Anglo-Western and East Asian regions (except for Latin European countries, which did not differ from Anglo-Western countries).

Person-level analyses (H1b and H1d)

To test our hypotheses at the person-level, we averaged levels of positive engaging and disengaging emotions for each participant across all situations (only if at least 6 situations had been answered). We then conducted a multiple regression model that included our general well-being measure for each individual as the outcome, and the average levels of positive engaging and disengaging emotions as well as their interactions with cultural region as predictors.

Results supported H1b (see Table 3): For Anglo-Western samples only positive disengaging emotions predicted general well-being significantly, whereas positive engaging emotions did not; the difference in the strength of prediction between the two emotion groups was marginally significant. Yet, results did not support H1d: For East Asian samples, both positive engaging and disengaging emotions predicted general well-being positively, but although positive engaging emotions emerged as a stronger predictor than positive disengaging emotions, the difference was not significant.

As before, for most Mediterranean regions we found a pattern that was more similar to Anglo-Western samples: positive disengaging emotions were a stronger predictor of general well-being than engaging emotions. This was particularly the case for Southeastern European and MENA samples: in these regions, positive engaging emotions were among the weakest and positive disengaging emotions among the strongest predictors out of all regions, and the difference between the two was found to be significantly different. However, Latin European samples were somewhat weaker in this tendency and relatively more similar to the pattern of East Asian samples: here, positive engaging emotions also predicted well-being positively and significantly (and stronger than in Southeastern and MENA samples), and did not differ to positive disengaging emotions in their predictive strength.

Hypothesis 2: emotional fit in relationship-focused situations and relational well-being

Our second confirmatory hypothesis was related to previous work showing that experiencing a culturally fitting "blend" of emotions in situations that highlight relationships is linked to better relational well-being (as a conceptual replication of De Leersnyder et al., 2014)

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[4] We decided to construct general well-being as an average across life domains and the single item measure since a) an exploratory PCA suggested a one-factor solution across all 10 original domains as a well-fitting solution, b) an average across the 8 included life domains (excluding "quality of your local environment") correlated highly with our single item assessment of overall life satisfaction ($r = .74$, $p < .001$), and c) our general well-being measure showed good reliability. We thus believe that this measure adequately reflects general well-being both on a methodological and conceptual level.

Table 2

Regression coefficients for positive engaging and positive disengaging emotions and situational well-being (situation-level).

	Positive engaging emotions					Positive disengaging emotions						
				ß: 95 % - CI					ß: 95 % - CI		Difference test	
Region	b	t	β	LL	UL	b	t	β	LL	UL	z	p
Anglo-West	0.42_a	34.62***	0.45	0.42	0.47	0.48_a	32.80***	0.47	0.44	0.50	−2.15	.032*
Latin Europe	0.37_b	35.74***	0.39	0.37	0.41	0.50_{ab}	42.08***	0.49	0.47	0.52	−6.7	< 0.001***
Southeastern Europe	0.38_b	44.85***	0.41	0.39	0.42	0.60_c	66.39***	0.59	0.57	0.61	−13.5	< 0.001***
MENA	0.34_c	46.17***	0.36	0.34	0.37	0.53_b	67.09***	0.52	0.50	0.53	−13.6	< 0.001***
East-Asia	0.59_d	49.84***	0.63	0.60	0.65	0.35_d	25.11***	0.35	0.32	0.38	10.2	< 0.001***

Note. Presented are the unstandardized and standardized regression estimates for positive engaging and positive disengaging emotions, obtained from the multilevel regression models at the situation-level. Subscripts denote between-region comparisons (by column); estimates that do not share a subscript are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$, subscripts in brackets indicate a marginally significant difference at $p < .065$.

Table 3

Regression coefficients for positive engaging and positive disengaging emotions and general well-being (person-level).

	Positive engaging emotions					Positive disengaging emotions						
				ß: 95 % - CI					ß: 95 % - CI		Difference Test	
Region	b	t	β	LL	UL	b	t	β	LL	UL	z	p
Anglo-West	0.04_{abc}	0.25	0.02	−0.15	0.19	0.71_{ab}	4.11***	0.34	0.18	0.51	−1.94	.053
Latin Europe	0.42_b	3.65***	0.19	0.09	0.29	0.60_{ab}	5.24***	0.29	0.18	0.40	−0.86	.390
Southeastern Europe	0.06_a	0.68	0.03	−0.05	0.10	0.75_{ab}	8.96***	0.36	0.28	0.44	−4.53	< 0.001***
MENA	$0.11_{a(c)}$	1.45	0.05	−0.02	0.12	0.78_b	10.21***	0.38	0.31	0.45	−4.82	< 0.001***
East-Asia	0.48_{bc}	2.70**	0.22	0.06	0.37	0.41_a	2.74**	0.20	0.06	0.34	0.24	.810

Note. Presented are the unstandardized and standardized regression estimates for positive engaging and positive disengaging emotions, obtained from the multiple regression models at the person-level. Subscripts denote between-region comparisons (by column); estimates that do not share a subscript are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$, subscripts in brackets indicate a marginally significant difference at $p < .065$.

To test our hypotheses, we first calculated for each participant their average level of emotional fit for relationship-focused situations[5] as well as the remaining situations, separately (only if an emotional fit index was available for least 2, 3, and 2 situations, respectively). We then conducted a multiple regression model that included participants' relational well-being as the dependent variable, and the average levels of emotional fit in relationship-focused and non-relationship-focused situations as predictors, including their respective interactions with cultural region. In line with the original work we also included an index of non-relational well-being (as the average across all seven remaining domain items) as a control variable in all our analyses.[6]

Results supported both H2a and H2b (see Table 4): Emotional fit in relationship-focused situations predicted relational well-being positively in all five cultural regions, whereas fit in non-relationship-focused situations did not predict relational well-being in any cultural region. No between-region differences emerged in the predictive strength of either

predictor. The difference in predictive strength between emotional fit in relationship-focused situations and in non-relationship-focused situations was significantly different only in Latin Europe and the Middle East, but not in the three remaining regions.

Hypothesis 3: emotional fit in culturally central situations and psychological well-being

Our final set of confirmatory hypotheses aimed to test previous findings that better psychological well-being is linked to fitting in emotionally with one's own culture in those situations that allow for the realization of central cultural mandates (i.e., autonomy in the West and relatedness in the East; as a conceptual replication of De Leersnyder et al., 2015).

To test our hypotheses, we first averaged for each participant their levels of emotional fit across relationship-focused situations, individual-focused situations, and non-specific situations, separately. We then conducted a multiple regression model that included our measure of participants' psychological well-being as the outcome and the three emotional fit measures as predictors, including their interactions with cultural region. In line with the original work, we also controlled for non-psychological well-being (as the average across the remaining five relational, environmental, and physical domains) in our analysis.[7]

Results supported H3b (see Table 5): For East Asian samples, fit in relationship-focused situations predicted psychological well-being positively (and more strongly than in all other regions); this was not

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[5] As our current categorization of relationship-focused situations contained only situations of positive valence, we conducted a series of post-hoc robustness analyses in which we used an alternative categorization of situations based on theoretical considerations. This alternative categorization differed from the current categorization by categorizing the situation "*you had a problem with a family member*" as a relationship-focused instead of a non-relationship-focused situation. We found that the pattern of results was largely consistent: Emotional fit in relationship-focused situations still predicted relational well-being positively all cultural regions except East Asia ($b = 0.35$, $t = 1.50$, $p = .134$), and fit in non-relationship-focused situations did not predict relational well-being significantly in any cultural region (but showed a marginally significant positive relationship in Southeastern Europe, $b = 0.47$, $t = 1.87$, $p = .061$).

[6] The overall pattern of results was largely the same if the covariate was not included: Fit in relationship-focused situations still predicted higher relational wellbeing in all regions, whereas fit in non-relational situations largely did not. The only change in the link between fit and wellbeing was that for the MENA region the negative effect of fit in non-relationship-focused situations now became significant ($b = -0.93$, $p = .002$).

[7] Not controlling for the covariate lead to a few changes in the specific link between fit and wellbeing for each region. Firstly, fit in relationship-focused situations now predicted psychological well-being also in Latin-Europe ($b = 0.61$, $p = .003$) and Southeastern Europe ($b = 0.57$, $p < .001$). Secondly, fit in individual-focused situations now predicted psychological well-being negatively in the Anglo-Western ($b = -0.76$, $p = .022$), Latin European ($b = -0.63$, $p = .028$), and MENA regions ($b = -1.11$, $p < .001$). Finally, fit in non-specific situations now predicted psychological well-being marginally positively in the Anglo-Western region ($b = 0.53$, $p = .054$).

Table 4

Regression coefficients for emotional fit in relationship-focused and non-relationship-focused situations (person-level) and relational well-being.

| Region | Fit in Relationship-Focused Situations | | | | | Fit in Non-Relationship-Focused Situations | | | | | Difference Test | |
| | b | t | β | β: 95 % - CI | | b | t | β | β: 95 % - CI | | z | p |
				LL	UL				LL	UL		
Anglo-West	0.91$_a$	4.32***	0.21	0.12	0.31	0.29$_a$	0.81	0.03	−0.05	0.12	1.37	.170
Latin Europe	0.63$_a$	3.65***	0.15	0.07	0.23	−0.25$_a$	−0.71	−0.03	−0.11	0.05	2.16	.030*
Southeastern Europe	0.49$_a$	4.33***	0.12	0.06	0.17	0.34$_a$	1.35	0.04	−0.02	0.10	0.51	.610
MENA	0.49$_a$	4.13***	0.11	0.06	0.17	−0.12$_a$	−0.50	−0.01	−0.07	0.04	1.78	.052
East-Asia	0.54$_a$	2.95**	0.13	0.04	0.32	0.02$_a$	0.06	0.00	−0.07	0.08	1.18	.240

Note. Presented are the unstandardized and standardized regression estimates for fit in relationship-focused and in non-relationship-focused situations, obtained from the multiple regression models at the person-level. Subscripts denote between-region comparisons (by column); estimates that do not share a subscript are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$, subscripts in brackets indicate a marginally significant difference at $p < .065$.

the case for any of the other cultural samples except the MENA region. However, results did not support H3a: For Anglo-Western samples (and all other samples as well) fit in individual-focused or non-specific situations did not predict psychological well-being.[8]

For the Mediterranean regions we again found some variation in the pattern of results: For Latin Europe and Southeastern Europe, emotional fit in either relationship- or individual-focused situations did not predict psychological well-being. However, for the MENA region emotional fit in relationship-focused situations positively predicted psychological well-being, even though this effect was only significantly stronger compared to the Anglo-Western region. Finally, only in East Asia and the MENA region did the difference in the predictive strength between fit in relationship-focused situations and fit in individual-focused situations reach significance; no significant differences between the two predictors emerged in the remaining regions.

Discussion

A central, yet often implicit tenet of cultural psychology, is that it is functional and beneficial for members of a cultural group to embody the psychological tendencies that are shared by others in their group (Kitayama and Markus, 2000; Shweder, 1991). Within the domain of emotion, fitting in emotionally with one's social environment has thus been assumed to be linked to positive psychological outcomes (e.g., Miyamoto et al., 2019). Evidence accumulated over the past few decades to demonstrate that people's emotional fit with their cultural group is indeed positively associated with different facets of well-being (e.g., Cho et al., 2018). In the current study we sought to conceptually replicate a series of past findings on the association between emotional fit and well-being observed in Anglo-Western and East Asian samples (i.e., De Leersnyder et al., 2014, 2015; Kitayama et al., 2006) using different measures and sample populations. Furthermore, we also explored this link in the Mediterranean region, a largely understudied cultural context in psychological research with a distinct focus on "honor" as a guiding principle in social life that creates a unique blend of independence and interdependence concerns (e.g., Uskul et al., 2023; Vignoles et al., 2016). Taken together, the current work contributes to the ongoing consolidation of insights into how people's well-being is co-shaped by the interplay between culture and emotional fit and the globalization of psychological science.

Emotional fit and well-being: a (mostly) successful replication attempt

Our study conceptually replicated a series of past findings on the positive link between emotional fit and well-being previously observed in Anglo-Western and East Asian samples. Firstly, fully replicating previous findings by Kitayama et al. (2006), we found that, at the situational level, subjective well-being (as measured by general positive emotions) was more strongly predicted by those emotion types that fit culturally central concerns: in Anglo-Western samples, situational well-being was more strongly predicted by positive disengaging emotions that highlight autonomy and independence (e.g., pride) than positive engaging emotions that highlight relatedness and interdependence (e.g., closeness) (H1a), whereas the opposite was true for the East Asian samples (H1c). At the personal level, we partially replicated this pattern of findings. As expected, general well-being was only predicted by positive disengaging emotions in the Anglo-Western samples (H1b), but by both positive disengaging and engaging emotions (and not just the latter) in the East Asian samples (H1d). Both sets of analyses focused on the intensity of particular culturally valued types of emotions (with positive disengaging emotions being in line with the Western mandate for autonomy and independence, and positive engaging emotions being in line with the East Asian mandate for relatedness and interdependence) and also explicitly contrasted the strength of their associations with situational and general well-being. Therefore, we can conclude that the intensity with which people experience emotion types that most closely fit their culture's central mandates – i.e., inferred cultural fit – is (most) positively linked to their well-being, both within and across various situations in everyday life.

Secondly, our study also provided support for past findings that looked at the link between different person-level facets of well-being (i.e., relational well-being and psychological well-being and thriving, respectively) and calculated (rather than inferred) emotional fit on the basis of profile correlations between an individuals and a culture's normative *patterns* of emotion (rather than specific types of emotions) (De Leersnyder et al., 2014, 2015). Specifically, we found that in both Anglo-Western and East Asian samples greater emotional fit in relationship-focused situations predicted better relational well-being but fit in non-relationship-focused situations did not (supporting H2a and H2b). Yet, we only partially replicated findings by De Leersnyder et al. (2015) on psychological well-being and thriving: While, as predicted, fit in relationship-focused situations that touch upon central relatedness concerns in East-Asian contexts predicted better psychological well-being in East Asian samples (supporting H3b), fit in individual-focused situations that touch upon central autonomy concerns in Western contexts did not predict better psychological well-being in Anglo-Western samples (contradicting H3a).

One explanation for this deviation from the original results may be the difference in which emotional experience was assessed. De Leersnyder et al. (2015) used the *Emotional Patterns Questionnaire* (EPQ; De Leersnyder et al., 2011), which allows to specifically sample different situational contexts for more targeted comparisons (i.e.,

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[8] We again conducted a series of post-hoc robustness analyses in which we used the alternative categorization of situations as outlined in footnote 2. In these post-hoc robustness analyses the pattern of results for H3 remained largely unchanged, with the exception that for Anglo-Western samples fit in individual-focused situations ($b = -0.53$, $t = -2.24$, $p = .025$) now predicted psychological thriving negatively.

Table 5

Regression coefficients for emotional fit in relationship-focused, individual-focused, and non-specific situations (person-level) and psychological well-being and thriving.

| Region | Fit in Relationship-Focused (RF) Situations | | | | | Fit in Individual-Focused (IF) Situations | | | | | Fit in Non-Specific (NS) Situations | | | | | Difference Tests | | | | | |
| | | | | B 95% - CI | | | | | B 95% - CI | | | | | B 95% - CI | | RF vs IF | | RF vs NS | | IF vs NS | |
	b	t	β	LL	UL	b	t	β	LL	UL	b	t	β	LL	UL	t	p	t	p	t	p
Anglo-West	−0.28a	−1.33	−0.08	−0.19	0.04	−0.46a	−1.81	−0.08	−0.16	0.01	0.21a	0.99	0.05	−0.05	0.15	0.54	.590	−1.4	.160	−2.16	.031*
Latin Europe	0.02ab	0.12	0.01	−0.08	0.09	−0.30a	−1.35	−0.05	−0.12	0.02	0.09a	0.53	0.02	−0.06	0.10	1.17	.240	−0.27	.790	−1.48	.140
Southeastern Europe	0.05ab	0.45	0.01	−0.05	0.07	−0.20a	−1.12	−0.03	−0.09	0.03	0.18a	1.54	0.05	−0.01	0.10	1.18	.240	−0.69	.490	−1.84	.065
MENA	0.31bc	2.99**	0.08	0.03	0.14	−0.23a	−1.32	−0.04	−0.10	0.02	0.07a	0.59	0.02	−0.04	0.08	2.49	.013*	1.25	.210	−1.46	.140
East-Asia	0.66c	3.95***	0.18	0.09	0.27	−0.18a	−0.71	−0.03	−0.11	0.05	−0.03a	−0.17	−0.01	−0.09	0.08	2.63	.009**	2.35	.019*	−0.47	.64

Note. Presented are the unstandardized and standardized regression estimates for fit in relationship-focused, individual-focused, and non-specific situations, obtained from multiple regression models at the person-level. Subscripts denote between-region comparisons (by column); estimates that do not share a subscript are significantly different from each other at $p < .05$, subscripts in brackets indicate a marginally significant difference at $p < .065$.

relationship-focused vs. autonomy-focused situations, work vs. home), whereas the situation vignettes in the ISOQ of the current study were generated to cover a wide variety of common daily emotion stimuli (Kitayama et al., 2006) and not to provide balanced comparisons across different types of situational contexts (Kitayama et al., 2006). Also, while the EPQ balances positive and negative situations, our bottom-up categorization approach resulted in a somewhat mixed classification of ISOQ situations, in which relationship-focused situations were also positive, and most individual-focused situations were negative in valence. This may have particularly impacted the lack of a positive association between individual-focused fit and psychological well-being and thriving in H3: individual-focused situations were exclusively negative in valence and may have particularly touched upon aspects (e. g., injury, work overload) that may have threatened aspects of psychological well-being (e.g., safety, time to do the things that one likes doing), leading emotional fit to have a stronger link to negative disengaging emotions. In a follow-up analysis we indeed found that emotional fit in individual-focused situations was mostly strongly related to negative disengaging emotions for both Anglo-Western ($r = 0.46$, $p < .01$) and East-Asian participants ($r = 0.38$, $p < .01$), but negatively to all other emotion groups. Taken together, while the ISOQ may thus have succeeded in representing relationship-focused situations with family members or other close ones that allow to realize the central cultural mandate for relatedness/interdependence, it may have failed to adequately represent autonomy-promoting situations at work that allow for the realization of the cultural mandate for autonomy and independence, which are thought to be crucial to people's well-being in Anglo-Western contexts.

Overall, however, the current study suggests that past findings on the positive link between emotional fit and well-being appear robust across various measures, fit indices (i.e., theoretically inferred fitting emotion groups and calculated fit with normative emotional patterns), multiple facets of well-being and different Anglo-Western and East Asian samples.

Beyond East-West: putting the Mediterranean on the map in emotional fit research

In the current work we extended previous findings on emotional fit and well-being to the Mediterranean and MENA regions, which have been described as fostering a cultural logic of honor (Peristiany, 1966) and as emphasizing elements related to both independence and interdependence (Uskul, 2023).

We found that individuals from this region showed distinct patterns of associations between emotional fit and well-being compared to those from traditionally studied Western and East Asian regions. Specifically, our results for H1 showed that situational and general well-being in these regions was more strongly linked to positive disengaging emotions that highlight autonomy and independence (such as feeling proud or high self-esteem) than to engaging emotions that highlight relatedness and interdependence (such as feeling close or friendly); at the situational level, this pattern of findings was even more pronounced than in the Anglo-Western region that highly emphasizes autonomy/independence. These findings align with recent evidence that suggests that honor contexts around the Mediterranean may exhibit a generally independent social orientation, but also emphasize facets of relatedness (Uskul et al., 2023). They may also not be surprising from an honor framework in that high pride and high self-esteem may help signal to others independence, autonomy, and self-respect to communicate that one is not to be messed with, an important message for others to be aware of in honor-promoting cultural contexts (Cohen et al., 1996). Similarly, the importance of disengaging emotions in such cultural contexts has also been demonstrated (somewhat indirectly) in research that has shown that individuals who strongly endorse honor values or concerns tend to engage in behaviors (e.g., avoiding seeking help, taking risks) that can help them project strength and toughness (for a review, see e.g., Uskul et al., 2023). Interestingly, our pattern of results for H1 differ from

results obtained in a similar study by San Martin et al. (2018): using the ISOQ with samples from Lebanon and Saudi Arabia the authors found a stronger association between subjective well-being and engaging than disengaging emotions. While our study drew upon a slightly larger sample size, future research is needed to synthesize findings from different studies conducted in the Mediterranean and provide reliable insights into the specific functions disengaging emotions serve in individuals' general well-being in this region.

In addition, our analyses on the link between relational and psychological well-being and calculated emotional fit with normative cultural patterns in different types of situations also highlighted both cultural similarities and differences. Specifically, fit in relationship-focused situations positively predicted *relational* well-being to the same extent in Mediterranean and MENA regions as in Anglo-Western or East-Asian regions (H2), suggesting that this link may be a candidate to be a 'functional universal' (Norenzayan and Heine, 2005). At the same time, we found that emotional fit predicted *psychological* well-being only in the MENA region (but not in the Latin European or Southeastern European regions) and more specifically, only fit in relationship-focused situations - a pattern most similar to the East Asian region. We can only speculate about the lack of effects for the other subregions, but the fact that we did not find any effects for individual-focused situations in our analyses of H3 may, just like for Anglo-Western samples, somewhat be linked to the selection of situations: the situations that clustered as relationship-focused in our categorization were all positive, whereas the situations that clustered as individual-focused were all negative. This separation in valence may thus not have allowed for the effects of fit to manifest in our analyses as the expected important individual-focused situations are probably those that foster the culturally valued positive autonomy-promoting emotions of pride and self-esteem. However, these sub-regional specific findings may highlight the psychological diversity within the Mediterranean and MENA-regions, thereby advocating to be cautious to subsume these regions as a uniform, homogenous cultural context - a plea also made by (newer) research showing that these regions appear to show distinct patterns of endorsement of cultural values (e.g., honor values and concerns, Vignoles et al., 2023).

Limitations and future directions

Our findings should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. First, while it is tempting to interpret our results as implying that higher emotional fit with one's culture leads to higher well-being, they remain cross-sectional and more research is needed to uncover the exact direction and mechanisms underlying the observed link. In fact, it may also be possible that higher well-being (also) provides individuals with more resources to emotionally learn and attune to their environment (cfr. cultural norm hypothesis; Chentsova-Dutton et al., 2010). Similarly, while emotional fit can be theoretically expected to provide benefits through various processes (e.g., via increased feelings of belonging, via social coordination, via fostering a sense of a shared reality), little work has specifically tested these mechanisms, let alone in interaction with the cultural contexts. For example, feelings of similarity may be a stronger driver of the link between emotional fit and well-being in interdependent cultures that tend to be characterized by a prevention-focus, whereas social coordination may be more important in honor contexts in which one's reputation is so dependent on the actions of all members of one's family. Future research should thus not only study the (mediating) processes underlying the link between emotional fit with one's cultural group and well-being, but should also carefully select these potential processes in light of the particular cultural context. Further testing in different regions identified as 'honor cultures' (e.g., Southern US) would also be needed to see if similar patterns as those in the current paper are observed there as well.

Second, and in addition to the limitations on situational sampling outlined earlier, our choice of the ISOQ to assess emotional experience is limited to the self-report of emotional experience. Yet, emotional fit may

also be linked to well-being through other components of emotion, such as emotional expression (Consedine et al., 2014) or physiological processes (Cho et al., 2018). Future research should therefore further extend our replication and cultural extension to the other potentially relevant modalities of emotions to provide a more comprehensive picture of the link between emotional fit and well-being. Similarly, given the situation recall methodology used in the ISOQ our analyses and findings are naturally limited to the types and range of situations included in the task; while the current range has been selected to be general and include common experiences in daily life, future research should explore how different types of situations – varying across valence and also specifically emphasizing autonomy or honor concerns – may further shape our insights into the link between emotional fit and well-being.

Finally, in line with our efforts to conceptually replicate previous work on emotional fit and well-being, we followed the respective articles and did not further explore potential gender differences in emotional fit or its link to well-being. While we controlled for gender in all of our analyses on emotional fit and well-being, the frequent, normative, and functional emotional patterns themselves may differ systematically between genders in line with socio-cultural expectations and practices regarding gender roles (Fischer and Manstead, 2000). The cultural emotional "average" may thus represent different comparisons points for people identifying as different genders. This may be a particularly fruitful avenue for research aiming to further generalize our findings in honor cultures, as honor and the honor code have been found to emphasize different expectations and behaviors for men and women in these contexts (Rodriguez Mosquera, 2011). Future research should thus more systematically incorporate gender into its exploration of fit, by for example calculating fit separately for gender groups (see e.g., Kirchner-Häusler et al., 2022) and by exploring gender effects in its link with well-being.

Conclusion

People's emotional experiences are attuned to the socio-cultural context that they inhabit, and recent cultural psychological research has provided first evidence that showing higher inferred or calculated emotional fit with one's cultural group is positively associated with various facets of well-being. By employing data from 12 countries around the world, the current study not only conceptually replicated central findings from this literature that focused on Anglo-Western and East Asian samples, but also extended our knowledge of this link to the understudied Mediterranean region. Specifically, at both the situational and personal level, we found a robust positive link between subjective and general well-being and the intensity of the culturally most valued types of emotions (i.e., inferred cultural fit): positive disengaging emotions (such as pride) were linked to more well-being in samples from both Anglo-Western and Mediterranean regions, whereas positive engaging emotions (such as closeness) were linked to greater wellbeing in the East Asian region. Moreover, while we found a comparable link between people's relational well-being and their calculated emotional fit with their cultural groups' normative pattern of emotions in relationship-focused situations, meaningful cultural differences were found for psychological well-being that was, across regions, predicted to different extents and by fit in different types of situations. Overall, the current work establishes the link between emotional fit with one's cultural group and various facets of well-being as robust across different types of measures, operationalizations of fit, and samples across the world.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

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Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:10.1016/j.cresp.2023.100171.

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