Research Article

What Pre-school Children Think about Happiness, Hope, Gratitude, Wisdom, Justice, and Optimism? The Positive Conceptual Thinking Development Study

Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić[1] and Ana Babić Šikić[2]

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore how pre-school children define and understand positive psychology concepts such as happiness, wisdom, hope, justice, gratitude, and optimism. The research included 100 children (4-7 years old) in Croatia. After receiving consent from parents, an individual structured interview with children was applied. Qualitative and quantitative methodology was used in data processing. It was found that children had the most comprehensive definitions of happiness, but defined the concept of justice the least. Furthermore, although the concept of gratitude recorded the highest answer frequency, the concept of happiness in relation to gratitude was accurately defined. Gratitude was followed by hope, justice, wisdom, and optimism. Boys gave significantly more answers considering happiness, wisdom, justice, and optimism, while older children offered significantly more answers considering the concept of happiness.

Keywords

Concept development, positive psychology, and pre-school children.

[1]Kindergarten "Gold fish", Žuknica 1a, 51221 Kostrena, Croatia
[2]University of Rijeka, University Avenue 6, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia,

Corresponding Author: Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić, Educational Sciences Department, Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka, University of Rijeka, University Avenue 6, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia: Tel: +385 51 265 830
Email: sanjatv@uniri.hr

The basic idea of positive psychology, a scientific psychological discipline, is that it offers people an answer not only to the solution of certain psychological difficulties but also an answer related to improving the quality of life even when there are no such difficulties (Seligman, 1998). Starting from this idea, it moves the focus of its research from difficulties such as anxiety and depression to happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and the other similar positive concepts, while simultaneously systematically discovering new areas of its application, such as the field of education (Seligman et al., 2009). The introduction of Positive Psychology as a university course at the study program of Early and Pre-school Education at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka six years ago has given pre-school teachers the opportunity to recognize the principles of positive psychology in their work with children. This introduction also encourages and nurtures the development of positive states, emotions, and thinking in pre-school children by their pre-school teachers (Tatalović Vorkapić & Vujičić, 2013).

The National Curriculum for Early and Pre-school Education in Croatia (2014) emphasizes that early and pre-school institutions are, besides children's parents, responsible for the development of positive characteristics, conditions, and relationships so that children could become competent members of a society and responsible for their own thinking processes, behavior, and self-actualization. This also refers to the prevention of depression. Positive conditions and pleasant experiences should prevail in the children's feelings and generally within their emotional state, because they are essential for the development of competence, autonomy, and health. On the other hand, the specific societal and cultural contexts are more than important in the overall child development. Therefore, the practitioners and researchers should be aware of the significant role of the new educational paradigm that was influenced by the development of neuroscience, the changed image of the child's competence, and complex family and societal changes (overworked parents, divorced spouses, and reduced number of social interactions). Having in mind the overall contemporary changes in the world that strongly influence children's well-being, it is very important to explore children's development of positive concepts such as happiness, hope, gratitude, justice, wisdom, and optimism. Even though there are numerous concepts from various sub-fields of positive psychology, this study is aimed on at least one representative from each field of positive psychology, as follows: happiness from the field of positive state and well-being; hope and optimism from the field of positive thinking; wisdom and justice from the wide filed of human virtues; and gratitude from the field of positive relationships. Finally, it is of utmost significance to use the "Child-Centered" approach in research (Thoilliez, 2011), so that the methodology of asking children about their own perceptions regarding the named concepts is applied in this study.

Exploring the Development of Positive Concepts in Childhood

The main contribution of this research is the fact that there is a lack of similar research in our country, but also abroad, with regards to how pre-school children understand some of the basic concepts of positive psychology. Positive psychology, which includes emotional states, opinions, and positive emotions of a child, is certainly one of the essential elements of education of pre-school children. The introduction of some basic principles of positive psychology in the process of children's education results in higher levels of activity and resolves any inconsistencies or problems, allows consideration of a situation from different perspectives and develops flexibility and better cognitive

functioning (Linley & Joseph, 2004). The terms happiness, hope, optimism, wisdom, justice, and gratitude have a great applicability in different aspects of work in preschool institutions. Elements of positive psychology can be used in everyday work with children through various workshops, projects and similar activities, among pre-school teachers in terms of increasing positivity (communication, support, cooperation, motivation) and parents as the primary models of positive behavior (characteristics, thinking, motivation) (Tatalović Vorkapić & Vujičić, 2013). This approach allows children a better understanding of personal behavior, emotions and thoughts and stimulates the child's growth and development into a positive and healthy personality. Various studies have clearly demonstrated that when we listen to how children define and understand positive concepts, such as happiness, hope, optimism, wisdom, justice and gratitude (Thoilliez, 2011; Navarro, Lee, Jiménez & Cañamares, 2017; Exenberger, Banzer, Christy, Höfer & Juen, 2018), we have the original information about their subjective well-being as the crucial part of their psychological health. At the same time, early childhood practitioners could be provided with the tool to create a more quality design of their work with children.

Conceptual Thinking in Pre-School Children

Even though this study has its background mainly in positive psychology with regards to the positivity of explored concepts (happiness, wisdom, hope, justice, gratitude, and optimism), it is crucial to mention the field of conceptual thinking development since children's understanding of these concepts is determined by the level of their cognitive development. It is well known that Jean Piaget has done tremendous work and contribution to understanding of children cognitive development. His four developmental stages within children's cognitive development clearly describe specific characteristics in the children's thinking. Since his efforts, many developmental scientists assumed that children know only what they perceive and what they do, i.e., they have perceptual categories and sensorimotor schemas about things but they do not have concepts about those same things (Quinn & Eimas, 1986). However, children's conceptual system develops by the end of the sensorimotor stage even though there has been no explanation how this actually happens (Mandler, 1992b). Therefore, Mandler (1992b) proposed how sensorimotor routines are transformed into concepts. Her theory was established to answer the questions what the format of children's concept representation is and what it looks like. In the attempt to answer these questions, she explored the perceptual analysis, which modifies the perceptual information into clear meaning to children (Mandler, 1988, 1991, 1992a). She determined that when children create that meaning, they create the basis for postulating their conceptual system and related concepts. She presented a concept of image-schemas as those early children's meanings. In her research work, she described in detail how these image-schemas provide a solid basis for creating concepts (Mandler, 1992b). On the other hand, even though cognitive development researchers have explored conceptual thinking in preschool children, there is a lack of research about the development of positive concepts in childhood, such as happiness, hope, gratitude, justice, wisdom, and optimism (Ress & Dinisman, 2015).

Happiness as a Positive State

Happiness or the subjective, hedonic benefit, is also interpreted as an affective component of subjective well being, while life satisfaction represents the cognitive evaluation of life filled with positive emotions (Myers & Diener, 1995). Many psychologists define happiness as a feeling that life is enjoyable, fulfilling, and meaningful. Emotional development of pre-school children is very specific and as such has a very characteristic connection with happiness. The child's emotions are short-lived and quickly exchanged, spontaneous, and expressed openly, which makes his or her environment aware of how the child feels (Berk, 2008). This is similar to the manner in which happiness is experienced. During their emotional maturation children require help from adults to become aware of their emotions, needs and internal states, to learn how to express their emotions, recognize and share them with others, gain experience with expressing emotions in a variety of ways, understand emotional answers and learn that it is possible to choose a way of expressing them. Expressing emotions helps children to show and signal their needs to the environment as well as to enter a diverse and rich social interaction (Vasta, Haith & Miller, 2005). The preschooler learns all the aforementioned through classical and respondent conditioning and models observation.

Hope and Optimism as Two Forms of Positive Thinking

Within the framework of the theory of hope, Snyder (2000) explains that hope consists of two components: the ability to plan paths to the desired goal, regardless of the possible obstacles, and the motivation to use these paths. Hope is defined as the cognitive, emotional, and motivational attitude towards the future (Rijavec & Miljković, 2006) and it occurs when we know exactly what we want; we create different ways to make this happen, think about our own abilities and are convinced that our efforts will enable, in addition to good mood, the realization of the initial target. Snyder (2000) believes that hope is not genetically conditioned but is fully acquired by thinking about the set goal. By thinking about the ways to approach the goal, the child learns about the causes and consequences under the influence of the environment and by thinking about the means he or she understands that they are exactly the causes of various events in his or her life. Hopeful thinking in children is formed around the age of two, which coincides with the developmental stages according to Erikson's developmental theory (according to Vasta, Haith & Miller, 2005). Research shows that the development of hope in children depends on the child's relationship with his or her parents or guardians (Shorey et al., 2003) and that various traumatic events that the child experiences in his or her childhood, such as the loss of a parent, significantly reduce hope.

Research on optimism is conducted by differentiating between dispositional optimism and optimism as an explanatory style. Dispositional optimism represents a personal opinion about the future; that we will experience more positive than negative situations (Scheier & Carver, 1985; 1994). Optimism refers to a personality trait that indicates positive expectations of one's own future. Seligman (1998) believes that optimism is not a personality trait but an explanatory style that involves the ways in which people explain the causes of different events in their lives. The basic elements of explanation are duration, range, and personalization (Rijavec, Miljković & Brdar, 2008). The environment in which a child grows up has the most important role in the development and formation of positive thinking as an important indicator of the child's proper growth and

development. The climate in which the child grows up should be positive with consistent support and development of democratic relations towards the child (Snyder, 2002; Jackson et al., 2005). Both the dispositional and explanatory styles are genetically inherited (less than 50%), but the environment plays a significant role in the development. The child acquires optimism through his/her parents as models; therefore, an early experience of optimistic behavior is an important factor in the child's development. This significant correlation is empirically determined (Pavlic & Tatalović Vorkapić, 2015). Development of optimism in a child depends on the parents' mental abilities, their presentation of optimism and pessimism, and the level of encouraging and rewarding optimism (Rijavec, Miljković & Brdar, 2008).

Justice and Wisdom as Properties of Positive Character

In contemporary literature, the most empirically validated and described classifications of human strength and positive qualities are: Gallup's strengths' classification (Rath, 2007), Classification of Character's strengths and virtues (VIA-Values in Action; Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and Classification of Search Institute's 40 developmental assets (Benson et al., 1998). The VIA Classification identifies six groups of fundamental virtues which correspond to all cultures and different times throughout history. These are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, moderation, and transcendence. Quality character or personality includes the functionality of all these virtues in the field of positive psychology. According to the VIA Classification, justice involves the relationship of the individual to the social environment and the foundation of human strength to live in a healthy community; it includes the power of integrity and morality, social responsibility and leadership skills (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Honesty is a consequence of an individual' moral judgment of what is morally good or bad and morally prescribed. Moral judgment is partly related to justice and partly to the care and concern for others. It indicates the understanding of what we should and should not do, what is ethically good and what is bad. Research on the children's moral development includes an investigation of moral behavior and moral reasoning, which are described in details in the context of Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development (according to Berk, 2008).

According to the authors of the VIA Classification, Peterson and Seligman (2004), wisdom and knowledge are the first forces and virtues that involve acquiring and using knowledge. In the same classification, wisdom combines creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective (noticing the broader picture), and giving wise advice. Even though there are three main definition categories of wisdom, it could be stated that wise people are those who know how to determine what matters most to them in life and who can figure out ways to make it happen (Brown & Greene, 2006). A wise person uses his or her intelligence for the common good and is able to create a balance between personal interests and the interests of the society. The first precondition for the encouragement and development of wise qualities of the child is to provide a multitude of positive experiences and experiences in general starting from an early age. Preschool children learn through imitation but also from their own experiences, both positive and less positive, which they use for a better understanding of certain situations or lessons. Adults have the task to encourage children to control and express different emotional states in a socially acceptable manner; to

encourage thinking about the cause-and-effect relationships through games and spontaneous situational experiences; to educate them so that they are happy with less tangible but more human and spiritual values; and to help a child to achieve his or her goals with their constant support without giving up so that they could become happy and satisfied adults. Glück and associates (2012) have conducted research on a sample of 461 children aged six to ten years. The research included children from two schools in the rural part of Austria and the goal was to examine what children think about wisdom, how they understand wisdom and how age affects the formation of opinions and defining the term wisdom. The results showed that 70% of children are familiar with the concept of wisdom. They became familiarized with it through books, television shows or movies, and conversations within family members. It is also interesting to note that children are mostly oriented toward some external indicators of wisdom such as agility or care for others. All children mentioned the social aspect of wisdom, while the research showed that older children also mentioned the intellectual part of wisdom, more than the younger ones. It can be concluded that, in defining wisdom, children pay little attention to the internal understanding of wisdom (one's own opinion, problem-solving skills, experience-based knowledge), which has led the psychologists to believe that the reason for this is the lack of cognitive maturity of children aged six to ten years.

Gratitude as a Positive Relationship

Gratitude as a positive relationship and the basis of a successful lifelong functioning is defined as a feeling that appears among individuals when they realize they have received something positive, good or nice from another person (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). In other words, individuals perceive the intention of the person who has given them something and now they feel thankful. According to research (Fitzgerald, 1998), gratitude implies a part of the process in which self-destructive emotions are turned into more positive ones that allow individual recovery. Gratitude as a useful experience consists of three components: a pleasant feeling of respect, good wishes directed towards a person or a thing, an event and the intention of an individual to give back by doing something positive. Gratitude is a feature in the behavior of an individual that is fully taught and environmentally conditioned. As a feeling, it is encouraged in the kind of environment that is emotionally positive for the child. Therefore, as it is the case with justice, hope, and optimism, gratitude is also developed according to the theory of social learning. Adults, through their own example and through encouragement in specific situations significantly affect the development of gratitude among children. From an early age, the child needs to raise his or her awareness of the importance and necessity of grateful thinking because this enhances the level of optimistic behavior, positive image, and success in children. It is also necessary to encourage the child to engage in a direct and sincere expression of gratitude so that he or she could understand its essence and develop responsibility for such behavior in situations when he or she receives a gift and therefore says, helps or does something (Froh, Bono & Emmons, 2010).

Research Aim

The aim of this research was to examine how preschool children define and understand basic concepts of positive psychology: happiness, wisdom, hope, justice, gratitude, and optimism. Based on the research objectives, this research has answered the following tasks: a) definitions of basic

positive psychology terms in the form of categories of answers and their frequency have been established; b) gender and age differences in the definitions of basic concepts in preschool children of positive psychology (happiness, hope, wisdom, justice, gratitude, and optimism) have been examined.

Based on the developmental characteristics of pre-school children, it is expected to determine children's own conceptualizations about happiness, hope, wisdom, justice, gratitude, and optimism. With this in mind, definitions of happiness, gratitude, and justice among preschool children will be the most in accordance with the existing definitions of these terms, as opposed to the more abstract concepts such as wisdom, hope, and optimism. As for gender differences, it is expected that there will not be any differences in the definition of the fundamental concepts of positive psychology, but regarding age differences it is expected that older children will define the fundamental concepts of positive psychology in greater accordance with adults' definitions, with regards to their higher level of cognitive development..

Method

Participants

The research was conducted on a sample of $N = 100$ children from the kindergarten *Orepčići* in Kraljevica (68%) and kindergarten *Zlatna ribica* in Kostrena (32%). The age range of the children is between 4 and 7 years of age, of which 15 of them are four-year-olds, 35 are five-year-olds, 28 are six-year-olds, and 22 are seven-year-olds. The average age is $M = 5.57$ years ($SD = 1.0$). The research included 54 boys and 46 girls. This was the convenience sample and only those children whose parents gave their consent were included in the research.

Measures

The research was conducted using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The measuring instrument implied an individual structured interview that included six fundamental concepts of positive psychology and it was created for the purpose of implementation in this research. There are several methodological principles used in this study. First, when choosing the positive psychology concepts, we aimed to encompass the broader area of this field, so the main representatives of the positive psychology fields are chosen as follows: the concept of happiness was selected from the category of positive state; hope and optimism as positive ways of thinking; wisdom and justice as virtues of the positive individual; and the concept of gratitude from the category of positive relations. The second methodological principle refers to the choice of questions for exploring these concepts. Each concept was explored with three to five questions (Table 1) related to the definition of the concept, personal experience of the children, and the appearance and behavior of other people in relation to a particular category. These questions are chosen for two reasons: they assure the answers about children's conceptualizations of these terms and they are proposed by the early childhood educator as the most understandable ones among children of pre-school age. Therefore, the interview consisted of questions asked for the six terms. For each question, the obtained answers were coded in the following way: *0 = No answer, 1 = No, 2 = I do not know, 3 = Yes, 4 = Nonverbal reaction, 5 = Questions about the meaning, 6 = One answer, 7 = Multiple answers.* For the purpose of the

statistical analysis, the categories from 0 to 5 were categorized as an unanswered category, 6 and 7 as a category with an answer to the question. Subsequently, the answers to questions which are in accordance with the basic semantic definitions of the concepts were separated. Since there is lack of similar studies in this field, the main methodological nature of this research was exploratory. This means, that the chosen concepts and their related questions served not only for exploring children's conceptualizations about them but exploring their level of understanding of the questions as well as their answers. Therefore, this study could serve as the solid ground for creating reliable and valid measures for future research.

Procedure and Data Analysis

Prior to the beginning of the research, ethical issues were covered in three steps. First, two preschool institutions in which the research was planned, received a letter by which they could confirm the approval of conducting research in their facility. They were informed about the progress, goals, problems, and ethical approach to research with the children. Second, the parents were informed in detail about the research aim and method, after which they had the choice of giving or withholding their verbal informed consent for their children to participate in this study. Testing was preceded by choosing adequate space structures for interviewing and announcing the topic and the reasons for testing. Prior to the interview, each child was informed about the research aim and asked if (s)he is willing to participate in this study: *"Same as you, I am also going to some kind of school in which are interesting about some terms. Lately, we talked lots of about happiness, hope, optimism, wisdom, justice and gratitude and what these words meant. So, it would be very helpful for me if you could answer to me on some questions about that? If you are not willing, it is ok."* After children's reactions to this introduction, and if their reactions were positive, each child was interviewed individually for an average duration between five to fifteen minutes. Tension was noticed in some of the children during some of the interviews even though they firstly agreed to answer the questions. That tension was manifested through certain physical activities (rubbing hands, pinching face, pulling hair, exhaling). Therefore, with the intention of satisfying the basic ethical issues regarding children's well-being and maintaining the flow of the interview, the interviewer gave the children short breaks and provided them with support so that the interview could be conducted until the end. Verbal and nonverbal support was given equally to all children and did not increase the interviewer's favoritism towards some of them. None of the children gave up on answering the questions nor showed a very high level of impatience and/or discomfort. Two children refused to participate in the research and their decision was respected. The course of the interviews respected the structure of the measuring instrument. The interview was recorded with a voice recorder and the data was recorded in the form of transcripts (110 pages). Two researchers conducted the categorization of identified answers in the context of qualitative methodology and SPSS 18 was used to determine the frequency of answers and to conduct an analysis of gender and age differences. Children's conceptualizations of these specific terms were analyzed regarding their similarity to adults' definitions, which are based on the Dictionary definitions (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/) and presented in Appendix 1.

Results

Defining and Understanding Happiness, Wisdom, Hope, Gratitude, Justice, and Optimism in Pre-School Children

A quantitative analysis of the answer frequency of the established definitions of happiness, wisdom, hope, gratitude, justice, and optimism resulted in frequencies and arithmetic means of those children that provided answers, those that did not provide answers, and those who gave answers similar to adults' definitions, as shown in Table 1. For a better understanding of the established results, it is essential to point out that the higher the arithmetic mean, or closer to one, the higher the number of children who were able to answer a larger amount of questions about a particular term. Considering the concept of happiness, it was found that 88 children answered all questions, while 12 children did not. A total of 48 children answered all questions related to the concept of wisdom and 58 of them answered the questions about the concept of hope. Regarding the results about the concept of gratitude, 82 children have heard of the mentioned concept and gave specific answers to questions, while with regards to the characteristics of cognitive development and the level of abstractness of the concepts, these results confirmed that children would better understand the concept of gratitude than the concept of wisdom. The average value of all questions asked about the concept of justice indicates that 46 children are familiar with that concept in some way. Finally, 49 children on average gave answers related to questions about optimism.

With the aim of comparing the determined answers between the concepts presented in Table 1, the frequency and the average values for each term in the categories of answers that the children gave and those that did not and the number of answers similar to adults' definitions for each question and each term could be observed. As it can be seen in Table 1, the children gave the highest number of answers similar to adults' definitions in relation to the concept of *Happiness* ($M = 82$), which has the highest average number of provided answers. In the second place it is the concept of *Gratitude* ($M = 54.6$), followed by the concept of *Hope* ($M = 31.2$). Although the concept of justice has an average value determined by the answer lower than the concept of wisdom, it can be determined that children define *Justice* ($M = 22.6$) similarly to adults' definitions, immediately after hope, compared to *Wisdom* ($M = 16.4$). Furthermore, it can also be concluded that despite the fact that justice, based on the average value of given answers, is at the lowest point, this analysis has revealed that children understand the concept of *Optimism* ($M = 6.5$) differently than adults. Thus, it is concluded that the concepts of happiness, gratitude, and hope are defined at a higher level of similarity with adults' definitions than the concepts of justice, wisdom, and optimism.

Table 1. Frequencies (f) and means (M) for children who gave answers, for children who did not give answers and for children who gave answers similar to adults' definitions for each question about happiness, wisdom, hope, gratitude, justice, and optimism

Terms	Question	Children who gave answers (f, M)	Children who did not give answers (f, M)	Children who gave answers similar to adults' definitions (f, M)	Original examples
Happiness	What is happiness?	73	27	72	"Happiness is… when someone loves me… when you fall and you do not hurt yourself… when you throw a coin into the water… when you have friends…when someone loves you… when it is a happy day… when you get a candy… when something good happens… when we laugh…when nobody hits you… when I am playing…"
	What makes you happy?	97 (M = 87.6)	3 (M = 12.3)	96 (M = 82)	
	How do you look like when you are the happiest? How do happy people look like?	93 (1)	7	1	
Wisdom	Who is a wise person?	57	43 (M = 36.2)	34 (M = 16.4)	"A wise man is someone who has a smart brain," "Wisdom is a smart mind, advice… when you remember a lot of things," "A wise man is one that frauds everybody," "Wise people frighten others, they cannot walk, steal children and dogs, shoot birds."
	What do wise people do?	62 (M = 63.8)	38	7	
	How do wise people look like?	62	38	23	
	What do you think is wisdom?	50 (3)	50	13 (4)	
	Are you wise?	88	12	5	
Hope	What is hope?	48	52 (M = 42)	17 (M = 31.2)	"Hope is when you hope for something …that it can happen or it will not." "We hope because we want something… we think that someday it will happen."
	What are you hoping for?	71 (M = 58)	29	57	
	When and why do we hope?	54 (4)	46	20 (3)	
	How does a hopeful person look like?	59	41	31	
Gratitude	What is gratitude?	84	16	50	"Gratitude is when you are thankful … other people give thanks because it is polite… because it is nice," "People are grateful because they do favors to one another – because somebody gave you some information and then you say thank you," "People are grateful when you tell them they have a nice shirt."
	Who is grateful?	77	23	34	
	When do you give thanks; when do you say "thank you"?	78 (2)	22	42 (2)	
	Why are you grateful?	97 (M = 82)	3	90 (M = 54.6)	
	When and why do other people show gratitude?	74	26	57	
Justice	What is justice?	41 (M = 46)	59 (M = 54)	9 (M = 22.6)	"Justice is when you play by the rules… that you're not cheating, that you're just," "if I am not just, I get a 5 minute time-out," "Justice is telling the truth … that you are smart and young… when you chop wood."
	Who do you think is just?	56	44	38 (4)	
	Are you just and what if you are not?	41 (6)	59	21	
Optimism	What is optimism?	24	76	1	"Optimism is when someone sees everything as being black, and someone sees everything as being colorful. The one who sees everything as colorful thinks only nice things will happen and the one who sees everything as black thinks that only bad things will happen," "Optimist is a police officer … a boss … the one that has a motorcycle … computer from an alien," "Optimism is when you can turn into something … a sport … it means there is no more electricity."
	Who is an optimist?	45	55	5	
	How does an optimistic person look like?	55 (M = 47.5, 5)	45 (M = 52.5)	4 (M = 6.5, 6)	
	When are you optimistic?	66	34	16	

Table 2. Categories of given answers and their frequencies (f) for each question about happiness, wisdom, hope, gratitude, justice, and optimism among preschoolers

Terms	Questions	The categories of answers and their frequencies	f
Happiness (429)	What is happiness?	happiness =21; activity =20; love=17; entertainment=14; game=13; award=10; friends=6; sweet=5; thing=3; absence of bad =3; life=1	113
	What makes you happy?	situation =81; when I get something=33; family=25; game=13; friends=9; every day=9; absence of bad =5; quantity =4; happiness=2; animals=1; entertainment =1	183
	How do you look like when you are the happiest, how do happy people look like?	laughter =45; nice=26; happiness=22; activity =16; differently =11; body=9; to have=1; situation=1; love=1; absence of bad =1	133
Wisdom (261)	Who is a wise person?	negative emotions =12; characteristics =11; appearance =8; family=7; thief=4; cartoon characters=3; God=3; somebody who has something=2; activity=2; animals=2; me=2; specific person=2; everybody=1;	59
	What do wise people do?	negative =28; positively=18, neutrally=17; imaginary=4	67
	How do wise people look like?	positive=29; negative =14; neutral=14; elders=6; imaginary=2;	65
	What do you think is wisdom?	negative=22; positive=18; neutral=5; wise=3; elders=3	51
	Are you wise?	somewhat=9; no=5; activity =3; yes=2	19
Hope (256)	What is hope?	situation=16; when you hope for=9; name=7; neutral=5; happiness =4; money=3; love=2; home/family=1; kindergarten=1; something nice=1; behavior=1; emotion=1	51
	What are you hoping for?	family=17; situations=14; nothing=10; activity=10; to be=6; gifts=6; friends=4; comment=2; health=1; toys=1; happiness=1; kindergarten=1;	80
	When and why do we hope?	situation=27; happiness=12; gift=6; nothing=5; family=3; money=2; game=1; kindergarten=1; friends=1; when I am=1; comment=1; because we hope=1; love=1;	62
	How does a hopeful person look like?	happy=16; negatively=10; neutral=9; situation=7; appearance=6; nice=5; activity =3; ugly=3; color=3; funny=1	63
Gratitude (482)	What is gratitude?	thank you=39; when you get something=26; situation=13; when you are good=8; emotions=4; things=3; family=3; comment=1	99
	Who is grateful?	situation=28; everybody=19; me=13; family=11; name=7; friends=4; God=2	84
	When do you give thanks; when do you say "thank you"?	gift=85; others=21; activity=14; family=12;	143
	Why are you grateful?	politely=24; gift=20; situation=18; others=6; emotions=5; activity =4	77
	When and why do people show gratitude?	gift=24; politely=19; situation=17; others=10; comment=3; emotions=3; activity =2; time=1	79
Justice (166)	What is justice?	properly=13; situation=6; good=5; clever=4; obedient =4; when you pretend=4; comment=4; righteous =2; decency =2; conciliation =1; gift giving=1; happiness=1; gratitude =1; protection=1; when you are right=1	50
	Who do you think is just?	family=28; friends=10; activity =6; everybody=6; name=5; things=2; some=2; nobody=1	60
	Are you just? What if you are not?	yes=16; situation=10; sometimes=8; nothing=7; punishment=4; no=3; angry=3 ; game=3; sad=1; happy=1	56
Optimism (207)	What is optimism?	When you do something=8; comment=4; imaginary=3; situation=3; ability=3; thing=3; how we see the world=1; body parts=1;	26
	Who is an optimist?	does something=17; professions =13; people=6; imaginary creature =6; friends=2; family=1; appearance=1; animals=1; me=1; comment=1	49
	How does an optimistic person look like?	appearance description=21; emotions=19; profession=9; comment=7; imaginary creature=2; family=1; situation=1;	60
	When are you optimistic?	situational =26; never=25 ; time=12; emotions=8; imaginary=1;	72

Qualitative Analysis of Positive Concepts' Definitions among Pre-School Children

Applied qualitative analysis included all the answers of interviewed children within the framework of predefined questions for each of the six basic concepts of positive psychology: happiness, wisdom, hope, gratitude, justice, and optimism. This qualitative analysis consisted of several steps. In the first step, all answers were drawn (one or more from each child) by category of questions for each of the six concepts. In the second step, an independent evaluator categorized all the children's answers by similarities in certain categories of answers. Finally, in the third step, frequencies of answers were numbered by category as well as the total number of answers to each question. From Table 2 it is observable that the majority of answers were obtained in relation to the concept of gratitude, then happiness, wisdom, hope, optimism, and finally, justice. Similarly, this analysis showed that the highest number of answers also means the highest number of answers that were similar to adults' definitions.

Table 3. Descriptives for Mann-Whitney test results about understanding basic positive psychology concepts regarding the preschoolers' gender

Basic terms	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mann-Whitney Uz	p
Happiness $M = .88$ SD = .18 Skewness = -1.11; Kurtosis = .25	Boys Girls	54 46	0.91 0.83	0.17 0.18	-2.53	0.01
Wisdom $M = .49$ SD = .32 Skewness = -.18; Kurtosis = -1.15	Boys Girls	54 46	0.55 0.40	0.30 0.32	-2.18	0.03
Hope $M = .58$ SD = .34 Skewness = -.26; Kurtosis = -1.20	Boys Girls	54 46	0.61 0.53	0.34 0.33	-1.18	0.24
Gratitude $M = .82$ SD = .20 Skewness = -1.11; Kurtosis = .25	Boys Girls	54 46	0.82 0.80	0.17 0.22	-.10	0.92
Justice $M = .46$ SD = .37 Skewness = .18; Kurtosis = -1.32	Boys Girls	54 46	0.53 0.37	0.33 0.39	-2.18	0.03
Optimism $M = .48$ SD = .31 Skewness = .04; Kurtosis = -1.02	Boys Girls	54 46	0.55 0.38	0.30 0.29	-2.84	0.01

Gender and Age Differences among Pre-School Children Regarding Their Definitions of Explored Positive Concepts

With the aim of testing the significance of gender differences in defining the fundamental concepts of positive psychology, the average results value of all questions of a particular concept was calculated initially. Therefore, the possible range of average values was 0-1 considering that the results in which children did not answer the question were labeled with the number 0 and those results in which children gave the answer to the question with the number 1. Since the descriptive analysis of the results showed a significant deviation from the normal distribution (Table 3 –

Skewness & Kurtosis), the Mann-Whitney test was applied to test the significance of gender differences, and the Kruskal-Wallis test was applied for testing age differences. Even though there were a small number of subjects within each age group, because of the lack of similar studies in our country, the age differences analysis was run after all.

As it could be seen in Table 3, the significant gender differences were established regarding the happiness, wisdom, justice and optimism, i.e., boys showed higher levels of definitions of positive concepts. In addition, as it could be observed in Table 4, age differences were established only in defining happiness. Definitions that were more similar to adults' definitions, i.e., those presented in Appendix 1, was found in five-, six- and seven-years olds as opposed to four-years-old.

Discussion

The first statistical analysis in this study, i.e., the quantitative analysis of the answer frequency of the positive concepts revealed that children mostly answered the questions regarding happiness, somewhat less regarding the categories of gratitude, wisdom, and hope, and the least the category of optimism and justice. However, the congruence of their definitions with the definitions of adults resulted in a somewhat different order. The most similar definitions to the adults' definitions were those of happiness and gratitude. After that, the similarity level decreased regarding the positive concepts of hope, justice, wisdom, and finally optimism. Concepts such as wisdom and optimism are defined at a lower level of similarity with adults' definitions and understanding of the term probably because children perceive these terms as very abstract since they are rarely used in everyday communication. Also, these concepts are difficult to be perceived in everyday life and difficult to be experientially learned by which their transformation to the conceptualization level is a hard job to do (Mandler, 1992b). On the other hand, situations in which children experience and mention the feeling of happiness, situations in which they are thankful or notice appreciation in their environment as well as expressions of some personal desires that encourage hopeful thinking are much more frequent and affect the formation of knowledge about these fundamental concepts of positive psychology. These experiences enable the modification of perceptual information into clear meaning, which makes a solid foundation for the concept (Mandler, 1991, 1992a).

Applied qualitative analysis of all positive concepts: happiness, wisdom, hope, gratitude, justice, and optimism revealed some surprising results. Because it was expected that the terms such as wisdom and optimism would be the least defined due to their abstract meaning and less frequent use in communication. On the other hand, it was believed that the concept of justice would be better defined because of the children experiential learning in preschool. During everyday interaction with their peers at preschool as well as with younger or older children perceive different experiences that contribute to the understanding of justice. With this in mind, it is logical to expect that, as Piaget and Kohlberg (according to Berk, 2008) noted, peer interactions would affect the moral development of a child as well as the general sensitivity to the concept of justice. Nevertheless, the very opposite occurred in this study.

Table 4. Descriptives for Kruskal-Wallis test results about understanding basic positive psychology concepts regarding the preschoolers' age

Basic terms	Age categories	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Pairs	Kruskal-Wallis test	p
					4*5	**5.78**	**0.02**
	Four years' old	15	0.75	0.15	5*6	0.46	0.50
	Five years' old	35	0.87	0.19	6*7	0.08	0.93
Happiness	Six years' old	28	0.91	0.14	**4*6**	**9.55**	**0.01**
	Seven years' old	22	0.90	0.18	**4*7**	**11.23**	**0.01**
					5*7	0.69	0.71
					4*5	0.20	0.66
	Four years' old	15	0.42	0.32	5*6	1.16	0.28
	Five years' old	35	0.47	0.30	6*7	1.43	0.23
Wisdom	Six years' old	28	0.56	0.31	4*6	1.95	0.38
	Seven years' old	22	0.44	0.33	4*7	2.31	0.51
					5*7	1.78	0.41
					4*5	0.14	0.70
	Four years' old	15	0.58	0.39	5*6	0.88	0.35
	Five years' old	35	0.55	0.31	6*7	0.68	0.41
Hope	Six years' old	28	0.62	0.36	4*6	0.87	0.65
	Seven years' old	22	0.55	0.32	4*7	1.06	0.79
					5*7	1.05	0.59
					4*5	0.05	0.83
	Four years' old	15	0.80	0.23	5*6	0.03	0.85
	Five years' old	35	0.82	0.19	6*7	0.00	1.00
Gratitude	Six years' old	28	0.82	0.19	4*6	0.07	0.97
	Seven years' old	22	0.81	0.20	4*7	0.07	0.99
					5*7	0.04	0.98
					4*5	0.02	0.90
	Four years' old	15	0.46	0.41	5*6	0.65	0.42
	Five years' old	35	0.44	0.38	6*7	1.63	0.20
Justice	Six years' old	28	0.52	0.36	4*6	0.66	0.72
	Seven years' old	22	0.39	0.33	4*7	1.52	0.68
					5*7	1.57	0.46
					4*5	0.02	0.90
	Four years' old	15	0.48	0,29	5*6	0.36	0.55
	Five years' old	35	0.47	0,32	6*7	1.64	0.20
Optimism	Six years' old	28	0.51	0,29	4*6	0.41	0.82
	Seven years' old	22	0.40	0,34	4*7	1.80	0.62
					5*7	1.70	0.43

Furthermore, results showed that children are more familiar with the term of gratitude than wisdom and that children show a higher level of knowledge about the concept of gratitude, which

has been confirmed. Preschool children are most affected by their parents who should, through their own example, develop in the child socially acceptable forms of behavior, positive relationships with children as well as teach them to be aware of and avoid negative ones. Except for the imitation process, in which the child imitates the parents' actions and based on them develops certain characteristics and behaviors, moral development is affected by the way of dealing with children, as it has already been mentioned earlier. Practicing induction as a method of conversation, in which a child is explained, in a natural and spontaneous way of explaining why his or her actions were wrong, may stimulate the child's level of moral reasoning (Boyes & Allen, 1993; Brody & Shaffer, 1982; Weiss et al., 1992). Below are the results of the qualitative analysis based on the positive psychology terms as articulated by the children.

Happiness. There were 113 answers to the question *"What is happiness?"* in which children defined happiness through the experience of love, activities, enjoying sweets (candy), rewards, happiness, fun, situations in which nothing bad happens (avoiding being spanked), friends, games, life, and material things. Happiness is mostly defined by the feeling and experience of happiness itself (21), and original examples could be observed in Table 1. So, instead of answering on what is happiness, they mostly answered in a way what made *them* happy, which is very interesting. This demonstrates the children's understanding of the question asked which reflects their better understanding of their own experiences. This is in accordance with their level of cognitive development (Mandler, 1991). There were 183 answers to the question *"When are you happy?"* in which the children described the activities and defined happiness through situations when they are given something, being surrounded by family, playing games, friends, animals, happiness, fun, quantity, time determination and even absence of something negative. The majority of children noted they were happy through descriptive situations, in the family or when they get something; they are the least happy regarding animals and the concept of entertainment. There was a total of 133 answers to the question "*How do you look like when you are the happiest?"* and "*How do others look like when they are happy?"*. The children responded to these questions in categories: laughter, happiness, appearing nice, a description of the body, activity, something different and the situations of love, the absence of something bad or in a situation where someone has something. Children mostly described personal appearance or the appearance of other happy people through the category of laughter and category nice suggesting they recognize, feel and therefore define positive feelings such as happiness.

Wisdom. There was a total of 59 answers to the question *"Who is a wise person?"* and the children defined a wise person through negative emotions, some characteristics and appearance, as a thief, God, cartoon characters or a family member, as a particular person, animal or through a situation. The most commonly described are negative emotions in the form of an adjective *("…naughty, angry, scary…")* and characteristics *("...the one who is wise, the one who knows everything, the one that has a very smart brain..."* There was a total of 67 answers to the question *"What do wise people do?"* whereby the children used positive, negative, neutral, or imaginary answers. The results showed that children mostly answered with descriptions of negative situations to this question and used the very minimum of their imaginary skills. When asked *"How do wise people look like?"* there were 65 answers and the children also used positive, negative, neutral and

imaginary answers but they described wise people as old (older) people. There were the most positive answers and correct answers to this question and this category is best described by the following examples: *"...they can always do something ... they always have some advice .... they are always thinking about what will they should do and are happy when they do it ..."*. When asked *"What is wisdom?"* the results provided a total of 51 answers within which children defined wisdom through positive, negative, and neutral answers and through the category of older people as well as someone or something wise. There were 22 negative statements (for example, when people are angry or sad) and 18 positive ones. A positive and accurate understanding of wisdom is demonstrated by the following statements: *"...wisdom is when people know a lot of things and they have something special ... cleverness, advice, and when you remember a lot of things... wisdom wins over power ..."*. There were only 19 answers to the question *"Are you wise?"* which the children gave within the category as partially (*half*) wise, wise, and not wise and through a description of some of their activities. It was found that the highest number of children considered themselves partially wise (9), two considered themselves as wise and five stated that they are not wise.

Hope. When asked *"What is hope?"* the qualitative analysis of data showed a total of 51 answers to this question within which children defined hope through descriptive situations, neutral statements, statements that it is when you hope for something; also through money, happiness, love, family, kindergarten, emotion, some behaviors, or as something beautiful. Categories with the highest answer frequency were describing the category of describing a situation (16) and the category of when we are hoping (9). The following examples of children's statements best describe their understanding and definition of the concept of hope: *"... when you hope for something ... that it can or cannot happen ... when you hope that someone will come ... when you think you will get something, and maybe you will or maybe you will not..."*. 80 statements were provided for the question *"What are you hoping for"* and the children gave their statements generally in the context of family situations, various other descriptive experiences or through some of their own activities, in the context of what they would like to become and friendships. The majority of answers occurred within the category of family (17) and one answer per category such as health, toys, happiness and kindergarten. A total of 62 answers were obtained when asked *"When and why do we hope"*. The children gave statements in the form of descriptive situations and within the following categories: happiness, love, gifts, family, money, games, kindergarten, and friends. Categories such as *friends*, some *comments*, *kindergarten, games, friends, love,* and *money* had the smallest frequency, while most answers were noted in the descriptions of situations and in the category of *happiness*. The following examples of situations indirectly describe their understanding of hopeful thinking: *"...because we are happy ... that we are okay ... I hope when I'm sick that I will soon go to the kindergarten ... when you want something and you don't get it... that a friend visits us and we play together ..."*. There were 63 answers to the question *"How does a hopeful person look like?"* within which the children expressed their thoughts descriptively and their answers considering the appearance of a person who hopes were categorized as happy, negative, neutral, beautiful, ugly, funny and the focus on appearance, color, or description of the situation or activity. The highest answer frequency has the category that refers to happy appearance (16), followed by the category of negative explanations (looks sad, angry, intimidated, scared, naughty).

Gratitude. When asked *"What is gratitude?"* the children provided a total of 99 answers within which they defined gratitude through words of *appreciation*, situations when they receive something and they are good; through emotions connected to family or in relation to a particular thing. The concept of gratitude is mostly defined through expressions of cultural behavior (thanks, thank you, please, sorry) and through descriptive situations when children receive something. Gratitude is the least defined in the context of things, emotions, or family. This category is supported by the following interesting statements: *"... when you are thankful ... to say thank you ... when somebody gives you something ... they thank you when you save someone ... I am thankful to you because you have found something for me ... when people say thanks to each other, they do so because they did a favor to one another ...".* The children provided 83 answers to the question *"Who is grateful?".* The highest frequency was found for the answers considering descriptive situations, then in the categories of all people, me, family and the lowest frequency were found in answers considering a named person, friends, and God. From descriptive situations the children mentioned: *"... when someone gets a gift ... the one that gets something ... when you are polite... when you bring them something to drink and everything else you are asked for ... sometimes I say thanks to people when they offer me something ...".* To the question *"When do you say "thank you"?"* the children provided a total of 143 answers of which 85 were related to the category of a gift or when someone given them something, 21 answers were related to other people, followed by descriptive activities and situations related to family members. In order to better understand the way of children's thinking and describing situations when they thank, here are some of their statements: *"... when someone gives me sweets ... when my mother buys something for me, when somebody lends me something ... when someone tells me something that is very nice... when someone surprises me ...".* When asked *"Why are you grateful?"* a total of 77 answers were found in which the children mostly stated that they say thank you because it is polite (24). Furthermore, the reason to say thank you are gifts, emotions, and other situations and activities but they also described situations that are not related to them. Children's statements that define the category of politeness are interesting: *"... because if you do not say thank you, that's not nice ... because this is the magic word ... everybody says thank you ... because we have to ... because it is a good word ...".* There were 77 answers to the question *"Why and when do people show gratitude?"* and the children mostly expressed themselves in the category of gift (24), i.e., when somebody gives them gifts. The next most common argument was the category of politeness (19) and they describe different situations (17). The least mentioned are emotions, some activities, or time determinations. Research has shown (Nelson et al., 2012) that children with a better understanding of emotions and other psychic states understand gratitude better and it would be interesting to relate the level of emotional intelligence to understand gratitude in future research.

Justice. The children provided 50 answers to the question *"What is justice?"* and defined the concept of justice through situations or activities that belong to different categories such as: doing something just, being smart, being obedient, pretending, being right, being good and proper or decent and just, reconciliation, happiness, giving, appreciation, and protection. The highest answer frequency was found in the category of correct behavior and the lowest answer frequency in situations of reconciliation, giving, happiness, gratitude, protection, or when you are right. The results have shown that the concept of justice in general is the least defined of all the fundamental

concepts of positive psychology, therefore, it is of utmost importance to portray the children's accurate statements which correspond to this concept: *"...to play by the rules, when you are not cheating ... when you are just ... ... to respect the rules ... that you are doing something good and correct ..."*. When asked *"Who do you think is just"* there were 60 answers in which the children stated that the following people are the most just: family members (28), friends (10), everybody; the children also named people they know or described a situation. They gave the least vague answers within the categories of nobody or somebody and listing things. From the analysis of the obtained results, it is observable that the children attributed the trait of justice, although it is the least defined, mostly to the people close to them, so we can assume that it is categorized as a positive value, which should of course be more sensitized. A total of 56 answers were obtained for the question *"Are you just and what if you are not?"* within which 16 children identified themselves as just and only three identified themselves as not just. Other categories implied time determination "sometimes," descriptive situations, an unspecified assertion and punishment, as a result of unjust treatment, playing and emotional states such as anger, happiness, and sadness. Children's statements explaining their thinking about the consequences of not being just are: *"... then I go to time-out for 5 minutes ... if I'm not just then I will not get anything ... then we are no longer friends ... then this means that no one will play if no one is just ... then dad is a bit angry ... if I'm not just, then it's not right; if I am, then it is ..."*.

    Optimism. A total of only 26 answers were obtained when asked *"What is optimism?"* as well as definitions. These were divided into categories: when you do something, like an ability, thing, perception of the world, parts of the body, and answers recorded as comments or descriptive situations. Children mostly defined the term optimism through the description of various actions and activities that people can engage in as well as through some form of human abilities or imaginary situations. It is essential to mention statements which define the concept of optimism as a way of seeing the world: "... *when someone sees everything as being black and someone as colorful. The one who sees everything as colorful think only nice things will happen and the one who sees everything as black thinks that only bad things will happen"*. It is also interesting to note some of the children's statements in the form of comments after the asked question: *"... my mother has not explained that to me ... I have never heard or saw that ... I did not learn that ..."*. 49 answers were obtained when asked *"Who is an optimist?"* and the children pointed out optimistic people in general, followed by the people of different professions, people who are doing something, imaginary creatures, themselves, as well as family members, animals or answers given as comments or they referred to the appearance of an optimistic person. The highest answer frequency (17) was recorded within the category which states that optimists are people who are doing something. When asked *"How does an optimistic person look like?"* the children provided 60 answers in which they identified optimists through emotions, professions, or physical appearance of an optimistic person, then through descriptions of situations, comments, or imaginary beings. The highest answer frequency was found in the category in which the appearance of an optimistic person was described (21), the category that is related to emotional states of an optimistic person (19) and his or her profession. The following interesting statements support the results of the answer analysis to the question about the appearance of an optimistic person: *"... white pants ... dressed in a suit ... gloves*

on his hands ... very black ... green ... has a Mohawk haircut ... beard ... ugly ... wise ... happy ... angry ... like a thief ... like a detective ... like a doctor ...". When asked *"When are you optimistic?"* a total of 77 answers were obtained and the children expressed themselves through the descriptions of situations, emotional states as well as time and imaginary determinations. The results showed that the majority of children responded to this question through descriptive situations and their examples, and 25 of them stated that they are not optimistic.

Overall, the determined results from qualitative and quantitative analyses clearly demonstrated that children are more familiar with those concepts that are closely related to their experiences and perceptual knowledge, such as happiness. This reflects their level of cognitive development. Because of that, they use their own experiences in defining and describing these concepts and related terms. Also, being the most clearly defined, happiness is the closest concept to their emotional experiences in difference to all other concepts, which makes this concept the best understood among pre-school children.

Regarding the gender analysis in defining the fundamental concepts of positive psychology, the results showed that in defining the concepts of happiness, wisdom, justice, and optimism there are statistically significant differences between boys and girls. In other words, the boys gave a significantly higher number of answers in terms of optimism, happiness, wisdom, and justice than girls. Although the same trend of differences is reached with the concepts of gratitude and hope, these differences are not statistically significant. Considering that, there is no similar research, both in our country and abroad, it is difficult to explicitly define why these gender differences have been established. Therefore, these findings could serve as a starting point for exploring further in some future research.

However, comparing these findings with the results of studies on gender and age, differences in the social-emotional well-being, and development of children of preschool age (Mayr & Ulich, 2009, Abdi, 2010; Tatalović Vorkapić & Lončarić, 2014), it is interesting that the social-emotional level is in favor of the girls, while the cognitive functions are in favor of the boys. We can only speculate about the reasons for these established findings considering that this is research of a correlation draft. It is possible that the analogy of better developed social skills and emotional expressions in girls, by using gender roles and parental style, can be applied to the established findings in this research, but this should be verified in some future research. In addition to gender differences, the results of the analysis of age differences indicate that the only statistically significant difference is in the understanding of the concept of happiness when four-year-old children are compared to five-year-olds, six-year-olds, and seven-year-olds. In other words, it was noticed that with an increase in age there is also an increase in the understanding and definition of the concept of happiness, which can be explained by a higher level of cognitive maturation. Unlike the concept of happiness, no significant age differences were determined in the concepts of wisdom, hope, gratitude, justice, and optimism. However, for a more detailed analysis of age differences, due to the small number of respondents in each age category, it is necessary to significantly increase the sample in similar future research.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to examine how preschool children define and perceive the fundamental concepts of positive psychology such as: happiness, wisdom, hope, gratitude, justice, and optimism. It was found that children gave most answers in the categories of happiness, somewhat less in the categories of wisdom and hope, which confirms the initial hypothesis. The concept of justice is least defined, the concept of wisdom is better defined than the concept of justice, and the concept of gratitude in relation to wisdom is significantly more defined. Furthermore, the majority of answers, which were divided into categories based on their similarities, were found for the concept of gratitude (total of 482 answers) followed by happiness (total of 429 answers), wisdom, hope, optimism, and at the end - justice (total of 166 answers). The majority of answers similar to adults' definitions, which corresponded to actual dictionary definitions, were established for the category of happiness, gratitude, and hope and less for optimism and wisdom, which had been assumed considering these are abstract concepts unlike those which children experience on a daily basis and are able to name. It is interesting to note that although it was assumed that, along with happiness and gratitude, the concept of justice would be at a higher level of knowledge and understanding, it has been shown that children define the concept of hope more precisely than justice.

In addition, in defining the concepts of happiness, wisdom, justice, and optimism, there are statistically significant differences between boys and girls. Boys showed better understanding and they provided more answers. When testing significance by age, it was found that a statistically significant difference in understanding and defining basic terms is noticeable only in the category of happiness.

The determined results should be viewed in light of the limitations of this research. For convenience purposes, a non-random and relatively small sample of preschool children was used for the purpose of this research. It would be interesting to conduct similar research on a random, larger sample of children in the future. Also, the next step is to research the relation between defining these terms with parental educational styles, methods of preschool teachers, child temperament, and other behavioral characteristics of children. Research could include parents and professional staff within preschool institutions and the results would be extremely useful to preschool teachers and parents who have the task of promoting the development of positive emotions, traits, opinions, and attitudes of the child so that a child can become a competent, healthy, and autonomous adult.

Nevertheless, this study has several contributions. The scientific one could be recognized in the fact that there is a lack of similar studies that were dealing with children's perceptions and voices about various conceptions, especially with the positive psychology concepts and especially in Croatia. Therefore, having in mind this study's limitations, positive psychology concepts should be furthermore explored. As for the practical implications, these findings clearly demonstrated the level of children's well being and their knowledge of positive terms, which should be taken into consideration in the practice. Positive education is mainly focused on nurturing and educating positive aspects of life in children, and talking about the concepts that were focused variables in this study could only enrich their lives.

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Appendix 1.

Definitions of the positive psychology concepts: happiness, wisdom, hope, gratitude, justice, and optimism (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/)

Concepts	Definitions
Happiness	The state of being happy.
Wisdom	The quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment; the quality of being wise.
Hope	A feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen.
Gratitude	The quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.
Justice	The quality of being fair and reasonable.
Optimism	The belief that good must ultimately prevail over evil in the universe.