



Happy Moments between Children and Their Parents: A Multi-method and Multi-informant Perspective

Flavia Izzo¹ · Edoardo Saija¹ · Susanna Pallini² · Salvatore Ioverno² · Roberto Baiocco¹ · Jessica Pistella¹

Accepted: 15 January 2024 / Published online: 26 February 2024
© The Author(s) 2024

Abstract

Research interest in children's happiness has increasingly grown in recent years. Studies of children's happiness have shown that happiness promotes greater social and emotional well-being during childhood. The present study explores the different perspectives of children and their parents on happy moments spent together, examining potential discrepancies in points of view. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 154 children (6–13 years old: $M_{age}=8.72$, $SD=2.00$; 57% girls), their mothers ($M_{age}=42.30$, $SD=4.50$), and their fathers ($M_{age}=45.47$, $SD=5.42$). Children were asked to indicate their level of happiness using a single item and to recount their happy moments spent with their fathers and mothers. Parents were asked to evaluate their children's happiness and to identify what they thought was the happiest moment their children had experienced with them. The data was analyzed using *Thematic Analysis*. Six main themes related to children's happy moments emerged from the transcripts: (1) *Activities outside the home*; (2) *Shared activities between parents and children*; (3) *Happy moments of play between parents and children*; (4) *Parent-child moments of affection*; (5) *Relevance of material gifts*; (6) *Non-specified happy moments*. Emotional interactions characterized the happiest moments reported with mothers, while those with fathers were more frequently playful and fun situations. Results showed that parents and children disagree on children's happiness levels and tend to identify different episodes as the happiest moments spent together. The study examined parent-child interactions in the context of family happiness, considering the protective role of a child's happiness against negative psychological symptoms. It aimed to identify components of happier moments as potential indicators of family well-being, given the family's role in psychological development.

Keywords Happiness · Children · Multi-informant · Family relationship · Subjective well-being

1 Introduction

In recent years, research on children's happiness has received increasing attention (Gómez et al., 2019; Holder, 2012). Happiness has been conceptualized as a relatively stable, positive, and affective trait (Holder & Klassen, 2010) strongly related to subjective well-being and general life satisfaction (Baiocco et al., 2019; Diener et al., 2018). It consists of two components: the affective component involves high pleasant and low negative emotions, while the cognitive component assesses overall life quality and fulfillment of essential needs, goals, and desires. Satisfaction can be general or domain-specific (e.g., family life satisfaction) (Izzo et al., 2022). Most studies have identified specific categories of sources of happiness for children, such as (1) family relationships (Greco & Ison, 2014); (2) friendship relationships (Baiocco et al., 2019); (3) material things and gifts (Maftei et al., 2020); (4) leisure, hobbies, sports (Giacomoni et al., 2014) or holiday time (Eloff, 2008). For several authors, spending time with family members represents the primary source of children's happiness (Waters, 2020), above and beyond the positive experiences at school and with peers (Chaplin, 2009; Greco & Ison, 2014; Maftei et al., 2020). Thus, the present study analyzed children's and parents' points of view on their perceptions of happy moments spent together, highlighting potential differences between children, mothers, and fathers.

Specifically, time spent with family members is one of the most common happy moments children report (Shek, 2001). Moreover, several studies have consistently shown that family relationships and the closeness of family members represent the most critical interpersonal resource for the well-being and happiness of children and adolescents (Gómez et al., 2019; Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Lehto, 2013). Taken together, research suggests that family influences children's happiness (Sargeant, 2010), and, in turn, feeling happy at home helps children and adolescents to experience feelings of freedom, love, affection, and joy (González-Carrasco et al., 2017; Orejudo et al., 2021).

The behavioral genetics results indicated that genes and environmental characteristics were relevant for explaining variation in happiness and well-being, suggesting that happiness level was influenced mainly by parent-child genetic transmission (Nes, 2010; Nes & Røysamb, 2017). In this sense, happy parents might have happy children because of the heritability of happiness: Parents might also provide their children with a supportive and loving environment that induces happiness due to their individual disposition to respond to their children's emotional needs (Nes, 2010). Further studies highlighted that family relationships might not only represent the basis of children's happiness (Sargeant, 2010; Thoilliez, 2011) but may also be considered essential predictors of children's life satisfaction beyond the influence of children's different life contexts (Holder & Coleman, 2009; Maftei et al., 2020). However, there is still uncertainty about whether and how often both children and their parents share the happiness of these family moments. To our knowledge, no previous study has specifically explored happy moments among family members using the perspectives of children and their parents (Izzo et al., 2022).

2 Age and Gender Differences in Children's Happiness

Children's sources of happiness vary significantly by age and gender. Children's sources of happiness vary significantly by age and gender. Some studies identified several sources of happiness for children aged 7 to 9 years (Greco & Ison, 2014) and those aged 5 to 8 years (Maftai et al., 2020): These sources encompass family relationships, leisure activities, construed as free time pursuits and hobbies, as well as material things, intended as receiving gifts or possessing objects. Conversely, Chaplin (2009) found different sources of happiness across varying age brackets, highlighting that children aged 8 to 9 primarily referenced hobbies, whereas preadolescents aged 12 to 13 highlighted material things, relationships, and achievements. Other studies found more refined and elaborated definitions of happiness for preadolescents aged 11 to 12 years (Giacomoni et al., 2014) and those aged 12 to 13 years (López-Pérez et al., 2016). Specifically, preadolescents are more inclined to refer to positive feelings and more frequently cite achievements and friends as their sources of happiness. Overall, happiness and life satisfaction tend to decline linearly with increasing age, both in general and in specific life domains (e.g., family satisfaction) (Goldbeck et al., 2007; Park, 2005). For example, children often report a significant decrease in the level of individual and family happiness (Ercegovac et al., 2021; Goldbeck et al., 2007; Park, 2005).

Regarding gender differences, the literature is not consistent. Some studies have reported that boys tend to be happier than girls (Bennefield, 2018; Kaye-Tzadok et al., 2017), other studies reported the opposite (Casas et al., 2013; Gross-Manos et al., 2015; Leto et al., 2019), whereas other have found no gender differences in happiness levels (López-Pérez et al., 2016; Uusitalo-Malmivaara, 2012; Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Lehto, 2013). The mixed findings may be due to gender differences in sources of happiness. According to some studies, girls are more often than boys oriented toward sources of relational and emotional well-being that emphasize positive feelings of happiness. In fact, girls spend more time alone with their mothers and fathers than boys. Conversely, boys more often use leisure and play activities as sources of well-being (Businaro et al., 2015; Giacomoni et al., 2014; Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2016).

3 Parents' and Children's Perspectives in Assessing Family and Children's Happiness

Family happiness is defined as the shared experience of joy, contentment, and well-being spread across a family where members feel happy and satisfied with the perceived support of other family members (Waters, 2020). Studies have highlighted that, especially in Western countries, families tend to consider communication and sharing between family members as pivotal familial values compared to non-Western countries (Shek, 2001). In fact, a negative parent-child relationship in a family is usually accompanied by low family satisfaction and low child happiness.

These studies might suggest that having a shared definition of happiness is important to family functioning. Although some research found no differences in parents' and children's perspectives on family happiness (Schnettler et al., 2017), several other studies showed that parents and children often have different perceptions of happiness. When assessing their children's happiness, parents are often influenced by two biases (Lagattuta et al., 2012;

López-Pérez & Wilson, 2015): (1) a positivity bias which is the tendency of parents to overestimate their children's happiness and underestimate negative emotions; (2) an egocentric bias which is the tendency of parents to use their own happiness levels to estimate their children's happiness. However, as the availability of multiple sources of information increases the reliability of children's measurements by comparing sources (Schneider & Schimmack, 2009), parents' assessment of children's happiness is still considered an important source (Holder & Coleman, 2009).

Other studies suggest that parents and children might use different criteria to evaluate happy families and family functioning. Shek (2001) found that parents and children might use different criteria for assessing happy families and family functioning in a Chinese sample of adolescents. In particular, children emphasize the attributes of emotional bonds (such as love and support, understanding and acceptance, conflict and harmony, and time spent together). At the same time, parents emphasize the importance of problem-solving and economic and material conditions. Therefore, parents and children might use different criteria to evaluate their family satisfaction, although other studies found no differences in parents' and children's perspectives on family happiness (Schnettler et al., 2017).

Gender differences may also influence this perspective discrepancy. Previous studies suggested that fathers tend to prioritize material attributes of the family environment (e.g., economic conditions). On the contrary, mothers are more focused on emotional attributes (e.g., understanding and acceptance) and family relationships (parent-child and marital relationships) (Shek, 2001). The systematic review conducted by Yaffe (2023) demonstrated that fathers tend to be less accepting, responsive, and supportive than mothers, highlighting differences in parenting styles and practices toward their children. These results seem consistent with the gender role stereotypes that women are more relationship-oriented than men (Eisenchlas, 2013), especially in the Italian context (Baiocco et al., 2019; Baiocco & Pistella, 2019). According to gender stereotypes, women are generally considered communal—friendly, warm, altruistic, sociable, interdependent, emotionally expressive, and relationship-oriented—while men are perceived as inferior in communal qualities (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). These parent-gender differences may impact the family and emotional well-being of children and preadolescents, consequently affecting their happiness levels within the family (Maftei et al., 2020).

4 The Present Study

The literature on happiness has mainly focused on adults and adolescents (Al Nima et al., 2012; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005), whereas a limited number of studies have investigated the concept of happiness from the perspective of children in combination with the perspective of the parents (Baiocco et al., 2019; Businaro et al., 2015; Migliorini et al., 2019; Verrastro et al., 2020). The present study aims to fill this gap in the literature using a multi-method and multi-informant perspective. Specifically, this study: (a) considers the family environment and parent-child relationships as relevant sources of children's happiness; (b) uses qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate children's happiness; (c) considers the perception of happiness using different perspectives from children and their parents.

As this study was conducted in Italy, some aspects of Italian culture are worth noting to understand our findings better. The family context in Italy has changed very profoundly in

recent years (ISTAT, 2015) and continues to change. Italian culture combines individualistic (e.g., the primacy of individual objectives; independence) with collectivistic ideals (e.g., the centrality of Italian families of origin; the relatively stable social and community networks; de Silva et al., 2021). The significance of connectivity and autonomy in Italian families may set them apart from parent-child interactions in other cultures or nations.

Moreover, mothers are the relational fulcrum in the Italian family, whereas fathers are more peripheral. In fact, the mother's influence has been found to be particularly substantial in Italy, where it extends to all of the children's activities. In contrast, the father's influence has frequently been less impactful (Cardoso et al., 2010). Although these aspects characterize the general culture of Italian families, it is pivotal to highlight that such specific features may not represent all the families under investigation in this study. Overall, several studies on Italian families suggested that parents have a crucial role in developing children's well-being (Bernini & Tampieri, 2019) and happiness (Businaro et al., 2015; Migliorini et al., 2019). For this reason, the main focus of this research was to explore the elements that make children happy within family relationships.

The present study explores the different perspectives of children and their parents on happy moments spent together, examining potential discrepancies in points of view (Shek, 2001). The importance of studying phases of development derives from the necessity to assess how children describe the concept of happiness and how these changes from childhood (i.e., primary school) to preadolescence (i.e., middle school) (Baiocco et al., 2019; Goldbeck et al., 2007; Verrastro et al., 2020). Therefore, integrating parents' perspectives and using qualitative and quantitative methodologies could be an essential resource for a better understanding family happiness.

Based on the cited literature and using quantitative and qualitative methodology, we hypothesized that: (1) due to the positivity or egocentric bias in parents' reporting of children emotions, parents and children identify different happy moments spent together (Holder & Coleman, 2009; Lagattuta et al., 2012; López-Pérez & Wilson, 2015; Shek, 2001); (2) younger children (age range: 6–10) are significantly happier than preadolescents (age range: 11–13) (Baiocco et al., 2019); (3) there are no significant gender differences in the categories of happy moments (López-Pérez et al., 2016; Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Lehto, 2013); (4) even though the qualitative part of this study is exploratory in nature, when asked to identify shared happy moments, parents and children will likely report episodes of affective interactions (Maftei et al., 2020; Thoilliez, 2011), play times (Giacomini et al., 2014; Greco & Ison, 2014; López-Pérez et al., 2016), moments of free times spent together (Chaplin, 2009; Eloff, 2008), and moments related to material aspects (Chaplin, 2009; Eloff, 2008; Sargeant, 2010); (5) the nature and frequency of children's happy moments with their fathers will be significantly different from those with their mothers. For example, children frequently report calm and affective interactions with their mothers and more playful and fun situations with their fathers.

5 Method

5.1 Procedures and Participants

The research team constructed an ad hoc semi-structured interview to explore children's happiness in family contexts. Questionnaires and interviews were administered individually to parents and children: parents provided informed consent, and children also orally consented to participate in the research before data collection began. The informed consent consisted mainly of notifying participants of the study's purpose, emphasizing the importance of an honest response, the participants' right to leave the interview at any time, and the guarantee of anonymity. All the interviews were conducted in person or through virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom by trained researchers of the Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy. The family members were interviewed separately to avoid influencing each other's responses.

Before the interview, an introductory section was included to help participants feel at ease. It was explicitly stated that responses were confidential and that there were no right or wrong answers. During the interview, researchers allowed ample time for individuals to formulate their responses. In cases where responses were not initially provided, researchers guided participants towards restating their answers, for example, by rephrasing the question. Interviews were recorded and transcribed entirely for analysis with the participants' consent. Participants' anonymity was guaranteed using an identification code to organize the transcripts and eliminate identifiable information (e.g., names or places).

Interviews' participation was voluntary (30 min), and the study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy. Data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy between October 2020 and November 2021. Participants were recruited via snowball sampling techniques, using direct contact with families or advertisements on parent groups who were asked to identify additional potential families that fit the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria were adopted to minimize sociodemographic and cultural differences among families, reducing the potential effects of variables that may affect the happiness levels (i.e., conflicting divorces): (1) Italian nationality; (2) families composed of cohabiting biological parents; (3) at least one child aged between 6 and 13 years; (4) absence of disabilities or severe illnesses in children or parents.

The sample consisted of 154 children (age range 6–10; $n=97$) and preadolescents (age range 11–13; $n=57$) between the ages of 6 and 13 years ($M=8.72$, $SD=2.00$; 57% girls), their mothers (age range 20–52; $M=42.30$, $SD=4.50$) and fathers (age range 32–59; $M=45.47$, $SD=5.42$), residing in central (71%), southern (26%), and northern Italy (3%). Regarding education levels, mothers reported a higher average level of education than fathers. Specifically, the majority of fathers attained at least a high school diploma, while mothers were more likely to have reported reaching bachelor's degrees and higher degrees. Most participants described their socioeconomic status as middle-low to middle-high (97%), except for three families who indicated low socioeconomic status and two who reported living in high economic status. Table 1 presents detailed sociodemographic characteristics of children and their parents.

Table 1 Sociodemographic characteristics of children and their parents

		n	%
Child gender	Male	66	42.9
	Female	88	57.1
Geographic area	Northern Italy	109	70.8
	Central Italy	4	2.6
	Southern Italy	41	26.6
Education Level Mother	Primary School	1	0.6
	Middle School	11	7.1
	High School	53	34.4
	Bachelor's Degree	17	11.0
	Master's Degree	49	31.8
	Post-graduate	23	14.9
Education Level Father	Primary School	2	1.3
	Middle School	26	16.9
	High School	69	44.8
	Bachelor's Degree	20	13.0
	Master's Degree	21	13.6
	Post-graduate	16	10.4
Socio-economic status	Low	3	1.9
	Middle-low	85	55.2
	Middle-high	64	41.6
	High	2	1.3

5.2 Instruments for Data Gathering

The study used quantitative (*Faces Scale*) and qualitative (*Happiness Interview*) research methods. Data collection and analyses were independently conducted for children, mothers, and fathers.

Faces Scale (Holder & Coleman, 2009). The single-item *Faces Scale* evaluates children's self-perception of happiness ("Overall, how do you usually feel?") using seven response options. These options are represented by real faces or pictures combining different expressive patterns to reflect particular emotional states. The mouths of the faces varied from very low, indicating very unhappy status (depicted by a very down-turned mouth), to very high, indicating a high level of happiness (defined by a very up-turned mouth). Participants marked the option that best reflects their happiness status. The *Faces Scale* was also administered to both parents to measure their children's happiness levels. Previous research indicates that the *Faces Scale* is a reliable, valid, and common measure of children's happiness (e.g., Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Holder & Coleman, 2009; Swinyard et al., 2001; Otsuka et al., 2020; Verrastro et al., 2020).

Happiness Interview. The research team developed an interview for the present research to investigate children's happiness and recollection of happy moments that children and parents shared. The interview drew on the systematic review of Izzo and colleagues (2022) and from the qualitative protocol of the Friends and Family Interview (FFI; Psouni et al.,

2020; Steele & Steele, 2005). All questions have been formulated using language accessible even to younger children. According to the ethics committee, from which approval was sought, the participants' burden in relation to the length of the protocol was evaluated, and it was unanimously deemed that the protocol was accessible to all participants. In addition, before starting the data collection, a pilot test was conducted. Specifically, four families with similar characteristics to those of the selection were recruited to assess the comprehensibility and feasibility of the questions (i.e., lengthy or rushed) and to ensure the interview guide elicited pertaining responses. The general interview questions did not change from the pilot test.

The interview is composed of five sections: (1) The *Self* section investigates what really makes children happy and how they spend happy moments with their parents (e.g., “*What is happiness for you? What makes you happy?*”); (2) The *family* section investigates the level of children's happiness in the family context and the level of the entire family's happiness (e.g., “*Thinking about your whole family, how happy do you think your family is?*”); (3) The *peer group* section examines children's level of happiness in friendship relationships (e.g., “*Compared to the other children you know, how happy do you think you are in your friendship relationships? Happier than others, as happy as others or less happy than others?*”); (4) The *school context* section assesses children's level of happiness in the school context (e.g., “*How happy do you think you are at school?*”); (5) The *future* section explores the levels of happiness children expect in the future and what they think will make them happy (e.g., “*Now thinking about when you grow up, not a teenager but an adult, how happy do you think you will be in the future?*”).

For the present study, we analyzed the contents from the *Self* section: Children were asked to talk about the happiest moment they spent alone with their mother and father. An example question is “*can you tell me what was the happiest moment you experienced with your father, that is, with him alone?*”. Similarly, parents were asked to identify what they thought was the happiest moment their children had experienced with them. An example question is “*thinking about your child, what do you think was the happiest moment your child had with you? What would your child answer to this question?*”.

5.3 Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the thematic analysis methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a procedure for recognizing and investigating themes that emerge from qualitative interviews. This method implicates different steps. First, three encoders (first author, second author, and third author) extracted a set of topics from the transcripts and discussed the themes that emerged in three sessions. Second, the research topic's theme structures were defined by comparison with the other team members. Third, a table of themes, sub-themes, and related quotations from the transcripts was created, conceptualizing a final thematic structure.

The kappa coefficient (κ ; Cohen, 1960) was used to examine evaluators' agreement on the coding of happy moments with mother and father and parent–child agreement on happy moments. To test whether the frequency of each type of happy moment differed significantly depending on whether the moment occurred with the father or mother, we performed a series of McNemar tests for paired nominal data using first children's reports and then par-

ents' reports. Given that the McNemar tests resulted in 2×2 Tables for each type of happy moment, we report odd ratios when the McNemar tests produced significant differences.

6 Results

Overall, the children described themselves as very happy ($M=6.31$, $SD=0.84$). Furthermore, mothers ($M=5.86$, $SD=0.76$) and fathers ($M=6.10$, $SD=0.78$) indicated similar perceptions regarding their children's happiness. Although the average values were similar, comparing the responses of parents and children showed that parents tend to underestimate or overestimate their children's happiness: The concordance between mother and children was 38%, and the concordance between father and children was 44%. Furthermore, correlational analyses showed that the children's age was significantly negatively correlated with the child's reported levels of happiness ($r=-0.24$, $p<0.01$) but not with the mother's and father's judgments of the child's happiness. No significant differences in happiness levels emerged based on the child's gender from the child's and parent's perspectives.

Through thematic analysis, the researchers identified six main themes (and relative sub-themes) that represent some key aspects of happy moments with family: (1) *Activities outside the home*, which includes activities done outside the home, such as excursions, trips, outings to restaurants or movies; (2) *Shared activities between parents and children*, which includes the moments and activities that children spent together with their parents, such as cooking, doing household chores or organizing parties; (3) *Happy moments of play between parents and children*, which includes all more or less structured moments of leisure and play carried out by children together with their parents; (4) *Parent-child moments of affection*, which includes episodes where parents and children shared emotional affectivity (i.e., affective aspects related to emotions, such as emotional support, sharing and closeness) or physical affectivity (i.e., affective aspects related to physical contact, such as cuddles or hugs); (5) *Relevance of material gifts*, which includes episodes where material aspects, mainly gifts, were central elements of the happiest moment spent by children with their parents; (6) *Non-specified happy moments*, which includes all responses in which participants neglected to answer (*unwilling to answer*) or were unable to recall a specific moment of happiness (*don't remember*), or happy moments in which the child and each parent were alone because other people (e.g., the other parent, siblings) were present (*lack of happy moments or lack of happy mother-child/father-child times*).

The degree of agreement between encoders was calculated on all responses and was almost perfect for both happy moments with the mother (child's perspective: $\kappa=0.91$, $p<0.001$; mother's perspective: $\kappa=0.93$, $p<0.001$) and happy moments with father (child's perspective: $\kappa=0.92$, $p<0.001$; father's perspective: $\kappa=0.97$, $p<0.001$). There are no differences based on gender and age in happy moments with mother and father from children's and parents' perspectives. Table 2 summarizes the themes' structure, representative quotations, and frequencies.

6.1 Activities Outside the Home

Children spend a lot of time indoors at home and school, so time spent outdoors often represents a happy time for them. Mothers ($n=60$) and fathers ($n=55$) frequently reported

activities outside the home as the happiest moment: Spending days together away from home becomes a way of reserving intimate moments where the parent can devote time and attention solely to the child without other distractions. In this sense, parents often arrange some days to spend alone with their children to do activities such as going to the cinema, the park or playground, and going out to restaurants. Some parents sometimes take a day off from work to be alone with the child or to surprise the child, as told by a father and a mother who was interviewed.

For many children, spending entire days with their mother ($n=55$) or fathers ($n=46$) away from home represented the happiest moments with their parents. On these occasions, children often perceive that they have the parent all to themselves. For an 8-year-old girl child, these moments become an escape to spend time alone with her mother without her two siblings and father:

When I woke up early and went to wake up mother. Mother woke up; but all the other males in the house were still asleep. Mother said: "Shall we go to the café for breakfast alone secretly?". We went, and when we came back, mother bought me watercolours and multicolored pens. (Girl child, 8 years old)

In addition to single days spent together away from home, parents and children identified trips as the happiest parent-child moments. On these occasions, parents feel they can focus more on their children. Furthermore, vacations allow them to spend more together, get to know and see new places, and experience new situations. For example, one father recounted a camping trip with his daughter:

In my opinion, when we went camping together. [...] She was happy because she liked to experience new situations. After all, the campsite forces everyone to stay close together; there are not so many separate rooms, but it is all one shared space. (Father, 47 years old)

Excursions into nature are other moments frequently mentioned by children and parents. In fact, many parents reported that they prefer choosing outdoor, natural places to spend time with their children because, during outdoor activities, they perceive children to be free and more serene. Spending time outdoors, in contact with nature, allows children to get out of the house and domestic routines. This time spent surrounded by nature can also be instructive and children can learn new things and have new experiences.

Interviews suggested that some of the happiest moments shared by children with their fathers and mothers allude to gender stereotypes: shopping was a happy moment commonly shared only by mothers and girl children, whereas going to the stadium to watch a soccer game or a motorcycle race was a happy moment involving only fathers. However, going to watch sports competitions represented a happy father-child moment for both boy and girl children. For example, one father recounted that a match at the stadium was the happiest time spent with his daughter:

It will seem strange. [the happiest moment was] at the Napoli-Chievo soccer game, at the stadium... the famous one-nil by Napoli in the 91st minute. My daughter went

Table 2 Thematic structure, representative quotations, and frequencies

Theme	Sub-Theme	Frequencies	Examples
Activities outside the home		Children with mother ($n=55$)	Child with father: "My first plane trip, like I was 6 years old, and I was looking at a cockpit".
		Children with father ($n=46$)	Mother: "When I took her to see the first concert, we went to see a Disney concert; I bought her a ticket and took her to Rome".
Shared activities between parents and children		Mother ($n=60$)	Father: "With my son, I attended an international meeting... It was with the Pope! I saw him happier. He felt he was part of something".
		Father ($n=55$)	Child with mother: "One day, we did not know what to do, we started kneading cakes".
Happy moments of play between parents and children		Children with mother ($n=26$)	Mother: "The happiest moments [...] we spend time together, I give her make-up, and paint her nails. I think it is one of the cutest moments we have together".
		Children with father ($n=29$)	Father: "Maybe a birthday party when we threw him a Harry Potter-themed party. So, she was very happy because I attended the parties with animations, I always sneak between them".
Parent-child moments of affection		Mother ($n=35$)	Child with father: "I think with dad there is always a joy, we laugh, we joke [...], and we always play. I think every time we wrestle".
		Father ($n=29$)	Mother: "Maybe when we play the tickle game, or when she would get under a very big T-shirt that I had, she would say: <i>mom let is pretend that I am still in your belly and laugh</i> ".
Emotional affectivity		Children with mother ($n=9$)	Father: "The happiest moment was when the snow came to Naples and we made a snowman in the garden".
		Children with father ($n=43$)	Child with mother: "So on Valentine's Day, we were sleeping when he woke us up with the barrels shooting confetti and behind the wall it said "I love you".
Physical affectivity		Mother ($n=14$)	Mother: "I believe in those situations where we have simply been close, it is an intrinsic feeling between mother and daughter".
		Father ($n=4$)	Father: "It was when I returned from a mission [...]. When I returned, my daughter attached to me like... mussel on at cliff".
Relevance of material gifts		Children with mother ($n=17$)	Child with father: "Once we were hugging in Beaumont in a wood and we had to get some blackberries, raspberries, and so we hugged exchanging blackberries and raspberries".
		Children with father ($n=7$)	Mother: "He is cuddly... He really needs physical contact, so a hug, a caress... Makes him happy".
		Mother ($n=15$)	Father: "I work a lot, so in those few moments that we are together, we also cuddle in bed... So I think those are the moments".
		Father ($n=6$)	Child with mother: "When she bought me a bike!".
		Children with mother ($n=8$)	Mother: "[...] when we go together to buy something he really likes, but it is very material".
		Children with father ($n=5$)	Father: "[...] the arrival of Stella, of the little dog, that she had been asking for years and years. It was particularly touching".
		Mother ($n=13$)	
		Father ($n=9$)	

Table 2 (continued)

Theme	Sub-Theme	Frequencies	Examples
Non-specified happy moments	Not remember	Children with mother ($n=10$) Children with father ($n=8$) Mother ($n=2$) Father ($n=3$)	Child with mother: "There are many moments that I enjoy when I am with mom... There are so many that I cannot think of any". Mother: "One particular moment does not come to mind". Father: "I have difficulty identifying the particular moment".
	Lack of good moments or lack of moments spent only with parents/children	Children with mother ($n=4$) Children with father ($n=9$) Mother ($n=1$) Father ($n=7$)	Child with father: "But exactly there has not been, there has not been any at all... Because anyway, dad and I fight a lot". Mother: "Being a pair of brothers who are very close in age, they are very jealous, so there is definitely not a time when my attention was devoted exclusively to him". Father: "There is no particular moment".
	Unwilling to answer	Children with mother ($n=8$) Children with father ($n=3$) Mother ($n=1$) Father ($n=4$)	Child with mother: "Skip". Mother: "Boh, but come on, I do not get them. Exonerate me!". Father: "That I do not know. I do not know, it makes me happy every moment I look at her. I cannot tell when she has been happy".

from crying to joy because we were in a crucial point for her favorite team... and in the end they won. (Father, 48 years old)

6.2 Shared Activities between Parents and Children

The second theme regards happy moments based on activities children do with their parents, such as cooking, watching movies, organizing parties, doing small jobs, and doing homework together. This theme is quite broad, and no particular sub-themes were identified. It was frequently evoked by both children (with mother: $n=26$; with father: $n=29$) and their mothers ($n=35$) and fathers ($n=29$). However, parents reported more episodes of shared activities than children, and mothers did so more often than fathers. *Shared activities between parents and children* is the most common theme after *Activities outside the home*.

Cooking is a shared activity that often emerges between children and their mothers. This activity was only reported by girl children who identified cooking with a parent, most often with their mother, as the happiest moment:

[The happiest moment with my mother was] when we cooked pastries [...] a year ago, [we cooked] the gingerbread. [...] Because I could stay with my mother and do beautiful things. (Girl child, 6 years old)

Another topic from the transcripts refers to activities organized together, like a surprise, a day of fun activities, or, very often, a party. For example, a father described a day passed with his daughter:

Her mother and brother were not there and we stayed all day and all night alone. We were busy the whole time doing different activities from morning to night. [...] There was a moment of disconnection between routine and something that eventually was just complete dedication [...] we organized a fun-packed day. (Father, 38 years old)

Another recurring happy moment refers to episodes in which children help their parents in some activity or, conversely, episodes in which parents help children. Several participants reported how these activities created closeness between children and parents. Some examples emerged from both child's and father's transcripts:

[...] The bicycle moment (i.e., the moment she learned to ride a bicycle) was two years ago. I remember there, on the road in front of the house, she was demoralized because she could not balance. When I managed to find the system to "push" her, I saw on her face the expression of the greatest happiness. (Father, 51 years old)

[...] When we did the letter to Santa. Father helped me write, and then Christmas came [...]. (Boy child, 6 years old)

6.3 Happy Moments of Play between Parents and Children

The happiest moments, including leisure and play time that the children shared with their parents, were codified in the *Happy moments of play between parents and children* theme. Specifically, these moments reported by both children (with mother: $n=9$; with father: $n=43$) and parents (mother: $n=14$; father: $n=37$) include physical play, playful contact, or other gross motor activity (e.g., tickling, running, cycling, skiing, and playing with a ball).

Many of these play situations represent an opportunity for parents to teach their children some skills, such as riding a bicycle, skating, or skiing. For parents, play may represent a break from work where they can devote themselves entirely to their children. Sports activities (such as soccer, basketball, and skiing) were often mentioned as the happiest times, especially by fathers.

Playtime between parents and children allows adults to understand their children's thoughts and emotions but also, represents an opportunity for parents to become children again, as one 41-year-old father reported:

When I am calm, and therefore I get to play with them, not like a parent, but kind of like a child messing around with them. I see that those are the moments that remain most impressive. (Father, 41 years old)

In addition to free play, parents and children reported more structured or object-mediated play situations such as construction, puzzles, or board games. One mother recalled an episode she spent with her daughter at the beach, emphasizing the importance of spending time with her daughter without distractions:

This summer, we were at the beach, alone with no other distractions, building sand-castles. It was nice because no distractions prevented me from giving her my full attention. (Mother, 39 years old)

Finally, although reported less frequently by children and parents, other forms of parent-child play identified as the happiest moments were pretended plays. In these episodes, children and parents use play objects to represent other objects and take on play roles, including verbally relabeling objects or transforming their functions. Noteworthy was the moment reported by a girl child who recounted performing a role-playing game with her father.

When he has to take me to school, he pretends to be a robot called "X21" while washing and dressing me. And he pretends he does not know anything because he pretends to be a robot living on Saturn. He says funny things about this planet, and then when he dresses me, he says, "These are the turbo clothes. Wait, I did not say the "r" right, turbo clothes. (Girl child, 6 years old)

6.4 Parent-child Moments of Affection: Emotional and Physical Affectivity

The fourth theme that emerged from interview transcripts related to the affective aspects of the relationship between children and parents. Participants identified affection, such as care,

assistance, or kindness, as the central elements of the happiest moment spent together. Two sub-themes emerged, *emotional affectivity* and *physical affectivity*. *Emotional affectivity* (children with mother: $n=17$; children with father: $n=4$; mothers: $n=13$; fathers: $n=4$), includes the affective aspects of relationships, like emotional support, sharing, intimacy, and proximity. For instance, a 12-year-old boy recounted an example of emotional affectivity during the happiest moment he spent with his father:

My father makes me feel good because when [...] I feel bad; maybe I also vent on my own, but when something bothers me mother may take it a bit superficially. Perhaps she says: 'oh well, it does not matter' or 'do not worry'. Father is more profound [...] he says... [...] he does not say 'oh well, it doesn't matter' or 'everything will be fine': he stays a little closer and comforts me when I am sad. (Girl child, 12 years old)

Fathers do not often refer to *emotional affective* dynamics when recalling the happiest moment with their children: Only four fathers said that the happiest moments involved episodes of care affect, intimacy, or proximity. Two of these fathers framed this closeness in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the quarantine, parents and children spent more time together, and this affected their relationships:

[the happiest time with my child was] being together during the lockdown days... these things... spending more time together. (Father, 38 years old)

The second sub-theme is *physical affectivity* (children with mother: $n=17$; children with father: $n=7$; mothers: $n=15$; fathers: $n=6$), which considers the affective aspects of physical contacts, like cuddles or hugs. For instance, a 6-year-old girl recounted the following example of physical affectivity during the happiest moment she spent with her mother:

When N.N. was once sleeping on vacation in Praia Longa, and while my sister was still sleeping, I went to mother's bed, and father was snoring, so we had many cuddles. (Girl child, 6 years old)

Overall, children reported affective episodes more than their parents, and mothers generally reported more physical affection than fathers. One mother describes a happy moment with her son:

When we took a bath together in the tub. When I gave them "massacres" (figurative, means an impetuous form of cuddling), as I call them, with kisses. (Mother, 49 years old)

6.5 Relevance of Material Gifts

The fifth theme was the least frequent compared to the others and was about happy moments related to material things, such as toy gifts, clothes, and animals.

When my parents bought me [shoe brand] shoes, I wanted them for a long time. (Girl child, 9 years)

A couple of parents agreed that the moment their daughter received a specific gift was the happiest moment she experienced with them:

That was when we bought her a horse. My daughter was 6 years old, and my husband showed up at home with Biscottino. This is the horse's name. She was out of her mind. (Mother, 34 years old)

My happiest moment was when I gave her the horse she wanted so much. At those time, she was 6, and I was really happy because I made her happy. (Father, 36 years old)

Overall, it appears that mothers ($n=13$) and fathers ($n=9$) evoked happy gifts-related moments more often than children (with mothers: $n=8$; with fathers: $n=5$), and mothers reported these episodes more often than fathers.

6.6 Non-specified Happy Moments

Finally, the sixth theme contains interview transcripts of children and parents who had difficulties in recounting a happy moment spent together, which can be grouped into three sub-themes: (1) *not remember*, (2) *lack of good moments or lack of moments spent only with parents/children*; (3) *unwilling to answer*. The sub-theme *not remember* represents the difficulty in recalling a precise moment of happiness. Such difficulties were closely linked to the inability to identify a particular moment because of memory difficulties. In addition, some children failed to respond because they found it challenging to select a specific moment among the many spent with their parents:

I know the moments; I was alone with mother when N.N. was not there yet, I don't remember. I just don't remember a particular moment. (Boy child, 11 years old)

The second sub-theme, *lack of happy moments or lack of happy mother-child/father-child times*, indicates the absence of happy moments in which the child and each parent were alone. Some children reported a lack of happy moments spent exclusively with one parent because other people (e.g., another parent, siblings) were always present.

A 46-year-old mother with two children reported that she was unable to spend time alone with one of her child because his sibling gets jealous or felt hurt because the brother stole her attention.

So, being a pair of brothers very close in age, they are very jealous, so there has not been a moment when my attention has been devoted exclusively to him. (Mother, 46-year-old)

The third sub-theme, *unwilling to answer*, indicates the inability or refusal to respond. In these transcripts, both children and parents had difficulty reporting a happy moment spent

together and were asked to skip the question. Often, children and parents reported that they did not know how to respond. Some parents had trouble taking their children's point of view, unable to imagine what moments they would consider happiest:

I honestly do not know, I cannot think of a particular moment, but I do not believe there is [...] I do not know how my daughter might answer that question. (Father, 49-year-old)

6.7 Parent-Child Agreement on Happy Moments

Descriptive statistics of happy moments with mother and father reported by both children and parents are presented in Table 3. As reported by both children and parents, the most common happy moments with mother and father were related to *Activities outside the home*. *Shared activities between parents and children* were also among the most frequently reported happy moments with both parents. However, some differences can be seen between happy moments with mother and father. Affectionate moments were more common when referring to happy moments with the mother, while playful activities were more common when referring to happy moments with the father.

Interestingly, about 14% of the children were unable to evoke happy moments with their mothers, in contrast to about 3% of the mothers who were unable to evoke happy moments with their children. This discrepancy was smaller when referring to happy moments with the father (i.e., 13% of children versus 9% of fathers were unable to evoke happy moments). Kappa coefficients were used to examine parent-children agreement on shared happy moments. The obtained κ values indicated a poor agreement on both happy moments with the mother, $\kappa=0.17$, $p<0.001$, and happy moments with the father, $\kappa=0.09$, $p=0.026$.

A McNemar Chi-Square test was conducted to test the frequency differences between happy moments with the mother and happy moments with the father reported by children (Table 4). The results show that children were almost six times more likely ($OR=5.6$) to report affectionate moments with their mother than with their father. In contrast, they were almost eight times more likely ($OR=7.8$) to report playful moments with their father than with their mother.

Table 3 Frequency of happy moments with mother and father reported by children and parents

	Happy moments with mother		Happy moments with father	
	Child's perspective	Mother's perspective	Child's perspective	Father's perspective
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Activities outside the home	55 (35.70%)	60 (39.00%)	46 (29.90%)	55 (35.70%)
Shared activities between parents and children	26 (16.90%)	35 (22.70%)	29 (18.80%)	29 (18.80%)
Happy moments of play between parents and children	9 (5.80%)	14 (9.10%)	43 (27.90%)	37 (24.00%)
Parent-child moments of affection	34 (22.10%)	28 (18.20%)	11 (7.10%)	10 (6.50%)
Relevance of material gifts	8 (5.20%)	13 (8.40%)	5 (3.20%)	9 (5.80%)
Non-specified happy moments	22 (14.30%)	4 (2.60%)	20 (13.00%)	14 (9.10%)

Note. $N=154$.

Table 4 Chi-square differences between happy moments with mother and happy moments with father reported by children

	Child's perspective			McNemar χ^2
	Happy moments with mother	Happy moments with father	Total happy moments	
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Activities outside the home	55 (54.50%)	46 (45.50%)	101 (100.00%)	1.72
Shared activities between parents and children	26 (47.30%)	29 (52.70%)	55 (100.00%)	0.26
Happy moments of play between parents and children	9 (17.30%)	43 (82.70%)	52 (100.00%)	26.27***
Parent-child moments of affection	34 (75.60%)	11 (24.40%)	45 (100.00%)	16.03***
Relevance of material gifts	8 (61.50%)	5 (38.50%)	13 (100.00%)	0.82
Non-specified happy moments	22 (52.40%)	20 (47.60%)	42 (100.00%)	0.13

Note. $N=154$. *** $p<0.001$.

Table 5 Chi-square differences between happy moments with mother and happy moments with father reported by parents

	Parents' perspective			McNemar χ^2
	Happy moments with mother	Happy moments with father	Total happy moments	
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Activities outside the home	60 (52.20%)	55 (47.80%)	115 (100.00%)	0.40
Shared activities between parents and children	35 (54.70%)	29 (45.30%)	64 (100.00%)	0.69
Happy moments of play between parents and children	14 (27.50%)	37 (72.50%)	51 (100.00%)	13.56***
Parent-child moments of affection	28 (73.70%)	10 (26.30%)	38 (100.00%)	10.80**
Relevance of material gifts	13 (59.10%)	9 (40.90%)	22 (100.00%)	1.00
Non-specified happy moments	4 (22.20%)	14 (77.80%)	18 (100.00%)	5.56*

Note. $N=154$. * $p<0.05$. ** $p<0.01$. *** $p<0.001$.

Similar differences were found using the parents' perspective (Table 5). Mothers were four times more likely than fathers to report affectionate moments ($OR=4.00$), whereas fathers were almost four times more likely than mothers to report playful moments ($OR=3.88$). Interestingly, fathers were three times less likely than mothers to evoke happy moments with their children ($OR=3.5$).

7 Discussion

The present research used quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the experiences of children's moments of happiness shared with their parents. Regarding quantitative measures, the *Faces Scale* showed that children's average happiness levels were high from parents' and children's perspectives, although the agreement between the children's and their parents' responses was low. In line with the literature reporting differences in parents' and children's perspectives in assessing children's happiness (Lagattuta et al., 2012; López-Pérez & Wilson, 2015) and confirming the first research hypothesis, the results showed

that parents recruited for this study do not seem to accurately identify their children's emotional states, probably due to the presence of negative bias or egocentric bias. However, the distribution was highly positively skewed, as usually observed for families composed of cohabiting parents without some negative experiences, such as conflicting divorces. Indeed, children and parents reported principally the higher options (6 and 7). Future research should further confirm this finding by examining other family structures.

The second research hypothesis that predicted age differences in happiness levels was confirmed. Indeed, research findings showed that younger children report being happier than preadolescents. This is in line with prior research showing that children tend to report higher levels of self-esteem and more positive self-perceptions than other age groups (Baiocco et al., 2019). Actually, preadolescence, with its substantial physical and bodily transformations and profound psychological and relational changes, often represents an emotionally stressful period that can affect the experience of happiness (Verrastro et al., 2020).

Consistent with the third research hypothesis, the results showed no significant gender differences in happiness levels. This result is similar to these studies that did not find gender differences in children's happiness (Uusitalo-Malmivaara, 2012; Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Lehto, 2013), even used the *Faces Scale* from the children's and parents' perspectives (Verrastro et al., 2020). Thus, the controversial findings in the literature on gender differences in happiness levels (Bennefield, 2018; Gross-Manos et al., 2015; Kaye-Tzadok et al., 2017; Leto et al., 2019) could be explained by differences in both evaluators (children or indirect evaluators) and instruments used to assess children's happiness.

Moving to the qualitative part of the study, hypothesis 4 was partially confirmed: When asked to identify shared happy moments, parents and children reported episodes of activities outside the home (Eloff, 2008), shared activities (Greco & Ison, 2014), play (Giacomoni et al., 2014; López-Pérez et al., 2016), affective interactions (Maftei et al., 2020; Thoilliez, 2011) and receiving gifts (Chaplin, 2009; Eloff, 2008). In addition to these five themes found in the literature (referred to using other labels and with other connotations), an additional theme not found in the literature, *Non-specified happy moments*, was identified in the present research, comprising responses not given for various reasons, but with high frequencies and therefore worthy of further analysis.

The most frequent theme was *Activities outside the home*. Several studies have shown that activities done outdoors in nature (Coventry et al., 2021), during the holidays (Eloff, 2008), and the free time spent outside the home (Eloff, 2008; Giacomoni et al., 2014) are linked to improving children's happiness. These episodes represent a break from the monotony of the daily routine, and children are more likely to be happy when they spend time away from home, knowing that their parents can devote more care and attention to them with no distractions.

The second theme, *Shared activities between parents and children*, was comparable to other themes that emerged in previous studies, such as free time or hobbies (Eloff, 2008), shared time with other members of the families (Greco & Ison, 2014; Maftei et al., 2020), drawing or painting together (Greco & Ison, 2014), parties (Thoilliez, 2011). In the present study, this theme was operationalized as a set of more or less structured and prolonged activities carried out together by children and parents inside or outside the home, alone or with other people. Regardless of the actual form, these parent-child activities are fundamental to intergenerational relationships because they facilitate some subtle intergenerational dynamics (Crosnoe & Trinitapoli, 2008).

First, shared family activities offer an important educational opportunity through modeling or explicit teaching to transmit values, teach children special tasks, develop children's skills, and provide life lessons. In addition, engaging in activities together facilitates and strengthens parent-child bonds that increase children's psychosocial well-being and happiness (Cheng & Furnham, 2004). Thus, shared activities appear to be the context in which children not only master competencies but also learn and negotiate relationships (McAuley et al., 2012). Specifically, the study conducted by Gray et al. (2013) found that adolescents who reported spending more time with family members and perceived a high level of love and connection with their parents were happier.

Another theme was *Happy moments of play between parents and children*, which includes more or less structured moments of play between parents and children. The identification of playtime as a source of happiness supports the work of other authors, highlighting the importance of children's play with parents (Ginsburg, 2007). In addition to positive outcomes regarding psychological development, playing assumes an important role concerning happiness in the family context (Eloff, 2008; Giacomoni et al., 2014; Greco & Ison, 2014; Maftei et al., 2020). Children use play to express their feelings about themselves and their world, release tension and anxiety, and discharge aggression. Still, the play also allows them to express their positive emotions, such as joy, happiness, surprise, and satisfaction (Landreth & Homeyer, 2021). In addition, play interactions between parents and children can bring families closer together, strengthen parent-child relationships, and promote children's emotional well-being (Gardner & Ward, 2000; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012).

The fourth theme that emerged was *Parent-child moments of affection*, which includes moments of affective interactions of an emotional and physical nature between parents and children. This theme is comparable to other themes that emerged in previous studies, although centered on attachment security (Greco & Ison, 2014), responsible parental care (Eloff, 2008), or just positive affect (Giacomoni et al., 2014; Greco & Ison, 2014). Overall, previous studies found that feeling safe, protected, and loved by parents were reasons for children's well-being and happiness (Fattore et al., 2009; Greco & Ison, 2014).

Moreover, in parent-child relationships, affection exchanges are linked to lower stress and better well-being for the child (Hesse et al., 2018). Previous research on affection in family contexts shows that mothers express more affection to their children than fathers (Floyd, 2002; Hesse et al., 2018). Indeed, in the present research, mothers report more frequently a physical or emotional affective episode as the happiest moment spent with their children than fathers. Similarly, children report affective episodes with their mothers more frequently than with their fathers.

The theme with the lowest frequencies according to parents' and children's transcripts was *Relevance of material gifts*, including the happiest moments when children received material gifts, such as toys or clothes. Other studies have identified this theme as relevant to children's happiness (Chaplin, 2009; Eloff, 2008; Maftei et al., 2020), although previous studies found that materialism increases from middle childhood to preadolescence and declines during adolescence (Chaplin & John, 2007). Interestingly, comparing children's and parents' responses showed that the latter refers more often to material aspects as a source of happiness than children.

In several cases, parents who consider receiving gifts as a source of happiness have children who feel happier during moments of affection, play, or shared activity with their parents. The recent study by Chaplin and colleagues (2020) found that, from chil-

dren's and parents' perspectives, younger children indicated material goods as sources of happiness more than experiences. During adolescence, happiness from experiences gradually exceeded happiness derived from material goods. Parents probably tended to underestimate their children's cognitive abilities, giving more importance to material aspects than children.

Finally, *Non-specified happy moments* was another theme that emerged from this study. Due to the high number of frequencies, it was preferred to be considered an informative theme in its own right rather than a non-theme. In fact, a systematic understanding of the experience of remembering happy moments is still lacking (Sotgiu, 2016) despite its importance in the construction of individual identity (Berntsen & Rubin, 2004; Berntsen et al., 2011). Several children in this study experienced two types of difficulties recalling happy moments due to: (1) expressing one's internal emotional states; (2) the conscious willingness to choose not to express memories related to one's emotional states (probably because they are shy or because they feel uncomfortable with the interviewers). Thus, young children may find it difficult to encode, organize, archive, or recall the happy times spent with their parents until they can process abstract concepts (Chaplin et al., 2020). Confirming the fifth and last research hypothesis, gender-typical behaviors emerge from parents' and children's perspectives for both *Happy moments of play between parents and children* and *Parent-child moments of affection* themes. Regarding fathers, moments of relationship with their children refer to the playful sphere, in line with the literature (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013). Children's and parents' interviews showed that children's happy moments at play were more frequent with their father than with their mother. Moreover, in the reported happy moments of parent-child play, gender differences also emerge in the type of play: mothers played in more static ways, such as role-playing or organized playing, which often include the use of objects (e.g., toys or tools), whereas fathers played in more physical forms, such as rough-and-tumble play (Coyl-Shepherd & Hanlon, 2013; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2013). These findings align with previous studies, which reported that boys mainly mention play or fun activities in general (Businaro et al., 2015; Giacomoni et al., 2014; Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2016).

On the other hand, both from children's and parents' perspectives, happy moments spent with mothers referred to the sphere of affectivity, feelings, and intimacy. This result is consistent with the literature: girls were more likely to emphasize relational and emotional well-being (Businaro et al., 2015; Giacomoni et al., 2014; Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2016). Probably, the pointing out of stereotypical gender roles by children derives from the fact that, in childhood, gender stereotypes may be considered moral absolutes to which one must rigidly conform, and only at preadolescence is it understood that they represent social conventions that can be flexibly applied. Furthermore, even from the parents' perspective, studies highlighted differences in the gender roles expressed by mothers and fathers. Cultural studies showed that mothers and fathers were equally available and responsive to some signals emitted by children; however, mothers were associated with taking care of their children, while fathers were associated with a more playful, stimulating, and vigorous type of interaction (Parke, 2002).

In addition, regarding the *Activities outside the home* theme, it was found that some of the happiest times children spend with their parents reflect gender norms. For example, going shopping was a happy time frequently shared only by mothers and daugh-

ters, whereas going to the stadium to watch a soccer match or a motorcycle race was a happy time shared predominantly by fathers and sons, but sometimes also by daughters. This finding suggests that some gender schemas children use to reorganize their reality (Bem, 1981; Martin & Dinella, 2002; Perry et al., 2019) may also be relevant to identifying moments of happiness. In addition, studies found that girl children tended to choose more “other-gender-appropriate” activities, showing greater social freedom in participating in sports and physical activity (Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006), more than did boy children, probably because the latter experience more significant pressure from early childhood to conform to cultural gender stereotypes.

7.1 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Some limitations should be noted when interpreting the results of this study. First, this study used an Italian non-probabilistic convenience sample that may not reflect families’ experiences in other cultural contexts. Second, this study used a sample of families composed of a mother, a father, and at least one child, which could limit the generalizability of the results to other types of families, such as single-parent families or families with same-sex parents. Third, the data were cross-sectional and limited to families with children aged 6–13 years. Future longitudinal studies could enrich our understanding of how experiences and memories of shared happy moments evolve over time for both children and parents at different stages of child development.

Fourth, although this study combined interviews and self-report measures, parents and children may have provided socially acceptable responses to portray an idealized and normalized image of their family. Fifth, this study focused on children’s happy moments shared with their parents using a single item and an interview. Future studies could assess children’s happiness using other sources of information (e.g., other relatives and teachers) and more robust quantitative scales (Holder & Coleman, 2009), taking into consideration different social-ecological contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), such as the school context and friendship network. Future research should use multiple methods to identify individual, relational, and family variables associated with parents’ and children’s ability to remember shared happy moments and implement targeted strategies to promote children’s happiness and well-being, considering the family system.

8 Conclusions

The results that emerged from this study underline the need for more scientific attention to the components of children’s happiness to promote greater social and emotional well-being during childhood. Research on children’s happiness could help to identify and promote interventions and programs to increase happiness in children, including knowledge of those predictors that can improve their happiness, such as family relationships (Izzo et al., 2022; Orejudo et al., 2021). Identifying these individual and environmental factors makes it feasible to evaluate which aspects contribute to enhancing or worsening children’s well-being.

Using quantitative and qualitative techniques, the present research explored the moments of happiness children shared with their parents. In doing so, we examined the

perspectives of both children and parents. While parents and children reported similar themes, it was found that both mothers and fathers experienced some challenges in recognizing their children's perspectives and identifying their happiest moments spent together. Our decision to investigate these factors from both children's and parents' perspectives was driven by examining critical components of the happiest moments within families as potential indicators of family well-being because families serve as prime educational agencies and continue to be privileged environments for human psychological development (Izzo et al., 2022).

After examining both viewpoints, we evaluated the divergence between parents' and children's perspectives. Their minimal level of accord indicates that parents may not always clearly understand or recognize their children's happy moments. The discrepancy in viewpoints may hinder parents from encouraging positive activities in their children, causing them to miss opportunities to engage together in meaningful and constructive developmental happy moments, which could positively impact their children's well-being and satisfaction levels.

We believe there is a requirement for increased scientific focus on children's happiness to encourage greater social and relational well-being throughout childhood, with several positive outcomes in adulthood (Diener et al., 2009). Indeed, children's happiness is a protective factor for all intents and purposes (Baiocco et al., 2019; Holder & Klassen, 2010). Children and adolescents who experience greater levels of happiness are less inclined to develop negative psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues. For this reason, based on the findings of this study, investigating happiness in children can assist caregivers in developing effective happiness-promoting behaviors in children to promote children's general and family happiness.

Author Contributions Conceptualization: Roberto Baiocco, Flavia Izzo and Jessica Pistella; Methodology: Roberto Baiocco and Jessica Pistella; Data Collection: Edoardo Saija and Flavia Izzo; Validation: Roberto Baiocco, Flavia Izzo and Jessica Pistella; Formal analysis and investigation: Salvatore Ioverno and Susanna Pallini; Writing—original draft preparation: Flavia Izzo and Edoardo Saija; Writing—review and editing: Roberto Baiocco, Flavia Izzo and Jessica Pistella; Supervision: Roberto Baiocco, Jessica Pistella, Susanna Pallini, and Salvatore Ioverno; Project administration: Roberto Baiocco. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding The authors did not receive support from any organization for the submitted work. Open access funding provided by Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza within the CRUI-CARE Agreement.

Data Availability Data and materials will be made available to the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Code Availability Not applicable.

Declarations

Ethical Approval The study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology of Development and Socialization Processes, Sapienza University of Rome.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Abdel-Khalek, A. M. (2006). Measuring happiness with a single-item Scale. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 34(2), 139–150. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2006.34.2.139>.
- Al Nima, A., Archer, T., & Garcia, D. (2012). Adolescents' happiness-increasing strategies, temperament, and character: Mediation models on subjective well-being. *Health*, 4(10), 802–810. <https://doi.org/10.4236/health.2012.410124>.
- Baiocco, R., & Pistella, J. (2019). Be as you are clinical research center at the Sapienza University of Rome. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 23(4), 376–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2019.1644572>.
- Baiocco, R., Verrastro, V., Fontanesi, L., Ferrara, M. P., & Pistella, J. (2019). The contributions of self-esteem, loneliness, and friendship to children's happiness: The roles of gender and age. *Child Indicators Research*, 12(4), 1413–1433. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-018-9595-7>.
- Bem, S. L. (1981). Gender schema theory: A cognitive account of sex typing. *Psychological Review*, 88(4), 354–364. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.88.4.354>.
- Bennefeld, Z. (2018). School and family correlates of positive affect in a nationally representative sample of US adolescents. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 35(5), 541–548. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-018-0539-3>.
- Bernini, C., & Tampieri, A. (2019). Happiness in Italian cities. *Regional Studies*, 53(11), 1614–1624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1597266>.
- Berntsen, D., & Rubin, D. C. (2004). Cultural life scripts structure recall from autobiographical memory. *Memory & Cognition*, 32(3), 427–442. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03195836>.
- Berntsen, D., Rubin, D. C., & Siegler, I. C. (2011). Two versions of life: Emotionally negative and positive life events have different roles in the organization of life story and identity. *Emotion*, 11(5), 1190–1201. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024940>.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Businaro, N., Pons, F., & Albanese, O. (2015). Do intelligence, intensity of felt emotions and emotional regulation have an impact on life satisfaction? A quali-quantitative study on subjective well-being with Italian children aged 8–11. *Child Indicators Research*, 8(2), 439–458. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-014-9250-x>.
- Cardoso, A. R., Fontainha, E., & Monfardini, C. (2010). Children's and parents' time use: Empirical evidence on investment in human capital in France, Germany and Italy. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 8(4), 479–504. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-010-9090-5>.
- Casas, F., Bello, A., González, M., & Aligué, M. (2013). Children's subjective well-being measured using a composite index: What impacts Spanish first-year secondary education students' subjective well-being? *Child Indicators Research*, 6(3), 433–460. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-013-9182-x>.
- Chaplin, L. N. (2009). Please may I have a bike? Better yet, may I have a hug? An examination of children's and adolescents' happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10(5), 541–562. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-008-9108-3>.
- Chaplin, L. N., & John, D. R. (2007). Growing up in a material world: Age differences in materialism in children and adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(4), 480–493. <https://doi.org/10.1086/518546>.
- Chaplin, L. N., Lowrey, T. M., Ruvio, A. A., Shrum, L. J., & Vohs, K. D. (2020). Age differences in children's happiness from material goods and experiences: The role of memory and theory of mind. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 37(3), 572–586. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2020.01.004>.

- Cheng, H., & Furnham, A. (2004). Perceived parental rearing style, self-esteem and self-criticism as predictors of happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 5(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:J OHS.0000021704.35267.05>.
- Cohen, J. (1960). A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 20(1), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316446002000104>.
- Coventry, P. A., Brown, J. E., Pervin, J., Brabyn, S., Pateman, R., Breedvelt, J., & White, P. L. (2021). Nature-based outdoor activities for mental and physical health: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *SSM-Population Health*, 16, 100934. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100934>.
- Coyl-Shepherd, D. D., & Hanlon, C. (2013). Family play and leisure activities: Correlates of parents' and children's socio-emotional well-being. *International Journal of Play*, 2(3), 254–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2013.855376>.
- Crosnoe, R., & Trinitapoli, J. (2008). Shared family activities and the transition from childhood into adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 18(1), 23–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2008.00549.x>.
- De Silva, A. D., Gao, M. M., Barni, D., Donato, S., Miller-Graff, L. E., & Cummings, E. M. (2021). Interparental conflict on Italian adolescent adjustment: The role of insecurity within the family. *Journal of Family Issues*, 42(3), 671–692. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X20927749>.
- Diener, E., Scollon, C. N., & Lucas, R. E. (2009). The evolving concept of subjective well-being: The multifaceted nature of happiness. In E. Diener (Ed.), *Assessing well-being: The collected works of Ed Diener* (pp. 67–100). Springer Science & Business Media. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2354-4_4.
- Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2018). Advances and open questions in the science of subjective well-being. *Collabra: Psychology*, 4(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.1525/collabra.115>.
- Eagly, A. H., & Mladinic, A. (1989). Gender stereotypes and attitudes toward women and men. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 15(4), 543–558. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167289154008>.
- Eisenchlas, S. A. (2013). Gender roles and expectations: Any changes online? *Sage Open*, 3(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013506446>.
- Eloff, I. (2008). In pursuit of happiness: How some young South African children construct happiness. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 18(1), 81–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2008.10820174>.
- Ercegovac, I. R., Maglica, T., & Ljubetić, M. (2021). The relationship between self-esteem, self-efficacy, family and life satisfaction, loneliness and academic achievement during adolescence. *Croatian Journal of Education*, 23(1), 65–83. <https://doi.org/10.15516/cje.v23i0.4049>.
- Fattore, T., Mason, J., & Watson, E. (2009). When children are asked about their well-being: Towards a framework for guiding policy. *Child Indicators Research*, 2, 57–77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-008-9025-3>.
- Floyd, K. (2002). Human affection exchange: V. attributes of the highly affectionate. *Communication Quarterly*, 50(2), 135–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370209385653>.
- Gardner, F., & Ward, S. (2000). Parent child interaction and children's well-being: Reducing conduct problems and promoting conscience development. In A. Buchanan, & B. Hudson (Eds.), *Promoting children's Emotional Well-being* (pp. 95–127). Oxford University Press.
- Giacomini, C. H., Souza, L. K. D., & Hutz, C. S. (2014). The concept of happiness in children. *Psico-USF*, 19(1), 143–153. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-82712014000100014>.
- Ginsburg, K. R., & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. (2007). The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent-child bonds. *Pediatrics*, 119(1), 182–191. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-2697>.
- Gleave, J., & Cole-Hamilton, I. (2012). *A literature review on the effects of a lack of play on children's lives*. Play England.
- Goldbeck, L., Schmitz, T. G., Besier, T., Herschbach, P., & Henrich, G. (2007). Life satisfaction decreases during adolescence. *Quality of Life Research*, 16(6), 969–979. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-007-9205-5>.
- Gómez, D. O., Aznar, C. F., & Alfaro Inzunza, J. (2019). Family, school, and Neighbourhood microsystems influence on children's life satisfaction in Chile. *Child Indicators Research*, 12(6), 1915–1933. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-018-9617-5>.
- González-Carrasco, M., Casas, F., Viñas, F., Malo, S., Gras, M. E., & Bedin, L. (2017). What leads subjective well-being to change throughout adolescence? An exploration of potential factors. *Child Indicators Research*, 10(1), 33–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-015-9359-6>.
- Gray, R. S., Chamrathirong, A., Pattaravanich, U., & Prasartkul, P. (2013). Happiness among adolescent students in Thailand: Family and non-family factors. *Social Indicators Research*, 110, 703–719. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9954-y>.
- Greco, C., & Ison, M. (2014). What makes you happy? Appreciating the reasons that bring happiness to Argentine children living in vulnerable social contexts. *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, 6(1), 4–18. <https://doi.org/10.18085/las.6.1.q8158245p8267638>.
- Gross-Manos, D., Shimoni, E., & Ben-Arieh, A. (2015). Subjective well-being measures tested with 12-year-olds in Israel. *Child Indicators Research*, 8(1), 71–92. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-014-9282-2>.

- Hallers-Haalboom, E. T., Groeneveld, M. G., van Berkel, S. R., Endendijk, J. J., van der Pol, L. D., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., & Mesman, J. (2016). Wait until your mother gets home! Mothers' and fathers' discipline strategies. *Social Development, 25*(1), 82–98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12130>.
- Hesse, C., Mikkelsen, A. C., & Saracco, S. (2018). Parent–child affection and helicopter parenting: Exploring the concept of excessive affection. *Western Journal of Communication, 82*(4), 457–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2017.1362705>.
- Holder, M. D. (2012). *Happiness in children: Measurement, correlates, and enhancement of positive subjective well-being*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Holder, M. D., & Coleman, B. (2009). The contribution of social relationships to children's happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 10*(3), 329–349. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-007-9083-0>.
- Holder, M. D., & Klassen, A. (2010). Temperament and happiness in children. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 11*(4), 419–439. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9149-2>.
- Istituto Italiano di Statistica (ISTAT) [Italian Institute of Statistics] (2015). Matrimoni, separazioni e divorzi (statistiche report) [Marriages, separations and divorces (statistic report)]. Istituto nazionale di statistica. <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2016/11/matrimoni-separazioni-divorzi-2015.pdf>.
- Izzo, F., Baiocco, R., & Pistella, J. (2022). Children's and adolescents' happiness and family functioning: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19*(24), 16593. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192416593>.
- Kaye-Tzadok, A., Kim, S. S., & Main, G. (2017). Children's subjective well-being in relation to gender—what can we learn from dissatisfied children? *Children and Youth Services Review, 80*, 96–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.06.058>.
- Lagattuta, K. H., Sayfan, L., & Bamford, C. (2012). Do you know how I feel? Parents underestimate worry and overestimate optimism compared to child self-report. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 113*(2), 211–232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2012.04.001>.
- Landreth, G., & Homeyer, L. (2021). Play as the language of children's feelings. In D. P. Fromberg, & D. Bergen (Eds.), *Play from birth to twelve and beyond: Contexts, perspectives, and meanings* (pp. 193–198). Routledge.
- Leto, I. V., Petrenko, E. N., & Slobodskaya, H. R. (2019). Life satisfaction in Russian primary schoolchildren: Links with personality and family environment. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 20*(6), 1893–1912. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-018-0036-6>.
- López-Pérez, B., & Wilson, E. L. (2015). Parent–child discrepancies in the assessment of children's and adolescents' happiness. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 139*, 249–255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2015.06.006>.
- López-Pérez, B., Sánchez, J., & Gummerum, M. (2016). Children's and adolescents' conceptions of happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 17*(6), 2431–2455. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-015-9701-1>.
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin, 131*(6), 803–855. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.803>.
- Maftei, A., Holman, A. C., & Cărlig, E. R. (2020). Does your child think you're happy? Exploring the associations between children's happiness and parenting styles. *Children and Youth Services Review, 115*, 105074. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105074>.
- Martin, C. L., & Dinella, L. M. (2002). Children's gender cognitions, the social environment, and sex differences in cognitive domains. In A. McGillicuddy-De Lisi & R. De Lisi (Ed.), *Biology, society, and behavior: The development of sex differences in cognition* (pp. 207–239). Ablex.
- McAuley, C., McKeown, C., & Merriman, B. (2012). Spending time with family and friends: Children's views on relationships and shared activities. *Child Indicators Research, 5*, 449–467. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-012-9158-2>.
- Migliorini, L., Tassara, T., & Rania, N. (2019). A study of subjective well-being and life satisfaction in Italy: How are children doing at 8 years of age? *Child Indicators Research, 12*(1), 49–69. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-017-9514-3>.
- Nes, R. B. (2010). Happiness in behaviour genetics: Findings and implications. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 11*, 369–381. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9145-6>.
- Nes, R. B., & Røysamb, E. (2017). Happiness in Behaviour Genetics: An update on heritability and changeability. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 18*, 1533–1552. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9781-6>.
- Orejudo, S., Balaguer, Á., Osorio, A., de la Rosa, P. A., & Lopez-del Burgo, C. (2021). Activities and relationships with parents as key ecological assets that encourage personal positive youth development. *Journal of Community Psychology, 50*(2), 896–915. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22689>.
- Otsuka, Y., Kaneita, Y., Itani, O., Jike, M., Osaki, Y., Higuchi, S., Kanda, H., Kinjo, A., Kuwabara, Y., & Yoshimoto, H. (2020). The relationship between subjective happiness and sleep problems in Japanese adolescents. *Sleep Medicine, 69*, 120–126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2020.01.008>.
- Park, N. (2005). Life satisfaction among Korean children and youth: A developmental perspective. *School Psychology International, 26*(2), 209–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034305052914>.

- Parke, R. D. (2002). Fathers and families. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Being and becoming a parent* (pp. 27–73). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Perry, D. G., Pauletti, R. E., & Cooper, P. J. (2019). Gender identity in childhood: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 43*(4), 289–304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025418811129>.
- Psouni, E., Breinholst, S., Hoff Esbjørn, B., & Steele, H. (2020). Factor structure of the friends and Family interview. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 61*(3), 460–469. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12604>.
- Sargeant, J. (2010). The altruism of preadolescent children's perspectives on 'worry' and 'happiness' in Australia and England. *Childhood, 17*(3), 411–425. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568209341087>.
- Schmalz, D. L., & Kerstetter, D. L. (2006). Girlie girls and manly men: Children's stigma consciousness of gender in sports and physical activities. *Journal of Leisure Research, 38*(4), 536–557. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2006.11950091>.
- Schneider, L., & Schimmack, U. (2009). Self-informant agreement in well-being ratings: A meta-analysis. *Social Indicators Research, 94*(3), 363–376. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-009-9440-y>.
- Schnettler, B., Lobos, G., Miranda-Zapata, E., Denegri, M., Ares, G., & Hueche, C. (2017). Diet quality and satisfaction with life, family life, and food-related life across families: A cross-sectional pilot study with mother-father-adolescent triads. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 14*(11), 1313–1337. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14111313>.
- Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Kotila, L. E., Jia, R., Lang, S. N., & Bower, D. J. (2013). Comparisons of levels and predictors of mothers' and fathers' engagement with their preschool-aged children. *Early Child Development and Care, 183*(3–4), 498–514.
- Shek, D. T. L. (2001). Chinese adolescents and their parents' views on a happy family: Implications for family therapy. *Family Therapy, 28*(2), 73–104.
- Sotgiu, I. (2016). How do we remember happy life events? A comparison between eudaimonic and hedonic autobiographical memories. *The Journal of Psychology, 150*(6), 685–703. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2016.1162764>.
- Steele, H., & Steele, M. (2005). The construct of coherence as an indicator of attachment security in middle childhood: The friends and family interview. In K. Kerns, & R. Richardson (Eds.), *Attachment in middle childhood* (pp. 137–160). Guilford Press.
- Swinyard, W., Kau, A., & Phua, H. (2001). Happiness, materialism, and religious experience in the US and Singapore. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 2*, 13–32. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1011596515474>.
- Thoilliez, B. (2011). How to grow up happy: An exploratory study on the meaning of happiness from children's voices. *Child Indicators Research, 4*(2), 323–351. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-011-9107-5>.
- Uusitalo-Malmivaara, L. (2012). Global and school-related happiness in Finnish children. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 13*, 601–619. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9282-6>.
- Uusitalo-Malmivaara, L., & Lehto, J. E. (2013). Social factors explaining children's subjective happiness and depressive symptoms. *Social Indicators Research, 111*(2), 603–615. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-012-0022-z>.
- Verrastro, V., Ritella, G., Saladino, V., Pistella, J., Baiocco, R., & Fontanesi, L. (2020). Personal and family correlates to happiness amongst Italian children and preadolescents. *International Journal of Emotional Education, 12*(1), 48–64.
- Waters, L. (2020). Using positive psychology interventions to strengthen family happiness: A family systems approach. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 15*(5), 645–652. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2020.1789704>.
- Yaffe, Y. (2023). Systematic review of the differences between mothers and fathers in parenting styles and practices. *Current Psychology, 42*(19), 16011–16024. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-01014-6>.

Authors and Affiliations

Flavia Izzo¹  · Edoardo Saija¹  · Susanna Pallini²  · Salvatore Ioverno²  ·
Roberto Baiocco¹  · Jessica Pistella¹ 

✉ Roberto Baiocco
roberto.baiocco@uniroma1.it

Flavia Izzo
flavia.izzo@uniroma1.it

Edoardo Saija
edoardo.saija@uniroma1.it

Susanna Pallini
susanna.pallini@uniroma3.it

Salvatore Ioverno
salvatore.ioverno@uniroma3.it

Jessica Pistella
jessica.pistella@uniroma1.it

¹ Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, Faculty of Medicine and Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy

² Department of Education Science, University of Roma Tre, Rome, Italy