

**UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES
FEDERICO II**



DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES

**PHD COURSE IN MIND, GENDER AND LANGUAGE
XXXIII CYCLE**

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**WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD?
WELL-BEING IN A GENDER AND
MATTERING LENS**

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Academic year 2019-2020

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INTRODUCTION

Well-being is a concept of high priority interest in psychology. In addition to being a valuable result in itself, the measurement and improvement of forms of well-being have become a fundamental objective for the politics of many countries around the world (Forgeard et al., 2011; Prilleltensky et al., 2015).

This interest has resulted in the intensification of studies on this topic in recent years. Since the 1950s, the definition of well-being as a state to be pursued and not as a mere absence of malaise (WHO, 1986) led many scholars to question the subjective aspects of this concept, separating them from the objective aspects. That is, it becomes clear that being healthy does not guarantee a person feelings of well-being (Naci & Ioannidis, 2015) and that objective indicators of well-being (such as income) can only give a partial account of what it means to live well (Stiglitz et al., 2009).

Despite this high interest, well-being studies have been characterized by disagreement between scholars about its definition. Definitions of well-being often differ by discipline and are often confused with related topics such as quality of life, happiness and well-being related to health.

Theories of well-being are problematic because of their vast number. For example, some researchers approach it from the perspective of basic human needs (Maslow, 1943; 2013), while others examine the capabilities of individuals (Sen, 1999).

On the one hand, subjective well-being has often been divided into an affective component, concerning emotions and a cognitive component, concerning the way people evaluate their lives (Nieboer et al., 2005; Simsek, 2011). On the other hand, the difference between subjective well-being and terms used interchangeably seemed unclear. Subjective well-being has been used as a synonym for happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), mental health (Tennant et al., 2007), and psychological health (Kozma & Stones, 1980).

In the literature, therefore, incomplete and unclear definitions have been provided. In general, however, it is possible to retrace a factor common to almost all the definitions provided, namely that well-being has often been defined as a multidimensional construct (Ryff, 1989). Indeed, there is broad agreement that well-being implies satisfaction with life as a whole and with specific domains, such as physical health, mental health, economic situation and interpersonal relationships. (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006; Diener et al., 2010; Seligman, 2011; Chmiel et al., 2012).

In particular, Diener and colleagues (2009) tried to synthesize the different definitions, developing a hierarchical model. At the highest level, there is overall subjective well-being; at the lowest level, there are four specific domains: positive affects, negative affects, general satisfaction and domain-specific satisfaction (for work, for relationships, for health, etc.).

Furthermore, Gonzalez et al. (2010) demonstrated the effects of evaluating specific life domains (relationships, health, stimulation and outcomes) on overall life satisfaction: the higher the specific domains, the higher the general subjective well-being level. And vice versa, the higher the satisfaction with life in general, the higher the satisfaction in specific domains (Pavot & Diener, 2008).

Finally, in their systematic review, Linton et al. (2016) found that the different theories of well-being consider dimensions that can be grouped around seven themes: overall well-being, mental well-being, social well-being, physical well-being, spiritual well-being, personal circumstances, and activity and functioning. The authors concluded that well-being should be understood as a multidimensional construct, reflecting themes that often overlap. It contains positive phenomena such as joy and social acceptance, negative phenomena such as anxiety and pain, subjective sensations and perceptions and material circumstances or more objective health states.

Starting from these considerations on the multidimensional nature of well-being, the present paper is structured in such a way as to pursue three main objectives.

The first objective is to present a broad overview of well-being studies from the middle of the last century to today.

To this aim, in the first chapter, an excursus of the history of this concept will be presented. The chapter will start from the concept of the biomedical model, within which there was a tendency to attribute to problems concerning health conditions, an internal cause to the individual, or of an intrapsychic nature, and in which the disease was also considered from a dichotomous perspective; or it established its presence in an individual based on strict presence/absence criteria (DSM-I, APA, 1952; DSM-II, APA, 1968).

Subsequently, the chapter will highlight two other approaches. First, the preventive approach, which recognizes for the first time the importance of the environment (both physical and social), as well as that of intrapsychic factors, in determining the health of the individual (Bloom, 1968; Heller et al., 1984; Cowen, 1980). Secondly, the health promotion approach, proposed by the bio-psycho-social model, emphasizes the interaction between the individual and the environment, considered on multiple levels, and the recognition of people of an active role protecting of one's own well-being (Engel, 1977).

The concepts of the well-being of Positive Psychology and the ecological approach will then be presented, focusing on the similarities and differences between these two important theoretical strands. In fact, if on the one hand, Positive Psychology focused more on an individualistic vision of well-being, emphasizing some constructs of a subjective nature, such as life satisfaction, or like positive emotions and fulfilment (Diener, 2000; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Seligman, 2011), on the other hand, the ecological approach treated well-being as a multilevel concept, therefore relating both to the individual, to relationships, to organizations and to communities (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006; Prilleltensky, 2012; 2013).

Finally, particular relevance will be given to the I COPPE model proposed by Isaac Prilleltensky and colleagues (2015). In addition to overall well-being, six specific dimensions are considered: interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological and economic well-being.

Given the distinctive theoretical elements of well-being according to the different perspectives examined, the second objective of this thesis is to investigate the factors that affect well-being and which may explain different levels of well-being among individuals. In particular, the following topics will be dealt with: mattering, social justice and gender-related stereotypes and discrimination. Infact, chapters 2, 3 and 4 are dedicated respectively to the in-depth study of these three concepts.

Mattering is the feeling of being important and interesting for others, of having value for oneself and for others (Prilleltensky, 2014). To better illustrate this concept, this work will present the theoretical conceptualizations of Rosenberg and Elliot before arriving at Prilleltensky's definition. Rosenberg (1985) theorized mattering while studying self-esteem among adolescents and labelled it as an integral component of individuals' self-concept. He hypothesized that all individuals experience different perceptions of mattering, highlighting two types: social and interpersonal mattering. Elliot et al. (2004) defined mattering as *“the perception that, to some extent and in various ways, we are a significant part of the world around us”* (p. 768) and distinguished three particular elements of mattering: awareness, importance, reliance. Then Prilleltensky (2014) stated that mattering is composed of two elements, feeling valued and adding value and that it concerns different levels: personal, interpersonal, occupational and community.

The chapter will also provide a comparison between mattering and the main constructs with which it is sometimes confusing, such as perceived social support, self-esteem, self-control and self-awareness. Finally, the practical implications that studies and interventions centred on mattering may have in social contexts will also be considered.

As regards social justice, the various aspects and typologies will be defined, as they have been explained by the different authors who will be treated this issue (Tyler et al., 1997; Dalbert, 2001; 2009).

Specifically, the work will discuss different theoretical models. Tyler (2001) proposed the differentiation between distributive, procedural and retributive justice. Lerner (1980) and Dalbert (2001; 2009) formulated the belief in a just world theory,

according to which people need to believe that the world they live in is right, i.e. a place where everyone gets what they deserve and deserves what they get. Moreover, Prilleltensky (2012), parallel to the multilevel model of well-being, proposed an ecological vision of social justice, a vision based on the personal, interpersonal, organizational and community levels.

Finally, through the paper *Wellness as Fairness* by Prilleltensky (2012), the indissoluble relationship that binds the conditions of social justice and the perception of the well-being of individuals will be highlighted.

Regarding gender issue, this thesis will propose an overview of the main regulations and the main scientific contributions relating to women's rights, the relationship between sexes and gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are general expectations about women and men, considered social groups. They lead people to attribute different skills and roles to men and women (Ito & Urland, 2003; Chalabaev et al., 2013). The most typical stereotypes are those for which men, compared to women, are more operational and practical, have more assertiveness and self-affirmation, and a greater predisposition to have broad social relationships with many people (Taurino, 2005; Schneider, 2005). However, gender stereotypes are also present in the relational (Jost & Kay, 2005), occupational (Jarman et al., 2012) and ethical-moral (Gilligan, 1982) fields.

Although stereotypes are mental categorizations that help individuals simplify reality, they can have negative repercussions. In fact, gender stereotypes can lead to discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women.

In this regard, extensive attention will be given to the concept of sexism and, above all, to the most recent developments in this form of discrimination. Sexism has traditionally been defined as “*a prejudicial attitude or discriminatory behaviour based on the presumed inferiority or difference of women as a group*” (Cameron, 1977, p. 340). Then, Tougas et al. (1995) introduced neosexism or modern sexism, defining it as “*a manifestation of a conflict between egalitarian values and residual negative feelings toward women*” (p. 843). Finally, Glick and Fiske (1997; 2001) distinguished between hostile sexism, or hostility and antipathy towards women, and

benevolent sexism, or the tendency to stereotypically believe that women have special abilities to apply in specific restricted contexts.

Moreover, an ecological approach for the study and women's well-being promotion will be shown. This approach simultaneously considers all the ecological levels that affect people's lives, such as the personal, interpersonal, organizational, community and social levels (Di Napoli et al., 2019). The strength of this approach is to examine well-being, questioning the distribution of power between the sexes, gender equity and women's feeling of mattering.

In conclusion, the last objective of this thesis is to present three empirical studies that have investigated the variations in well-being based on, respectively, different cultural contexts, the effect of other psychological and demographic variables, and the effect of traumatic and extraordinary events, as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Chapter 5, Study 1 will be presented. This study aimed to test the psychometric validity of the I COPPE scale, for the measure of well-being, through the comparison between two different countries, such as Italy and Argentina. In particular, the study aimed to: confirm the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the scale, demonstrating its ability to be applied in different socio-cultural contexts; they also evaluate the differences between Italians and Argentines in different dimensions of well-being (overall, interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological, economic).

The study was carried out with two samples of students (638 Italians and 482 Argentines), recruited by snowball sampling. The collected data were analyzed using multigroup confirmatory factor analysis, applied within Structural Equations Modeling (SEM; Kline, 2016). As will be seen, the results confirmed that the I COPPE scale can measure well-being in different contexts without its validity being affected by socio-cultural differences. Furthermore, the study also shows that Italians and Argentines differ in levels of well-being for most of the dimensions considered.

In Chapter 6, Study 2 will be presented. This study aimed to investigate the effects of belief in a just world, neosexism, on well-being, via mattering. In particular, it was hypothesized a model in which personal and general beliefs in a just world positively

affect the dimensions of well-being. In contrast, neosexism has a negative effect, and these relationships are mediated by mattering. In addition, the study also had the further objective of investigating any effects of socio-demographic variables (such as sex, age, marital status, etc.) on well-being.

The study involved 2520 Italian citizens recruited using the snowball sampling technique. The data were analyzed using multiple mediation modeling and MIMIC modeling, applied within Structural Equations Modeling (SEM). The results partially confirmed the mediation hypotheses, showing that the personal and general beliefs in a just world and the neosexism have affected many dimensions of well-being, through mattering. Furthermore, differences in the levels of well-being due to the effect of some demographic variables were found.

Finally, Chapter 7 will be dedicated to the presentation of Study 3. In this study, the objective was to detect changes in well-being across time during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the well-being levels of a sample of 364 Italian students, measured in two waves, were compared. The first wave took place between the end of March and the beginning of April 2020, that is when the epidemic in Italy had reached its maximum spread, and the whole country was in lockdown. The second wave was made in mid-May 2020, that is shortly after the exit from the lockdown and the reopening of shops, offices and commercial activities in general. The collected data were analyzed using longitudinal modeling, carried out within Structural Equations Modeling (SEM). As will be seen, the results showed some differences in students' well-being levels during and after the national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, differences in the levels of well-being of men and women during the lockdown, were found.

CHAPTER 1. The overtime evolution of studies about well-being: from the biomedical model to the ecological model

This chapter will analyze the most important contributions related to well-being.

The main purposes of this first section are two:

- 1) to examine the evolution of the concept, starting from the definitions proposed by the various authors in the last century;*
- 2) to present, in detail, the ecological approach proposed by Isaac Prilleltensky, who suggests a multidimensional model of well-being including seven specific domains of well-being: overall, interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological and economic.*

1. Studies on well-being in the twentieth century

Since the 1950s, research on well-being has increased exponentially. In those years, such research took place within a typical biomedical model.

The biomedical model classified disease states using rigorous biological criteria and referring to precise symptoms and signs. From a classical medical-clinical perspective, there was a tendency to attribute to problems concerning health conditions (both physical and mental) a cause internal to individuals (DSM-I, APA, 1952; DSM-II, APA, 1968). From this perspective, the individual was considered the only "guilty" or at least responsible for his condition, while little attention was given to the role of any external and situational factors.

A restorative approach to health also characterized the biomedical model. The disease was considered in dysfunctional terms and therefore was addressed only when it has already arisen in the patient. Furthermore, the pathology (whose aetiology included only organic causes) was conceived from a dichotomous perspective; this means that strict criteria established the presence or absence of disease (DSM-I, APA, 1952; DSM-II, APA, 1968).

Characteristics such as the shared approach, the dichotomous conception, the excessive remembrance of scientific dictates and the etiological reductionism (given by taking into consideration only the biological causes as an explanation of the diseases), constituted over time, the limits of the biomedical model (Fee & Krieger, 1993; Johnstone, 2006).

Starting from these limits, in the 1960s, a new approach to study and intervention in well-being, more oriented towards prevention, spread.

For the first time, the preventive approach recognized the importance of the environment (both physical and social), and intrapsychic factors, in determining the health of the individual (Bloom, 1968; Heller et al., 1984; Cowen, 1980). The preventive approach proposed then, different types of prevention based on the presence/absence and the degree of disease evolution.

In particular, Caplan (1964) distinguished three different levels of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary prevention is aimed at healthy people and

aims to prevent the onset of the disease; secondary prevention deals with people considered to be particularly at risk of developing a disease; finally, tertiary prevention is aimed at those who have already contracted a disease and aims to reduce the individual's symptoms and restore the original state of health.

However, despite its merits, the preventive approach was still inscribed within the biomedical paradigm. The disease was still explained as a deviation from a biological norm, to which the deviant subject must be reported. Furthermore, despite the attention to the role played by the environment in determining the individual's health, this approach continued to look at the people with malaise like passive patients entrusted to the care of the medical expert (Shaffer & Sherrell, 1996).

Therefore, little importance was given to the subjectivity of the individual and the therapeutic value inherent in the patient's conception as an active subject, capable of taking charge of his own suffering and aimed at seeking effective strategies for resolving this state (Barbot, 2006).

Hence, there was an evolution from an approach oriented to the a posteriori treatment of the disease to an approach aimed at preventing it. Still, with neither of these two orientations, it was possible to break away from the classic medical model.

The intolerance for this model, considered excessively reductionist and not very attentive to environmental and social causes, has led over time to the creation of a new vision of well-being and disease (Johnstone, 2006; Fava & Sonino, 2007).

In the late 1970s, Engel (1977) proposed the biopsychosocial model. This model bases its structure on the general theory of systems (Bertini, 1988) and, through integrating different professional roles (doctors, psychologists and social workers), aimed to overcome the etiological simplism internal to the bio-medical model. It identified the dynamic interaction between multiple factors, both biological, environmental and psychological, as the cause of the alterations in the state of health.

Deepening the psychological level of this model, it can be seen how the emphasis is placed on the overall health of the individual, who is actively inserted in his environment and, therefore, on the promotion of well-being, understood as self-realization and exploration of the new thinks.

Therefore, according to this model, health can no longer be considered a simple "absence of disease" but as a state to be continuously promoted throughout the individual's life. This new orientation has also found support in the definition of health provided by the World Health Organization, according to which it represents "*a state of physical, mental and social well-being and not just the absence of disease or infirmity*" (WHO, The Ottawa charter for health promotion, 1986).

Thus, at the end of the last century, a new intervention strategy, oriented not only to prevention but also to promoting well-being, has begun to develop. The promotion approach focused attention on developing skills at both individual and collective levels. This intervention strategy was fully part of the biopsychosocial conception (Engel, 1977). It emphasized on the interaction between the individual and the environment (considered in its multiple levels) and the attention given to the concept of health as a state to be pursued continuously.

Moreover, this intervention was recognizing people an active role in protecting their own well-being. With this approach aimed at promoting well-being, the health outcome was no longer predetermined by exclusively biological factors. Still, it was considered the product of more complex processes relating to the interaction between the individual and the contexts.

The strategy of promoting well-being proposed to include in the well-being evaluation all the levels described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his ecological model: individual level, microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem.

At this point, it is useful to focus on two specific movements, within the perspective of promoting well-being, that were based on different theoretical models. The reference is to the movements of Positive Psychology and Critical Community Psychology.

2. Positive Psychology and well-being

The Positive Psychology movement was born in the United States in the late 1990s and quickly gained international recognition. It raised from the confluence of different perspectives, especially of a psychological matrix, united by overcoming the pathological and clinical conception of classical psychology. These perspectives shared an individualist point of view, i.e. their interest was concentrated above all on enhancing intra-individual psychological constructs, considered as capacities through which individuals pursue their own well-being (Aspinwall & Tedeschi, 2010).

Positive psychology derived from two basic views: the hedonic and the eudemonic perspective. The hedonic perspective focused on the concept of pleasure, which derives from positive life experiences and which produces a condition of well-being (Veenhoven, 2013; Diener, 2000). Within this vein lies the model of Edward Diener (see Fig. 1), who defined subjective well-being as a general assessment of the individual regarding his own life.

Diener (2000) highlighted four essential components of subjective well-being: negative emotions and positive emotions, that are the affections of pleasure or displeasure through which people valued their lives; life satisfaction, deriving from a global assessment of one's life; and finally, satisfaction in specific domains, regarding the evaluations of people relating to particular areas of their life, such as work, family, friends etc. (Diener, 2000; Diener et al., 2009).

Instead, according to the eudemonic perspective, well-being was not identified with individual pleasure, but it was based on factors that also consider the role of the social implications that the pursuit of one's happiness entails. For example, it considered the ability to pursue one's own goals and the community one, to mobilize resources for increasing individual autonomy and social skills.

The origin of the eudemonic perspective dates back to Aristotle's conception of happiness, expressed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Ameriks & Clarke, 2000). According to the great Greek philosopher, man as a rational being can achieve the full realization of a good life, pursuing not only individual goals but also collective

ones. Therefore, to achieve well-being, it is necessary to cultivate in addition to one's individual virtues also the civic virtues linked to the common good.

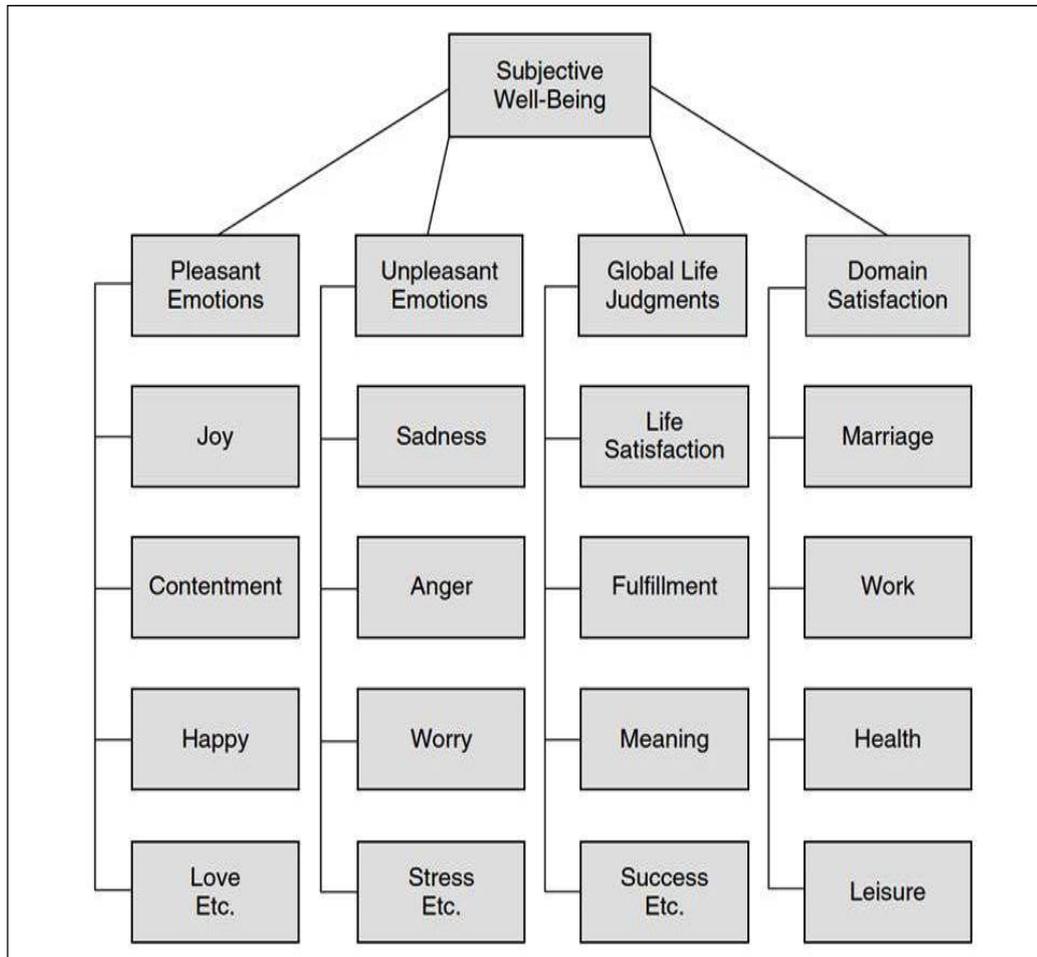


Figure 1. Diener's model of subjective well-being (source: Diener, 2000)

Within the eudemonic perspective, Carol Ryff (1989) introduced psychological well-being. This concept was referring to optimal psychological functioning. It was based on six dimensions: self-acceptance, having positive relationships with others, autonomy, control over one's environment, having a purpose in life, and finally having the feeling of continuous personal growth.

Another significant contribution to the definition of well-being is given by Corey Keyes. His theorization is always placed in a eudemonic perspective but overcoming

the intrapsychic vision. Indeed Keyes (2013) proposed the construct of social well-being, that is, the state of well-being that the individual derives from a good degree of adaptation to the society in which he lives, as he takes advantage of benefits such as cohesion and social integration and a sense of belonging and interdependence.

In this sense, well-being consisted of five dimensions: social integration, that is the assessment of the quality of one's relationship with society and community; social acceptance, that is the perception of society obtained through the quality and character of other people; the social contribution, that is the evaluation of one's own social value; social updating, that is the evaluation of the potential and orientation of the company; and finally social coherence, that is the perception of the quality, organization and functioning of social life (Keyes, 2013).

Keyes' theory's merit was to emphasize the social dimension, which is indissolubly linked to the concept of subjective well-being and which certainly influences the individual's assessment of his or her state. However, the limit of this approach lies in considering well-being from the point of view of how the individual adapts to society, and not how the society can be sometimes dysfunctional, causing discomfort in the individual.

In addition to these perspectives, Martin Seligman (2004), considered the founder of this movement, undoubtedly gave prominence to the current of Positive Psychology. Seligman (2011) introduced the PERMA model, which consisted of a model with five factors. It is possible to achieve an optimal functioning condition or increase one's personal well-being, which also includes the pursuit of own happiness. The five factors of the model were positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (see Figure 2).

The first factor concerned the perception of positive emotions, capable of increasing satisfaction with one's life. The second factor described the degree of involvement in life events and is linked to the awareness of exercising an active role in pursuing one's well-being. The third factor was referred to good relationships with others, fundamental as good social capital increases one's well-being. The fourth factor was referred to the meaning that individuals give to their lives: the perception

and awareness that life is endowed with meaning. Finally, the fifth factor was the sense of personal fulfilment given by the awareness of having reached a goal in one's life (Seligman, 2011).

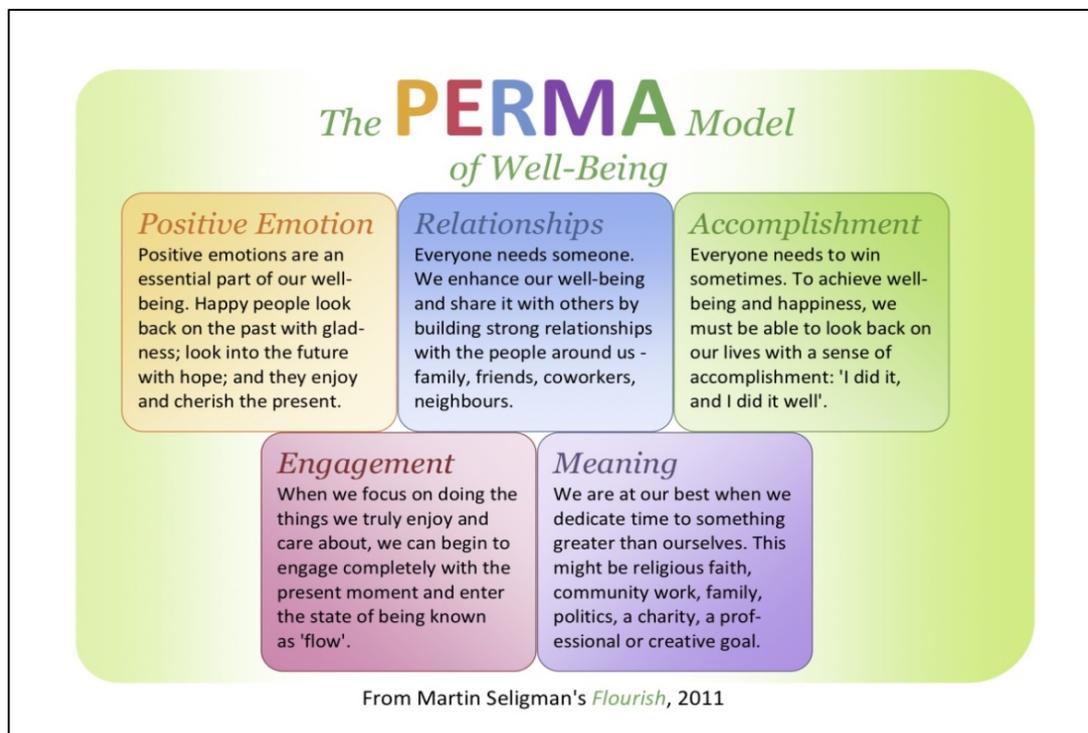


Figure 2. PERMA model (source: Seligman, 2011).

From the PERMA model, it is clear that for Seligman, well-being was a condition of personal satisfaction, potentially reachable by all individuals, provided that behaviours are implemented that adhere to the five factors mentioned.

Considering the point of view expressed by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) in the introductory article of Positive Psychology, we observed that the purpose of Positive Psychology was to improve the quality of life and prevent disease through the promotion of the individual resources of individuals.

According to the authors, a change in psychology's focus was required. It was necessary to pass from a shared perspective, based exclusively on the a posteriori concern to solve the critical issues in individuals' lives, to a constructive one aimed

instead at developing individual positive qualities, such as self-determination, optimism and individual and social happiness. However, despite the undoubted merits of Positive Psychology (including that of considering environmental factors in the aetiology of well-being), it can be noted that the attention of this perspective was always placed above all on the internal aspects of the individual, his resources and his personality. Positive psychology, therefore, aimed primarily at promoting subjective well-being and the starting point was still the single individual (Aspinwall & Tedeschi, 2010).

In conclusion, despite having had the merit to overcome the clinical and psychopathological approach to well-being, through the enhancement of the individual's personal resources and his positive qualities, positive psychology had an excessive tendency to individualize the explanation of phenomena, using concepts such as self-efficacy, flow, optimism, locus of control, post-traumatic growth (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

In this way, this movement continued to propose once again an individualistic logic, which did not take into account that: a) well-being can be not only individual but also organizational, community and social (Prilleltensky, 2012); b) justice and equality, as well as the management of power, affect the perception and construction of well-being; c) contextual and situational factors influence the latter.

Furthermore, one of the risks inherent in the Positive Psychology approach, and more generally of all those disciplines that ignore the points mentioned above, is to encourage the practice of blaming the victim, that is, the tendency to consider individuals as the only culprits for failing to achieve their own state of well-being (Ryan, 1971; Held, 2004).

3. Well-being in the ecological approach

As Perkins and colleagues (2005) affirmed, the profound changes of the last few decades of economic, social and cultural nature have significantly affected the lives of children, young people and families, causing a fragmentation of the community. For these authors, it was essential to adopt an ecological perspective capable of

identifying the characteristics of the living environment that affect people's well-being.

The ecological perspective considered the analysis of transactions between people and environments as central. This perspective considered the context in all its aspects, including both physical and social, but also cultural and historical ones and the characteristics and behaviours of people within the context itself. The ecological perspective "*is a conceptual framework designed to draw attention to the individual and environmental determinants of behaviour*" (Migliorini & Rania, 2014, p. 70), which considers the various levels in continuous interaction and mutual causation.

It must also be considered that the individual's position within the ecological environment is not fixed but changes according to changes in role or, more generally, to environmental factors. the term ecological transition (Bennett, 2017) defined these changes, which is relevant in the development and adaptation of the person since it produces changes in the activities and knowledge of the individual.

3.1. Isaac Prilleltensky's ecological approach

From an ecological perspective, Prilleltensky (2012) highlighted the importance of considering individual's well-being in a broader context. He divided well-being into various dimensions, emphasizing that individual well-being cannot be considered alone but simultaneously with various aspects of the context. In other words, he identified an interdependence between individual well-being, organizational well-being and community well-being, highlighting how by increasing one, the others are also strengthened (see Figure 3).

Well-being was defined by Prilleltensky (2012) as "*well-being is a positive state of affairs, brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of diverse objective and subjective needs of individuals, relationships, organizations, and communities*" (p. 2).

By the term "positive", the author meant the various ways in which different cultures and individuals develop/thrive. With "simultaneous and balanced degrees of satisfaction", the author referred to the needs that people and the systems with which

they interact progress concurrently and in balance. “Objective needs” was referred to the degree of satisfaction with the material and physical needs necessary for survival and development, such as food, shelter and clothing. The "subjective needs" are emotional and psychological encouragement necessary for development.

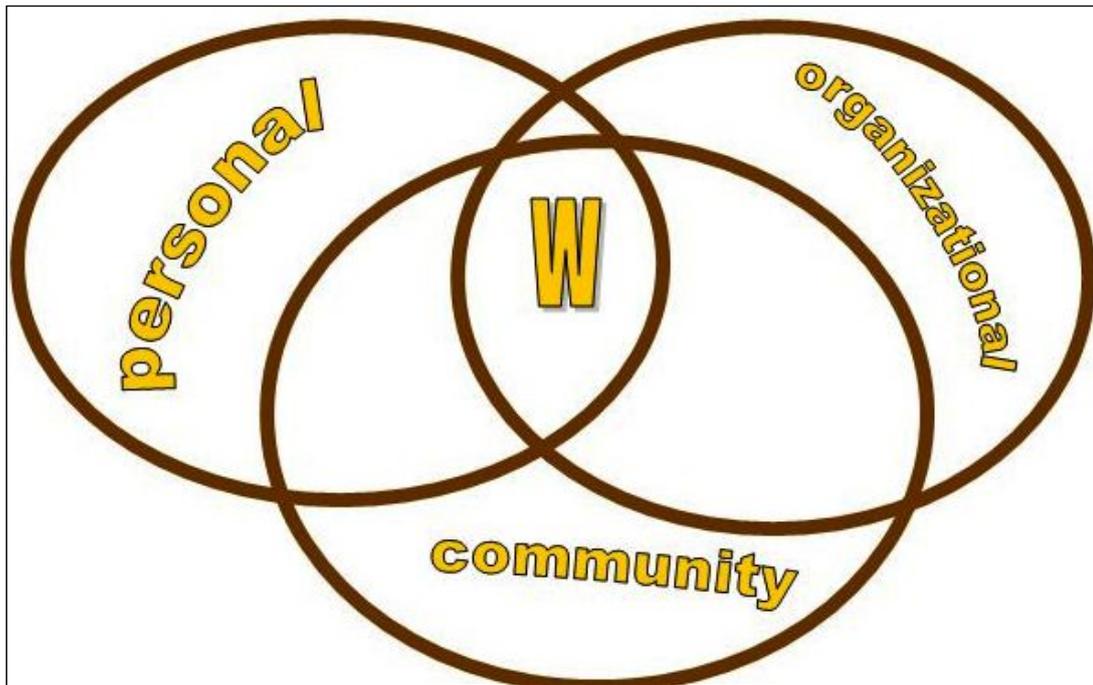


Figure 3. Ecological levels of well-being (source: Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006).

Therefore, the well-being of an individual cannot be defined only on the basis of one level but in its various facets, and it is essential to consider the various interdependencies with the broader context. *“It is not enough to be free from anxieties, fears and obsessions to enjoy psychological well-being. We need to be satisfied with the relationships we have established and we need to live in thriving communities”* (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006, p. 9).

The author highlighted a strong correlation between a sense of justice and well-being: it is impossible to experience well-being if the individual does not feel that he is living in a fair society. The lack of resources and inequality of power cause

psychological breakdown, verbal and emotional aggression and disrespect towards others.

In considering well-being, Prilleltensky (2005) used five S: the Site, the Sign, the Sources, the Strategies and the Synergy. In short, the site refers to the dimension in which well-being is manifested, the sign to the aspects that express well-being, the sources to the factors that give rise to it, the strategies to the activities that promote well-being, and finally, the synergy to the dynamics between sources and strategies, closely interrelated with each other, as well as the network between the various contexts in which well-being takes place (personal, organizational, community).

3.2. Multidimensional well-being: the I COPPE model

With the premise of considering the various contexts of well-being (individual, interpersonal, organizational and community), Prilleltensky and colleagues (2015) highlighted how for a broader possible assessment of the well-being of individuals, it is necessary to consider different domains.

On this basis, he developed the I COPPE model, which is a multidimensional model that, in addition to the overall one, considers six specific domains of well-being: Interpersonal, Community, Occupational, Physical, Psychological, and Economic (see Figure 4).

Interpersonal well-being

Interpersonal well-being indicates the degree of satisfaction with the quality of relationships with significant figures (family, friends and colleagues).

Prilleltensky (2012) identified objective indicators of interpersonal well-being in the number of friends, number of conflicts and leisure activities with peers, while subjective indicators refer to the perception of being supported, listened to, evaluated, appreciated and treated with respect and dignity.

According to Migliorini and Rania (2014), what favours the individual's well-being is the ability to maintain and process relationships. Therefore, the quality of the relationship and mutually recognized satisfaction are central.



Figure 4. I COPPE model (source: Prilleltensky et al., 2015).

While marriages have a protective effect on the well-being of individuals, in some cases, it is the rupture that plays this role. In this regard, it is generally recognized that divorce leads to three different effects on a person's well-being. First of all, a moment of crisis is experienced, that is, a strong emotional experience that temporarily reduces the level of well-being. Secondly, there is the experience of losing an important supportive resource or the end of the relationship with the partner believed to last forever. Finally, divorce is perceived

as relief from marital problems. These effects depend precisely on the representation and quality of the marital relationship: if the condition of marriage is experienced as positive, divorce, in this case, is a crisis and a loss of resources that will cause a reduction in the individual's well-being; if the marriage was conflicting, the separation causes both positive and negative effects. If the relief that divorce engenders is weak, there will be a slight decline in global well-being; on the contrary, there will be an increase in global well-being (Bogliolo & Bacherini, 2009).

No relationship is free from conflict. Therefore it is important to consider both the impact they have on the relationship and the management of the dyad. In fact, if properly addressed, it can represent an opportunity for development, giving rise to new ideas, while if ignored or fed, it can seriously threaten the stability of relationships (Migliorini & Rania, 2014).

According to Boszormenyi-Nagy (2014), the bond of loyalty, at the basis of every interpersonal relationship, allows linking individual aspects to aspects of the various levels of the system, from the family context, to interpersonal bonds as well as to social networks. A clear and defined role offers great support for the well-being of the individual and contributes to the definition of his/her identity and the perception of the support received (Siedlecki et al., 2014). The effects of the different social support forms on well-being are direct and stress-buffering (buffer effect). First of all, social support can strengthen well-being through bonding, recognition and confirmation signals from the other (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006).

Social support also plays the role of moderator in the face of stressful experiences and "can reduce the quantity and negative quality of stressful stimuli by perceptually re-evaluating them to alleviate their emotional-psychological impact and therefore favour an adaptive response (Migliorini & Rania, 2014).

Through their studies, Cohen, Sherrod and Clark (1986) found that the moderating effects of social support on stress were already active in individuals who knew they had support and were related to high self-esteem and support

emotional and informative. Furthermore, according to Cohen (2004), compared to those with a low level of support, individuals who enjoyed the support from partners and friends live longer, recover faster from illnesses, have a higher level of health and better cope with the adversities that arise.

Community well-being

Community well-being indicates satisfaction with one's community (Prilleltensky et. al, 2015).

The objective indicators are access to education and services, social capital, volunteering, clean air and safety. The subjective indicators refer to the sense of community, the feeling of being accepted, respected and protected in the community, and being proud to be part of it (Prilleltensky, 2012).

In general, social capital and active participation in the community and inequality play a central role in the well-being of the individual and the community. Social capital refers to collective resources such as civic participation, norms of reciprocity, organizations that foster trust and improve the community (Putnam, 1993; 2002). Therefore, social capital builds a network of trust and active participation, which, in turn, strengthens the community's ability to create structures of cohesion and participation.

In his studies, Putnam (2000) found that social capital increases the individual well-being of the residents of a community. In particular, he observed that in communities where individuals actively participated in social activities and/or volunteered, there was a high level of education, as well as a low level of crime, child abuse and high welfare outcomes.

High levels of social cohesion and a close gap between rich and poor produce greater and better welfare outcomes than wealthier societies characterized by high rates of social disintegration (Brian, 2015).

In fact, another factor that guarantees the well-being of the individual and the community is economic equity. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) reported that in states

with a narrow gap between rich and poor, such as Japan and Sweden, citizens live longer than in societies where the gap is much wider, such as the United States.

To experience high community well-being, it is important to have the perception of living in a moral community based on care and compassion. Therefore, the community must favour care for one's neighbour (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006).

Finally, Prilleltensky (2012) recalled the fundamental role of social justice and equality in determining the well-being of the individual and the community. As he stated, "*we cannot aim for self-determination in the absence of opportunities, or obtain democratic collaboration and participation without the possibility of expressing our opinions and having our own choice*" (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006, p. 67).

Occupational well-being

Occupational well-being indicates satisfaction with one's job, vocation or hobby (Prilleltensky et al., 2015). This construct is more inclusive than satisfaction with work (Olsson et al., 2013) since it includes other occupations that do not refer only to paid employment. There are many people whose main occupation is volunteering or being housewives.

The objective indicators of occupational well-being are access to work resources, a clear job description, the presence of communication channels, receiving praise and recognition of one's strengths. The subjective indicators can be found in feeling appreciated and involved, evaluating a positive working climate, giving meaning, having positive relationships with the boss (Prilleltensky, 2012).

Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2006) identified as fundamental indicators for well-being to be involved in activities that have a strong meaning and allow personal growth. A sign of the presence of occupational well-being is the flow, a term that indicates dedicating oneself totally to the activity, losing track of time. Those who feel that their work is stimulating and promote personal and/or

professional growth will have a greater level of involvement within their organization.

Moreover, Harter and colleagues (2003) highlighted a change in the representation of work: in older generations, working was the means to feed one's power; the new generations, on the other hand, define employment as a place of satisfaction and gratification in which it is possible to grow personally and professionally.

Various authors in community psychology applied the construct of the sense of community as formulated by McMillan and Chavis (1986) to the organizational context. In particular, Boyd and Nowell (2014) added the dimension of responsibility. They defined the sense of community in the organizational context as *"a member's feeling of being part of an interdependent community, a feeling that is part of a larger and more stable structure that it meets basic needs and a sense of responsibility for the well-being of that community and its members"* (p.109).

In the organizational context, what allows the prosperity of the occupational well-being of individuals (as well as that of the organization) is the quality of relationships between colleagues and one's superior. As Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2006) stated: *"cooperation is a clear sign of personal well-being in organizations, with a double effect: both the person and the organization gain from it"* (p. 118).

As with other life events and situations, stressful elements also occur in the working world, which impacts on the resources and abilities of the individual (Sarchielli, 2013). The stressors present in the work context refer to the intrinsic characteristics of the work (complexity, scarce variety, scarce autonomy, noise, etc.), to organizational roles (for example, ambiguity or role conflict), to work relationships (such as the low quality of interactions with superiors and colleagues or lack of social support), personal development opportunities (with scarce career and learning opportunities) and psychosocial climate (i.e. excessive competition, distrust, etc.).

Moreover, not having a job can have serious negative effects on well-being. Depolo and Sarchielli (1987) found that in unemployed people, physical and psychological well-being drop significantly. They have feelings of depression, anxiety, general dissatisfaction with life, feelings of loneliness and aggression towards themselves and others. In addition, in these cases, individual and social counterproductive behaviours may occur: consumption of alcohol, tobacco, psychotropic drugs and soft drugs; forms of aggression, social deviance or real criminal acts; high rate of suicides or attempted suicides. Therefore, a vicious circle is created that self-feeds these conditions, further aggravating the malaise of the unemployed individual (Sarchielli et al., 2013).

Finally, for occupational well-being, it is essential to guarantee a healthy workplace, which not only has the lowest possible level of risk of accidents and illnesses but that is also characterized by a climate of welcome and fairness and a good balance between technical, organizational and social demands required by work.

Physical well-being

Physical well-being refers to the degree of satisfaction with one's health (Prilleltensky et al., 2015).

Objective indicators are identified in pain symptoms, biochemical markers of health and disease, disability, longevity and functional assessment. Subjective indicators refer to feelings of vitality and energy and self-assessments concerning one's own health (Prilleltensky, 2012).

Although they may seemingly be unrelated to each other, interpersonal well-being is closely linked to physical well-being: having love, warmth, intimacy and positive relationships promotes physical well-being and greater longevity of life (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006).

Individuals who are married live longer and survive a range of health problems in a higher percentage than single mothers. Besides, married individuals are less prone

to manifest severe mental health problems such as depression and anxiety and describe their life as fulfilling and fulfilling.

As with the other levels, stressful factors and events significantly affect the individual's physical well-being. In fact, high levels of stress maintained over a long period compromise the immune system and increase the likelihood of health problems (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003). Even more common, time-limited and minor adverse events can cause immune alterations: for example, university exams can cause an ineffective immune system response to infections and slower wound healing. In conclusion, individual and environmental factors interact with each other, generating effects on the individual's health (Roganti, 2013).

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being was defined as satisfaction for one's emotional life. In other words, it refers to that "*state of affairs in which the individual feels that all his individual, organizational and collective needs are satisfied*" (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006, p. 12).

Various objective indicators are identified, such as laughing, smiling, crying, sleeping, anger and depression symptoms. The subjective indicators refer to evaluations of life satisfaction, expressing one's feelings, perceived self-efficacy, mastery, sense of control, spirituality, perceiving meaning, growth and participation (Prilleltensky, 2012)

The various experiences of opportunity or risk and the awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses influence psychological well-being. Wallston & Wallston (1981) introduced the health locus of control (HLOC) construct to describe the belief that one's health depends on internal or external factors. For the scholars, there are three possibilities: individuals who have an internal HLOC have the belief that their health depends on their behaviour; individuals who have an external-medical HLOC believe that their health depends on professionals such as doctors; and finally, individuals who have external-case HLOC believes that his health is dictated solely by external factors over which he himself has no control. Through this construct, it is

possible to evaluate the degree of control that the individual feels he/she has over his health and his life. Indeed, those with an internal LOC have greater motivation and self-direction, a higher self-efficacy that generates an active involvement in promoting a change towards their own well-being (Gremigni & Casu, 2013).

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) is another fundamental element that influences the individual's well-being. This construct refers to the belief in one's ability to organize and carry out the course of action necessary to manage situations to achieve the intended results properly. Beliefs of effectiveness influence how people think, feel, find personal motivations and act (Bandura, 1986).

It is also important to evaluate how the individual copes with stressful situations, that is the implemented coping strategies. Casu et al. (2013) found that problem-focused coping is associated with better mental health outcomes. In particular, when adaptation strategies are implemented (acceptance responses, cognitive restructuring, downsizing of aspirations and evasion in the face of the impossibility of changing the course of events), depressive symptoms are reduced. Instead, emotion-centred coping seems to be more associated with dysfunctional outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, neuroticism, dissatisfaction with life and eating disorders (Casu et al., 2013).

Economic well-being

Economic well-being was defined as the satisfaction with one's economic and financial situation (Prilleltensky et al., 2015).

Economic well-being indicators refer to having money to eat, have shelter, dress and get medical care and have retirement savings. The subjective indicators refer to having a feeling of economic security, relative poverty, the tendency to spend and the pleasure making purchases (Prilleltensky, 2012).

Rubenstein and colleagues (2016) pointed out that people's economic well-being is strongly connected to the GDP of the country they live in. But they also added that it is important for the well-being not only to have money but also to spend it in the

right way: using one's resources for travel, experiences and gifts for others is better than buying material objects for oneself (Rubenstein et al., 2016).

As a conclusion of this chapter, a summary table (Table 1) of the seven domains of Prilleltensky's multidimensional model of well-being is provided.

Table 1. Domains of Prilleltensky's I COPPE model.

Domains	Definitions
Overall well-being	satisfaction with a positive general state of affairs in one's life.
Interpersonal well-being	satisfaction with the quality of relationships with significant people (family, friends and colleagues).
Community well-being	satisfaction with one's local community
Occupational well-being	satisfaction with one's main occupation, i.e. their job, vocation or hobby.
Physical well-being	satisfaction with one's physical health.
Psychological well-being	satisfaction with one's emotional life.
Economic well-being	satisfaction with one's economic and financial situation

CHAPTER 2. Definitions and models of mattering

This chapter will analyze some important contributions related to mattering. The main purposes of this section are two:

- 1) to present the different theories of mattering reported by the scientific literature;*
- 2) to present in particular the theorization of mattering proposed by Prilleltensky.*

1. What is mattering? Rosenberg and Elliot's theories of mattering

First specified by sociologist Morris Rosenberg, mattering has been defined as “*the feeling that others are dependent on us, are interested in us, care about our destiny or live in it as an extension of their own self*” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165).

It is widely believed that all human beings have an innate desire and need to be important to others, be needed and wanted and feel meaningful and important to others who are meaningful to them. Receiving interest in one's thoughts, ideas, actions and feelings is essential for developing healthy human beings throughout life (Elliot et al., 2004).

Being needed, of being important for others, gives meaning to individuals' lives. According to Maslow (2013), it is probable that the importance of feeling valued by others can only be placed behind security needs and basic physiological needs.

Rosenberg (1985) theorized mattering while studying self-esteem among adolescents and labelled it as an integral component of individuals' self-concept. He hypothesized that all individuals experience different perceptions of mattering, highlighting two types: social and interpersonal mattering. Social mattering is referred to feel valued by society, workplace and community (e.g. when an employee feels that he/she is important to his company as his/her commitment and attention to detail are recognized).

Interpersonal mattering is refers to feel valued by specific other individuals in our lives (for example, a husband who feels he is important to his wife). Interpersonal mattering is essential for an individual's sense of self, as all individuals want to be important to others. It is also essential for social connection with others in society.

Rosenberg & McCullough (1981) argued that mattering affects people's behaviour. In particular, they reported that people who feel valued are motivated to maintain their meaningful links with others and, therefore, to act in a socially acceptable way to avoid jeopardizing these relationships.

The lack of mattering instead leads to negative behaviours, as its absence is so devastating for the individual that he/she tends to act negatively. Having the feeling

of not counting, of being irrelevant is experienced as a rejection of the self. The individual will do everything to change this status, even engaging in antisocial behaviours. It is preferred to be considered negatively rather than not considered (Schlossberg, 1989).

These negative responses to the perception of lack of mattering include two possibilities: socially undesirable behaviours implemented for attracting attention or social isolation so that the individual does not have to face the reality in which he/she is not needed (Biordi & Nicholson, 2013).

Both responses can be harmful to the individual. Indeed, in the first case, individuals will be viewed negatively by others, will lose their respect and attention and as a result, will feel even less valued. In the second case, isolation will lead an individual to be considered strange or different from others and consequently will lead him/her to feel less considered and to perceive more that he/she is not important to anyone (Cacioppo et al., 2011; Biordi & Nicholson, 2013).

Furthermore, Rosenberg (1985) highlighted the importance of the perception of mattering. As whatever the objective indicators of mattering are, if people do not see them, they will not develop the sense of mattering, and they will not feel valued.

Rosenberg became interested in this construct in the last years of his life, so he could not complete his theories before he died. However, Gregory Elliot, one of his students, was able to continue much of his work on mattering.

Elliot et al. defined mattering as “*the perception that, to some extent and in various ways, we are a significant part of the world around us*” (2004, p. 768). An individual can be important for another individual (a friend, a boyfriend, a teacher), for an institution (the family, a company), for a community or society.

Mattering can take various forms. Elliott and colleagues (2004) distinguished two main categories and three specific elements (awareness, importance, reliance; see Table 1). The first category implies awareness, which is being at the centre of the attention of others. This awareness is purely cognitive: we count if others realize that we exist if we are recognizable to others as individuals, distinguishable from the

masses that populate the surrounding environment. If we fail to attract the attention of others when we are in their presence, we may feel like a “non-person”.

Table 2. Elements of mattering (source: Elliot et al., 2004)

<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Importance</i>	<i>Reliance</i>
I am the object of other's attention.	I am an object of other's concern	Other chooses/looks to me
<i>Other:</i>	<i>Other:</i>	<i>Other:</i>
Notices me	Invests resources in me	Seeks my advice
Recognizes me	Promotes my welfare	Depends on me
Is familiar with me	Is attentive to my needs	Seeks support from me
Remembers my name	Provides emotional support for me	Seeks resources from me
Is aware of my presence	Takes pride in me	Needs me
Does not ignore me	Cares about what I do	Trusts me to be there
	Criticizes me for my own good	Values my contribution
	Inconveniences self for me	
	Sees me as an ego-extension	
	Listens to me	

Fenigstein (1979) demonstrated the dramatic effects of being ignored, excluding participation in social interaction. He reported as an example of social isolation the highly effective "shunning" punishment used by US military academies. The other cadets totally ignored the wrongdoer: no communication could be addressed or accepted by the transgressor.

The second category of mattering implies a relationship between the single individual and others. Since the relationship can be bidirectional, there are two sub-categories determined by the flow of the relationship.

The first sub-category is importance. We feel we are important to others if we object to their interest and concern. Others listen to our complaints, our problems, and the fact that they invest their time and energy for us to promote our well-being suggests that we are a significant part of their life (Matera et al., 2020). Here the flow of the relationship goes from the other to the individual.

In some cases, we may realize that others promote our well-being through positive means; other times, we may have the impression of being at the centre of negative reactions from others. Either way, we recognize that others are investing their efforts in our relationship with us.

The second subcategory is reliance. We value others if they depend on us to satisfy their needs or desires. Here the mattering follows the flow of the relationship from person to person. For example, the joy of parents when they realize that their children need them is due to the realization that they matter.

2. What isn't mattering?

To understand more about mattering, after deepening what it is, it is also necessary to understand what it is not.

There are many elements of the concept of self that social psychologists have postulated, and mattering can be confused or superimposed on some of them, so it is important to point out the differences.

Elliott and colleagues (2004) identified four social psychology constructs associated with mattering but actually distinct: perceived social support, self-esteem, self-control and self-awareness.

a) Perceived social support is the feeling that others provide the resources (material, psychological, emotional) that help move forward. Although it should be positively associated with mattering (especially concerning importance), the two concepts are distinct. Perceived support is defined as the extent to which a person expects others to provide support to a person's specific needs (Schwarzer et al., 2004). On the contrary, the importance is considered a more general perception, which involves a continuous interest in the well-being of others, beyond providing specific forms of support. We know that others invest in us even when there are no specific needs; they are genuinely interested in our well-being.

b) Self-esteem is the global assessment of one's personal characteristics; it is the extent to which a person considers himself a useful person (Rosenberg, 1985; Cast &

Burke, 2002). Both self-esteem and mattering play a role in self-evaluation, but mattering also includes the relational dimension of one's own identity, which emerges from specific relationships with others (Josselson, 1994), and so necessarily implies a relational aspect (Brinthaupt & Erwin, 1992). Both the constructs are among the mechanisms that link social ties to health (Thoits, 2011). Both are associated with fewer symptoms of anxiety, depression, distress, life satisfaction, happiness and general well-being (Baumeister et al., 2003). However, there are important distinctions between these two constructs: mattering in its essence is a purely cognitive process, an attribution of one's connection to the social order. On the contrary, evaluating one's self-esteem involves both cognitive and affective processes (Orth & Robins, 2014).

Many factors contribute to a person's self-esteem and mattering is one of them. Elliott and colleagues (2005) argued that attributions on mattering form a fundamentally important basis for inferences on self-esteem, but mattering is not in itself a judgment on one's worth as a human being. Self-assessment is a consequence of mattering, not its part.

c) Snyder (1974) defined the self-controlled individual as “*one who, regardless of concern for social appropriateness, is particularly sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of others in social situations and uses these suggestions as guidelines to control their own self-presentation*” (p. 527).

Goffman (1978) argued that we all engage in managing impressions, orchestrating our behaviour to achieve the goals we seek in a given encounter with others. So, the concept of self-control states that people differ in the ways they present themselves.

An individual with high self-control looks to the environment (including the behaviours of others) in search of signs that indicate behaviours that are suitable for achieving objectives. On the contrary, those with low self-control prefer to look for guidelines within themselves (Elliott et al., 2005). In self-control, the others are largely an object, an audience for which the impression is managed to achieve a goal.

On the other hand, mattering is about making a difference for individuals, groups, or institutions (Elliott et al., 2004). Although self-control may be involved in a person's attempt to "count", it is not mattering.

d) Self-awareness is the chronic tendency to be the object of one's attention. Fenigstein and colleagues (1975) identified two general forms of self-awareness: private (the cognitive awareness of one's personal characteristics) and public (the awareness that the individual is a stimulus for the behaviour of others).

Private self-awareness is a dispositional tendency to examine themselves. It can include excessive attention to physical, cognitive and emotional characteristics. Although it can affect a person's behaviour, it does not involve establishing relationships with others. On the other hand, public self-awareness concerns the awareness that others are using our presence and our behaviour to help determine their actions in the encounter (Blakemore & Frith, 2003).

There are good reasons to expect that mattering is positively associated with each of these constructs. For example, being important to another should be associated with high levels of self-esteem (Cast & Burke, 2002). However, self-awareness refers only to one's own evaluation (private or public) of oneself but does not imply feeling valued by others and therefore lacking in the relational aspect, which instead mattering has.

3. Prilleltensky's conceptual model of mattering

According to Isaac Prilleltensky (2014), "*mattering is an ideal state of affairs consisting of two complementary psychological experiences: feeling valued and adding value. Human beings can feel valued and add value to themselves, to others, to work and to the community*" (p.151).

Feeling valued means feeling appreciated, noticed, respected. Adding value means contributing, improving, helping or enriching your life or that of others.

Prilleltensky (2014; 2019) also distinguished two essential moments of the feeling of mattering: recognition and impact. The first refers to the signals we receive from

the world that our presence is important, that what we have to say has meaning and that we are recognized in our family, at work, or in the community at large.

On the other hand, the moment of impact refers to the sense of agency, that is, the feeling that what we do makes a difference in the world (Prilleltensky, 2014).

Each of these two moments unfolds along a continuum. Recognition has a sense of right on one extreme and a feeling of invisibility on the other. Neither extreme is healthy for personal or collective well-being. We need to feel recognized, appreciated without demanding too much attention or privilege at the expense of others. Simultaneously, we must avoid the feeling of invisibility that plagues many oppressed minorities and communities. Feeling ignored, neglected, forgotten is a terrible violation of psychological human rights.

So, while the recognition reflects the moment to get attention, respect and dignity, the impact reflects the moment to do and act on the world Prilleltensky (2019).

Two extremes threaten the sense of mattering: domination and powerlessness. While the first signals the need for complete control over the environment and other people, the second refers to the powerlessness and inability to make a difference (Prilleltensky, 2019).

Returning to the subdivision of mattering into feeling valued and adding value, Prilleltensky (2014) portrayed this through what he called the mattering wheel.

As Figure 2 shows, starting from the centre, we find the mattering supported by the two experiences of feeling valued and adding value. Feeling valued means feeling worthy, recognized, appreciated. Add value means making a significant contribution to yourself and others. Subsequently, observing the end of the wheel, there are the following eight sectors: self, relationships, work and community that we find respectively for feeling valued and for adding value (Prilleltensky, 2014).

Prilleltensky (2019) underlined how important it is to find two types of balance in mattering. The first balance is between feeling valued and adding value; both must be present to experience mattering. There can be no individual or collective mattering without balancing the need to feel valued with the moral imperative to add value to oneself and others.

The second balance is between the four sources of feeling valued and the four of added value. We need to pay attention to ourselves, to others, to work and the community (Prilleltensky, 2019).

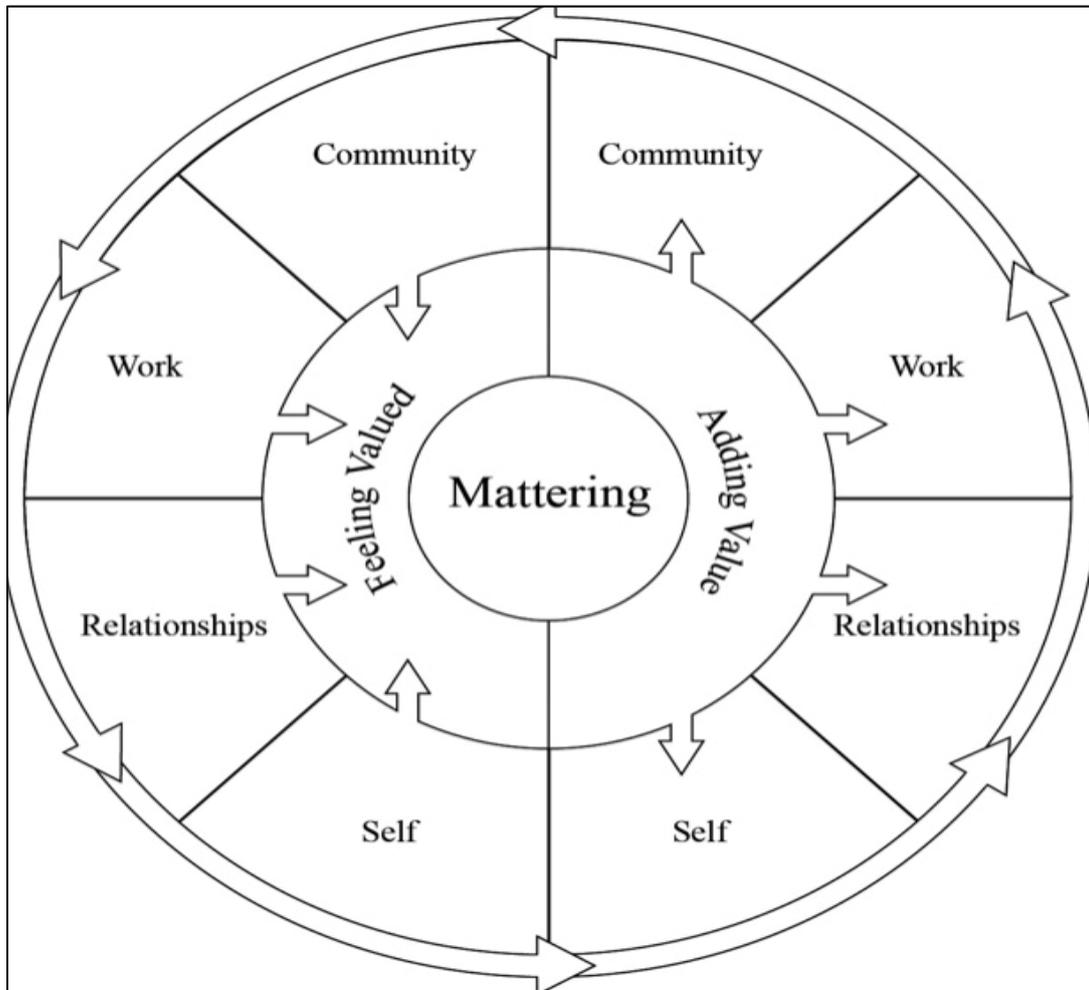


Figure 2. The wheel of mattering: a conceptual framework (source: Prilleltensky, 2014)

The eight sources are interconnected. Excessive investment in one could detract from the others. An example workaholics who ignore their needs by giving value only to work and what they get is stress, exhaustion and a possible heart attack. If an individual invests all his/her mental energies in adding value only to himself/herself, ignoring the well-being of others, he/she cannot expect much in return. The more

resources an individual brings to the community, the more likely he/she is to receive positive feedback, thus generating a virtuous circle (Prilleltensky, 2019).

In conclusion, feeling valued and adding value are complementary and interdependent needs. Marginalization and exclusion generate frustration, alienation and aggression, making it difficult to obtain positive consideration. Appreciation, on the contrary, leads to self-confidence, to the desire to make a difference. This, in turn, will make you feel appreciated.

4. Practical implications of mattering

Mattering is a basic human need that can be nurtured or hindered by different social philosophies and political games (Schieman & Taylor, 2001). It exists in the microcosm of relationships and work and the macrocosm of social policies.

The experience of mattering promotes health and happiness and prevents personal devaluation, interpersonal disconnection, work disengagement and community disintegration. According to Prilleltensky (2019), these four problems (the four Ds) define the crisis of our time, can be found everywhere and their consequences are devastating, both for individuals and for the community. Too low a personal value translates into a high prevalence of depression, which is being witnessed worldwide. As stated by the WHO (2019) “*in 2020, depression will be the second cause of disability in the world and the first in 2030*”.

Disconnection is seen in high isolation levels, loneliness, relationship breakups, and extramarital relationships. The decline of social capital and the increase in inequality and segregation indicate the disintegration of the community (Costa & Kahn, 2001).

The four D's arise from mattering deficits or distortions. Countries, communities and companies that take mattering seriously are healthier and happier. One solution is to promote what Prilleltensky (2019) called *We Culture*, which means to reject a policy that uses and abuses mattering through deviation, resentment, entrepreneurship, but instead adopts strategies that balance feeling valued with adding value.

We need to balance rights with responsibilities and well-being with equity. Without equity, there is a limit to the amount of well-being we can promote in individuals, organizations and societies (Summers & Smith, 2014). Women, African Americans, people with disabilities, and sexual minorities cannot give value if they do not receive equal treatment at school, at work, in the community.

To do this, we need to promote mattering at home, in the workplace, in the community and social policies. By doing so, we will be able to fight depression and disengagement by making people feel valued and helping them to add value. Building a society in which equality and equity replace nationalism and narcissism.

CHAPTER 3. Social justice and its effect on people's well-being

This chapter will analyze some important contributions to social justice. The main purposes of this section are:

- 1) to present the different theories of social justice reported by the scientific literature;*
- 2) to present in particular the theorization proposed by Isaac Prilleltensky, who indissolubly links the conditions of social justice to well-being.*

1. The forms of social justice

Various authors in psychology have addressed the theme of justice, mainly concerning the concept of social influence, and therefore, within group dynamics (Mucchi Faina, 2002; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

Classic in this sense are the famous experiments conducted by Sherif (1937) on the formation of the norm, by Milgram (1965) on obedience to authority, and the studies that led to the social identity theory of Tajfel (1978) and Turner (1981).

In this context, an important contribution was provided by Turiel (1978; 1983), who was the first to introduce a differentiation between rules, speaking of moral rules and conventional rules as belonging to different domains of social behaviour. According to Turiel (1983), moral rules are mandatory, impersonal, universally applicable, regardless of social agreements, determined by general criteria, and linked to the rights and well-being of other people. On the other hand, conventional rules are based on the agreement between social group members. They, therefore, have the purpose of coordinating social interactions and defining the social system itself (Turiel, 1983).

More recent studies on justice have investigated a further aspect of this phenomenon, namely the way in which people construct their own conception of what can be defined as right or wrong, and how this belief affects their decisions, their feelings and their behaviour (Tyler et al., 1997).

Referring in particular to Tyler's paper, *Social Justice* (2001), we can see how the author articulated the concept of justice on two levels: an individual level, which concerns the role played by personal judgments in shaping people's reactions and experiences; and a group level, which concerns assessments relating to the presence of justice for all members of a social group. It should be noted that these levels can sometimes be at odds with each other, as the collective good can also imply the renunciation of the satisfaction of personal interests (Runciman, 1966).

Furthermore, in his contribution Tyler (2001) distinguished two different forms of justice: distributive and procedural. Distributive justice is the perception that there is fairness in distributing resources and awards received. For example, People are very

satisfied when they feel they have received a fair wage for their job performance. And the same considerations also apply to the awards received in the field of interpersonal relationships.

However, while some studies (Alwin, 1987; Le et al., 2018) showed that decisions based on distributive justice affect the feelings and behaviours of individuals, some authors (Messick et al., 1985; Lucas et al., 2011) argued that distributive justice would not be helpful in solving social dilemmas. This is most likely due to the fact that people overestimate their performance and consequently their rights, in making decisions about what they deserve (Schlenker & Miller, 1977).

Furthermore, other studies (Messick et al., 1985; Mikula et al., 1990; Mikula, 1993) showed that, usually, the dissatisfaction of individuals is not so much related to the rewards or recognition received, but rather to how you are treated.

The lack of consideration, aggressive conduct and behaviour that undermines the sense of personal dignity would seem to have a much greater impact on people's dissatisfaction and perception of injustice. This aspect suggests that, in addition to distributive justice, attention must also be paid to what has been called procedural justice.

Procedural justice (Tyler, 2001) refers to evaluating the correctness of the procedures that led to some choice or result. Thibaut and Walker (1975) were the first to demonstrate that giving an individual the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes increases his/her satisfaction with the decisions made and influences the assessment of the correctness of these decisions, even when these involve a negative impact on his/her personal interests. The evaluation of a fair decision-making process can favour the adhesion of individuals to the final decision (Pruitt et al., 1993).

All of this implies that procedural justice can promote cooperative behaviour among group members, thus promoting the resolution of social conflicts (Mikula & Wenzel, 2000). Furthermore, it favours the acceptance of social laws, as it develops the belief that the authorities are legitimized and that it is right to obey (Tyler, 1999).

In conclusion, according to Tyler (2001), it is not so much the perception of having been justly rewarded or unjustly punished that influences the satisfaction of individuals within one's social group (distributive justice), but rather its role in this group and how much he/she is taken into account during the decision-making process of choices, norms or social rules that concern him/her (procedural justice).

Furthermore, to these considerations, it must be added that individuals are influenced by the evaluation of a further type of justice, that is, retributive justice. This form of justice refers to the re-establishment of social equity after violating the laws (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Wenzel et al., 2008). People feel the need to be rewarded if they have been victims of injustice, and in the same way they want that anyone who has violated the rules will be justly punished (Tyler, 1999).

2. The Belief in a Just World Theory

Another important contribution to social justice comes from the belief in a just world theory (Lerner, 1980).

The hypothesis supported by this theory is that people feel the need to believe that they live in a just world. A world in which everyone gets what he deserves and deserves what he gets. This belief in a just world has a highly adaptive value, as it allows individuals to give stability and order to their social context (Lerner, 1980; Lipkus, 1991; Benabou & Tirole, 2006; Hafer & Sutton, 2016).

When people feel threatened by injustice, they also tend to keep their faith in a just world alive, trying to change reality and end injustice when possible. And if it is not possible to restore the condition of justice, a cognitive process called assimilation of injustice is activated in reality. Through this process, the situation is re-evaluated to conform to one's belief in a just world (Dalbert, 2009).

Dalbert (2001; 2009) conceptualizes the belief in a just world as a stable dimension of an individual's personality and traces three functions of this belief.

The first function is to push people to behave according to justice. A believer in a just world expects to be rewarded for his actions and therefore tends to behave correctly. The second function is to trust others and the justice linked to one's

destiny. This implies important adaptive skills, such as the ability to create a long-term life plan with another person. Finally, the third function is to provide a reference that helps people to interpret their life in a meaningful way and that allows them to face situations of injustice, restoring the idea that justice sooner or later will be applied (Dalbert, 2001).

But what makes individuals believe that the way is right? Several kind of researches (Rubin & Peplau, 1973; Furnham, 2003; Benabou & Tirole, 2006) pointed out how different individual dispositions influence belief in a just world. It has been noted that the belief in a just world is positively associated with some personality dispositions, such as authoritarianism and internal locus of control (Butler & Moran, 2007).

Furthermore, a distinction must be made between a belief in a world that is just for oneself and a world that is just for others or in general. The first belief is when individuals usually feel treated fairly, while the second belief is when individuals feel that people generally get what they deserve (Lipkus et al., 1996).

Some studies (Dalbert & Stoeber, 2006; Wu et al., 2011; Donat et al., 2016) showed that these two types of trends have very different consequences. Personal belief in a just world would seem a better indicator of adaptive outcomes (such as a high level of subjective well-being). In contrast, belief in a world just for others or general would lead more to the implementation of aggressive social behaviours (Bègue & Muller, 2006). However, we must not think that the two constructs are clearly separated. In fact, in everyone, some tendencies go both ways (Alves & Correia, 2010).

Another important difference to emphasize is between the motive for justice and the motivation for justice (Dalbert, 2009). Motives are dispositions that reflect individual differences in striving for a specific goal. So, a justice motive is an individual disposition that pushes to fight for justice as an end in itself, and the belief in a just world can be read as an indicator of this tendency (Lerner, 1980).

Therefore, the stronger the belief in a just world, the stronger the motive for justice should be. However, some research (Miller, 1999; Lind & van den Bos, 2002)

suggested that it is not motives that affect individual differences, but motivations for justice. Motivation can be defined as the orientation of an individual towards a specific goal, in a specific situation (Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009). This means that a motivation for justice is an orientation towards justice in a given situation. Therefore, Motivations for justice are triggered by specific circumstances in interaction with particular personal dispositions, which may push people towards justice or other tendencies, such as religiosity (Rubin & Peplau, 1973).

The basic idea of the belief in a just world theory is that people, because of the suffering due to the injustices received, feel an unconscious need to restore justice (Dalbert, 2009). This makes the belief in a just world an essential defence strategy against injustice. It allows individuals to feel satisfied with their lives and experience high levels of personal well-being (Correia & Dalbert, 2007).

3. Social justice in the ecological approach

The ecological approach places great importance on the concept of social justice, defining it as an equitable distribution of power (Prilleltensky, 2012).

Prilleltensky & Nelson (2009) described the concept of social justice both as a value to be referred to and as a goal to be pursued. The authors also highlighted two issues related to this concept: the distinction between distributive justice and procedural justice and the conception of social justice as a multi-level construct.

Distributive justice, understood as the fair sharing of resources and obligations (Prilleltensky, 2001), refers to the recognition of the fulfillment of needs, capabilities, opportunities, rights and power, for every individual, organization or community (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2009).

On the other hand, procedural justice, rather than referring to the outcomes to which the decision-making process has led, focuses on the process itself. Indeed, this term alludes to the possibility of taking part in decision-making processes that are transparent, fair, inclusive and that respect with fairness the representation, voice and power of the citizens of a community (Dalton et al., 2006).

Both these types of justice can be found in every ecological level of a context: microsystem (personal-interpersonal), mesosystem (organizational), and macrosystem (community) (Prilleltensky, 2012).

At the microsystem, distributive justice can concern, for example, the sharing of goods or responsibilities within interpersonal relationships, while procedural justice refers to the presence in relationships with others, of respect, dignity and participation in decisions.

At the mesosystem, an example of distributive justice might be receiving fair compensation for one's work. On the other hand, distributive justice could be related to the clarity of the information received in the organization to which one belongs and the possibility of having a voice in the decision-making process of the institution.

At the macrosystem, distributive and procedural justices require that all individuals have the same rights, opportunities and resources. So, at this level, social justice relates to the proper functioning of public education, social security and other socio-political services and infrastructures (Prilleltensky, 2012).

Prilleltensky (2001), moreover, considers social justice as a commitment to promote *“a just and equitable sharing of bargaining powers, resources and duties within society, in consideration of the different powers, needs and capacities to express own will of the people”* (p.754).

From all these definitions, it emerges that social justice is considered a value or a belief, according to which people should have equal access to resources and protection of their rights. Furthermore, in these definitions, social justice is always connected to the dimension of power and the importance of developing the potential of the most marginalized groups to promote social equity (Torres-Harding, Siers et al., 2012).

Therefore, it is clear that in the ecological approach, justice in addition to being considered a theoretical construct is seen as a concept inevitably linked to research and action, and educational and training practice. Corresponding to these fields of application (theory, research-action, and education-training), Prilleltensky and

Nelson (2009), highlighted the three main purposes that guide Community Psychology in addressing the issue of social justice: a) connecting the personal point of view of the individual with the political point of view; b) connecting the parties, who are involved and influenced by the processes of social change; c) and connecting the micro, meso and macro levels, and therefore to consider always the relationship between the individual, organization and community.

3.1. Wellness as fairness

In his paper *Wellness as fairness*, Isaac Prilleltensky (2012) laid the groundwork for a model of well-being that is indissoluble from the assessment of the social justice of a context.

Prilleltensky's considerations (2012; 2013) on the link between justice and well-being started from the assessment of the situation in the first decade of this century of South American countries, such as Colombia and Mexico. He noted that, given the severe conditions of poverty and violence, one would expect to find very low well-being and life satisfaction levels in these countries. However, both countries have been shown to have some of the highest levels of personal well-being in the world (Inglehart et al., 2008).

From this paradox, it was clear underestimating the subjective aspects of well-being, such as freedom, religion, tradition, social support and family ties. These aspects can function as compensation tools with respect to objective conditions of poverty and high crime (Buettner, 2010).

Furthermore, another factor to keep in mind is an adaptation, that is, the psychological capacity of human beings, which makes them able to survive in the most pitiable conditions and derive satisfaction even from the most unfavourable circumstances (Jerneck & Olsson, 2008). However, the fact that people have this ability does not mean that their living conditions should not be changed. To give an example, some women adapt to being abused by their husbands, but their ability to adapt obviously cannot prevent such a dramatic condition from changing (Sen, 2009).

Furthermore, looking at the opposite situation, that is, to those countries in which there are sub-optimal conditions of justice, and in which therefore one would expect to find high conditions of well-being, it was noted that the individuals do not reach high levels of life satisfaction. This aspect is possibly due to ongoing confrontation with higher income and status groups (Graham, 2009).

All these considerations led Prilleltensky (2013) to highlight how, it is necessary to consider both the subjective and the objective dimensions in the evaluation of well-being.

The author then differentiated between units of analysis and sources of evaluation in the well-being definition. The former refers to individuals, relationships, organizations or communities, while the latter are the places from which the information comes (from a person, from a database, or an anthropological observation).

In this regard, he argued that much research on well-being has focused on the individual, as a unit of analysis and on his perceptions and feelings as a source of evaluation. This betrays an individualistic conception of well-being, which he considered limited (Prilleltensky, 2012).

Having made these assessments, Prilleltensky (2012; 2013) focused on the concept of justice, proposing a distinction between two main types: distributive justice, relating to the equitable distribution of resources, and procedural justice, relating instead to the possibility that the decision-making process is conducted with fairness, transparency and in compliance with the rights of all.

From these two main forms derive various specific subtypes of justice: relational justice, with which we refer to how we treat the people with whom we relate; developmental justice, which concerns what is expected of others (for example, of children), in accordance with their maturational stage; informative justice, which is linked to the possibility of feeling informed and recognized when decisions are made; retributive justice, which is related to the idea who commits a crime, must take responsibility for his actions; and finally, cultural justice, which concerns the way we treat one another in the community context (Prilleltensky, 2012; Duff et al., 2016).

As explained in the first chapter, Prilleltensky (2005) proposed an ecological concept of well-being (personal, interpersonal, organizational and community), which is determined by sites, signs, sources and strategies. In this sense, parallel to the definition of well-being, he treats justice from an ecological perspective, thus emphasizing the action of justice on different levels.

Based on the objective and subjective conditions of well-being and the type of justice (distributive or procedural), in fact (as can be seen in Figure 1), there are the following levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational and community (Prilleltensky, 2012).

On a personal level, we can be fair or unfair to ourselves about what we give ourselves (distributive intrapersonal justice) and how we treat ourselves (procedural intrapersonal justice). This means that injustice is committed when we unjustly break down and feel unworthy of our love and affection (Prilleltensky, 2012; 2013).

Justice is given by treating others with the dignity and respect they deserve on an interpersonal or relational level. And therefore, unfair behaviour is denoted by taking advantage of people and not respecting their life choices.

At the organizational level, justice concerns the transparency of the decision-making process and communication and information exchange flow. Therefore, decision-making processes that take place without the consultation of all the parties involved and that lead to decisions that do not respect the rights of all parties (especially minority ones) are considered unfair (Prilleltensky, 2012).

At the community and social level, distributive justice is related to the just distribution of services and economic resources within society, while procedural justice concerns how all citizens are treated equally by all social bodies, such as the legislature, educational institutions, housing and leisure. In addition, the aspect relating to the assumption of one's responsibilities in the event of unjust actions must be considered.

Thus, according to Prilleltensky (2012), the personal, interpersonal, organizational and communal components of well-being depend heavily on distributive justice and procedural justice.

And from this reflection, it can be deduced that favourable or unfavourable conditions of justice lead, through specific psycho-social processes, to positive or negative of well-being conditions.

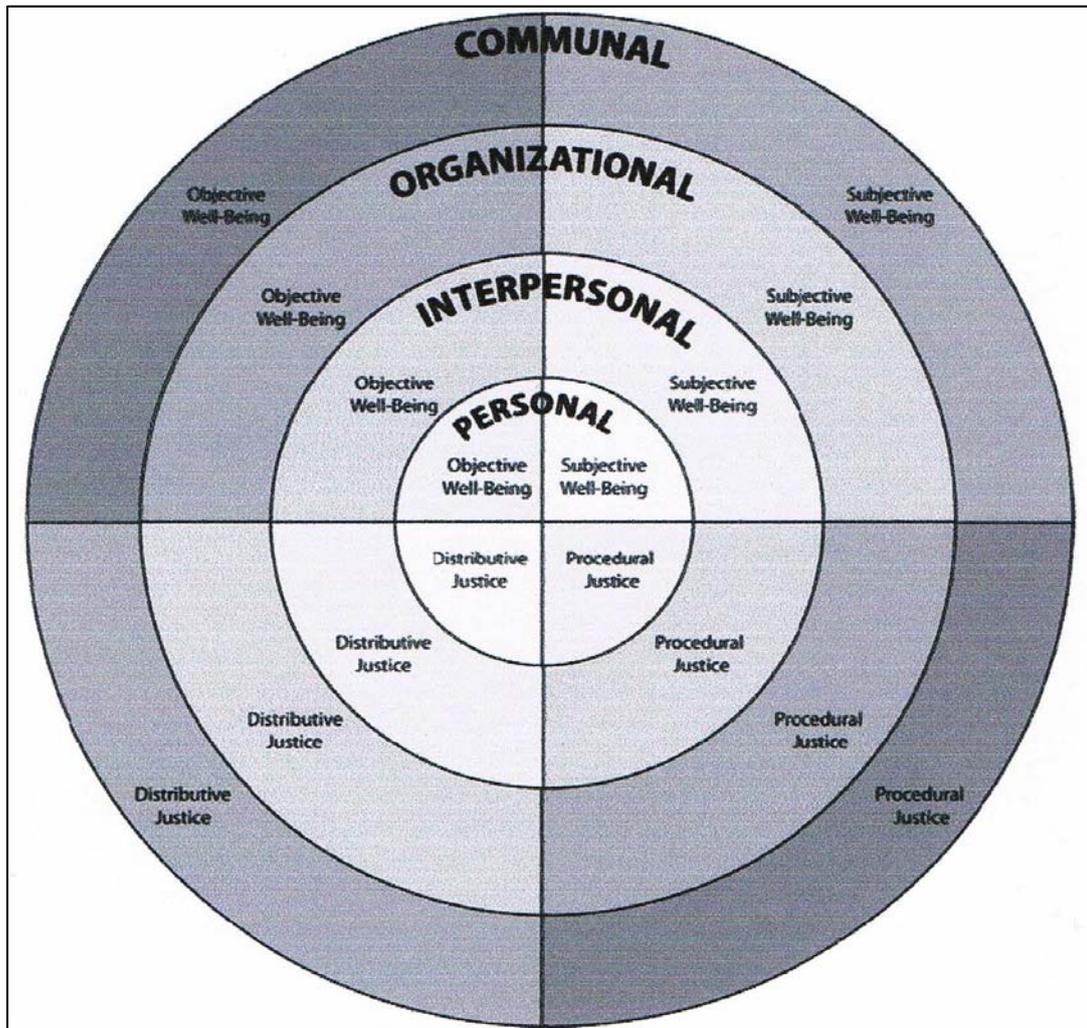


Figure 1. Levels of social justice and well-being (source: Prilleltensky, 2012).

We can trace a continuum of conditions of justice, which corresponds, in parallel, to a continuum of conditions of well-being. Specifically, as explained in Figure 2, we can distinguish four different cases.

In the first case, we have optimal conditions of justice, which through processes of promotion of reactive conditions to problems, prevention of threats, individual development and avoidance of confrontations, lead to a condition of prosperity.

In the second case, we are talking about sub-optimal conditions of justice, which through processes, such as resilience, adaptation, compensation and downward comparisons, promote coping strategies.

In the third case, vulnerable conditions of injustice, through processes of critical experience, critical awareness, critical action (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003) and honest comparisons, push towards confrontation.

In the fourth case, finally, we have persistent conditions of injustice, which, through processes such as oppression, internalisation, impotence and upward confrontations, lead to suffering conditions.

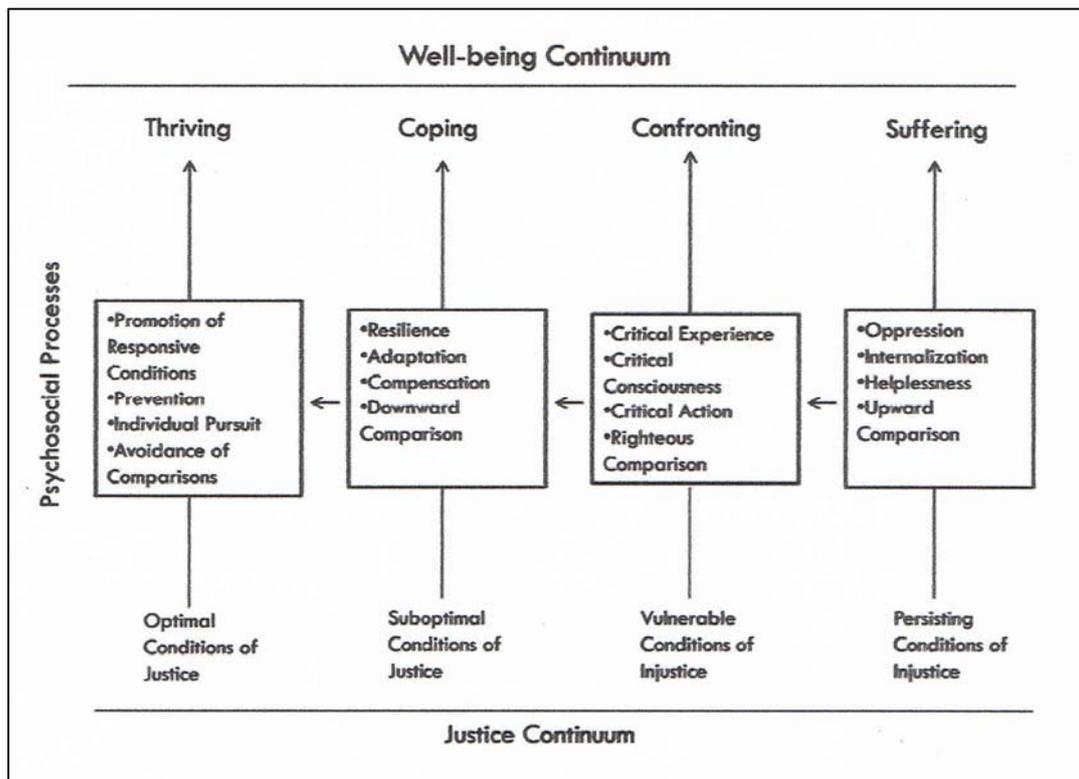


Figure 2. Conditions of social justice and states of well-being (source: Prilleltensky, 2012).

In conclusion, Prilleltensky (2012) has shown how conditions of justice can determine different conditions of well-being. However, we must not think that the system proposed by the author is rigid and immutable. In fact, it is possible to move from one condition of well-being to another, changing the conditions of justice through the modification of psychosocial processes, which operate in a given context.

Furthermore, happy people with a high level of well-being in contexts of persistent conditions of injustice, and unhappy people with low well-being in contexts with optimal conditions of justice should be recognized.

At this point, a question arises: what is the purpose of promoting a change in the conditions of justice in disadvantaged contexts?

The answer to this question is found in the words of Prilleltensky himself (2013):

“there is no doubt that some people, endowed with intelligence and empathy, are able, with adequate support, to overcome adversity, but these remain the minority. For the majority of people who live with oppression and injustice, life becomes a constant struggle” (p.149).

CHAPTER 4. Gender issues: gender stereotypes, gender roles, sexism and women's well-being

This chapter will analyze, some important contributions related to gender stereotypes and sexism. The main purposes of this section are three:

- 1) to present an overview of the main regulations and scientific contributions on women's rights, the relationship between sexes and gender stereotypes;*
- 2) to present the main contributions on discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women, with particular reference to the conceptualization of neosexism or modern sexism.*
- 3) to show an ecological approach to the study and promotion of women's well-being, which also consider the distribution of power between the sexes, gender equity and women's feeling of mattering.*

1. Legal measures and studies about the relations between the sexes.

Since the second half of the last century, there has been much progress in the international human rights movement. Many positive changes have come in the matter of gender equality.

Several regulations have been developed in Europe over the past 70 years to ensure gender equality on a legislative level. Some examples are the Treaty of Rome (EU, 1957) which established wage equality between men and women, the Treaty of Maastricht (EU, 1992), which guaranteed equal opportunities in working conditions and the Treaty of Amsterdam (EU, 1997), which sanctioned the possibility of making “positive discrimination”, that is offering advantages that allow women to combine work and private life. Furthermore, in 2000, the European Union produced the *Charter of Fundamental Rights*, which provides equality between men and women in all fields, both educational and working (EU, 2000a).

Innovations in the field of justice and gender equality have also led to an intensification of scientific studies.

In this sense, many scholars in the philosophical, psychological and social fields, especially of a/the feminist matrix, have investigated the construction and transformation of gender relations (MacKinnon, 1989; Andermahr et al., 2000; Ferber & Nelson, 2009).

Gender relations were defined as a “*specific subset of social relations uniting women and men as social groups in a particular community, including how power and access to/control over resources are distributed between the sexes*” (Hubert & Stratigaki, 2011, p. 171). Gender relations are building blocks in every aspect of the human experience. The experience of gender relations and the construction of gender as a social category are shaped within social relations. They are based on the tendency of human beings to categorize, or in other words, to create stereotypes.

Stereotypes are general expectations about members of particular social groups (Operario & Fiske, 2001). While there is an overall difference between these groups, not all of the individual specimens in these groups will necessarily differ. However, the stereotypical perception that a particular trait characterizes membership in a

specific group typically leads people to overemphasize differences between groups and underestimate variations within groups (Bordalo et al., 2016).

Creating stereotypes serves to categorize perceived reality and gender is the primary characteristic perceived by the person. Individuals immediately and implicitly group unknown individuals based on gender, even when this categorization is not relevant to the situation (Bennett et al., 2000).

Furthermore, although it is now well known that it is a fluid characteristic, gender continues to be seen as a binary categorization, in which men are compared with women, emphasizing the differences between them.

Therefore, gender categorizations are detected immediately, are chronically salient, appear relatively fixed, and are easily polarized. This contributes to the formation and persistence of gender stereotypes and strengthens the perception of the differences between men and women (Ito & Urland, 2003).

Gender stereotypes lead people to attribute different skills and roles to men and women. Gender roles derive from the general concept of social role, which refers to the shared expectations that apply to people who occupy a certain social position or are members of a particular social category (Chalabaev et al., 2013). Gender roles refer to beliefs, behaviours and attitudes that a society considers appropriate for women and men (Zucker et al., 2006).

Many people tend to associate certain tasks and social behaviours mainly with women or men, on the basis of their purely biological differences (Vianello et al., 2013). For example, men are associated with the ability to be operational and practical, with assertiveness and self-affirmation, and with the predisposition to have broad social relationships with many people. On the contrary, women are considered more emotionally oriented than actions, more altruistic and emotionally dependent, and more predisposed to having dual relationships (Jost & Kay, 2005; Schneider, 2005; Taurino, 2005). Moreover, the agency is seen as predominantly male, while care as predominantly female (Kite et al., 2008).

This different attribution is visible, for example, in the way men and women behave and in the life choices they make. The tendency to act in men results in

riskier choices, such as risky sexual behaviour, alcohol and drug use, gambling and unsafe driving, while women are more cautious in these domains (Byrnes et al., 1999).

The differences between men and women are also visible in the employment and work environment. Jarman and colleagues (2012) showed that, in 30 industrialized countries, there is clear gender segregation in professional roles: some occupations, such as police, are male-dominated, while other occupations, such as nursing, are female-dominated. Furthermore, women spend more time in household activities than men, regardless of their employment status (Poulin-Dubois et al., 2002).

These differences also influence the way to help others. Men are more likely to engage in emergency relief, showing free will, while women are more likely to volunteer, showing communality (Becker & Eagly, 2004).

The tendency to differentiate between men and women also affects the moral level. In their theorization of moral development Kohlberg et al. (1983), came to claim that women rarely reach the higher stage (in which individuals arrive at an autonomous and post-conventional moral position).

Gilligan (1982) explained the scarce presence of women at the highest moral level, stating that it is not due to a moral deficiency of women, but to a different way of perceiving the world compared to men. In fact, women's perception of themselves is so closely linked to interpersonal relationships that their moral dilemmas induce them to implement highly contextual modes of judgment (Gilligan, 1977). This particular moral orientation, defined as the ethic of care, is characterized by subjectivity, intuition and sensitivity, and the implementation of response methods that damage the other least possible and avoid leaving him alone. In contrast, the ethic of justice, which has been considered as more masculine, is characterized by objectivity, rationality, emotional independence and a tendency to treat others fairly, knowing and respecting the laws, both implicit and explicit (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Akman, 1991).

These observations on how men and women behave seem easily explained by referring to inherent biological differences (Ellemers, 2018). The physical strength of

men and the ability of women to have children predispose them to different types of activities and concern. However, much research (Levy et al., 1995; Russell & Trigg, 2004; McLaughlin et al., 2010; Eisend, 2019) indicates that gender differences develop over the course of life, due to the way boys and girls are raised and educated.

So, the different social roles and positions of power of men as economic suppliers and women as housewives, rather than biological distinctions, emphasize and broaden the initial differences. This means that the traditional gender roles, in which there is an unequal distribution of power between men and women, not arise only from biological differences between the sexes. Instead, it reflects individuals' approval of social norms that connect men to the public sphere and women to caring roles (Felski, 2002). Additionally, social roles, beyond gender, have been found to affect hormone regulation, self-regulation, and social regulation, which ultimately elicits different thoughts, feelings and behaviours in men and women (Eagly & Wood, 2013).

Despite these evidences, still very often, the fact that men and women have different social roles and social outcomes as a group tends to be explained simply as the result of individual differences in preferences and abilities or purely biological differences. This illusion of meritocracy is so strong that it prevents individuals from seeking, processing, or accepting evidence indicating that differences in social outcomes may stem from gender stereotypes (Barreto & Ellemers, 2015).

The belief that social differences arise from individual choices hides the possibility that members of different groups are not treated equally and discourages attempts to decrease this inequality (Stephens & Levine, 2011). This belief is reinforced by the tendency to see the world as a just place, where everyone gets the results they deserve (Lerner, 1980; Dalbert, 2009). The belief in a just world causes people to attribute more appreciable characteristics to groups that already have high status. Hence, gender stereotypes are adapted to situations, so that the male stereotype consistently represents the most valued characteristics in that context (Ridgeway, 2001).

In conclusion, given the position of power of men with respect to women, someone might think that gender stereotypes are a problem only for women. Indeed, in different cultures, men tend to be seen as free or not determined by gender stereotypes. This implies a reduction of studies concerning men: scholars do not explicitly study the psychology of men or the history of men. Male scholars do not care about how being a man can distort their intellectual work (Flax, 1987).

However, as widely emphasized by feminist theory (Flax, 1987; Felski, 2002; Allen, 2018), the definition and questioning of gender relations and stereotypes imply advantages for women and men.

In fact, women aren't the only ones suffering from implicit gender stereotypes; men do it too, albeit differently. For example, men are underrepresented in professional and family roles that emphasize communality and caring, and gender stereotypes implicitly prevent their interest in and inclusion in such roles (Croft et al., 2015). Furthermore, the implicit assumption that relationships with others and interpersonal vulnerability are less relevant to men can have debilitating effects over time. Wong and colleagues (2017) revealed that men driven by the male stereotype to be self-reliant and exert power over women suffered social costs. The scholars showed that these men had poor social functioning and compromised mental health, characterized by depression, loneliness and substance abuse.

2. Neosexism: the modern form of women discrimination

Despite the introduction of regulations and the increase in scientific studies, discriminatory attitudes and actions towards women continue to appear in today's Western societies. These discriminations are based on some gender stereotypes deeply rooted in Western culture.

Stereotypical categorizations of what is most typically masculine or feminine lead some individuals to have discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women or, in other words, to be sexist. Sexism has traditionally been defined as "*a prejudicial attitude or discriminatory behaviour based on the presumed inferiority or difference of women as a group*" (Cameron, 1977, p. 340).

Classically there was a tendency to consider sexism the open manifestations of hostility towards women, but in the current socio-psychological research, the construct has been revised and extended, compared to the traditional version. Modern conceptualizations of sexism are no longer limited to just classical indicators such as negative attitudes and beliefs towards women. Currently, hidden and subtle sexist beliefs can manifest themselves in different ways (Swim & Campbell, 2001).

Therefore, despite the many legislative regulations adopted by different countries that establish equity between people and social groups, hidden and sometimes unconscious hostile feelings persist in many individuals. These feelings lead to perceive the other as inferior to oneself in certain respects.

The need to grasp and address this hidden problem has led many scholars to propose new models of social prejudice and discrimination, such as racism (McConahay, 1983; Sniderman et al., 1991; Leach, 2005), but also sexism (Benwell, 2007; Sutherland et al., 2017).

In particular, Tougas et al. (1995) proposed a new conception of sexism that considers these hidden aspects. Starting from the analogy with racism, the authors highlighted that despite the marked and open prejudices against minorities, such as black people that have greatly decreased since the 1950s, there are still obstacles that do not allow concrete socio-economic actions that reduce differences between social groups.

Along this line, Tougas et al. (1995) defined contemporary sexism or neosexism as the “*manifestation of a conflict between egalitarian values and residual negative feelings toward women*” (p. 843).

The concept of neosexism reflects the complexity of current beliefs about the status of women. For example, sexist people are not necessarily opposed to equality and maintain non-traditional gender roles but deny the existence of discrimination against women (Swim et al., 2001). Therefore, this new form of sexism, which denies the existence of inequality and discrimination, is related to non-traditional gender roles and preventing gender awareness, because this implies the recognition of discrimination against women.

Tougas and colleagues (1995) proposed a model (shown in Figure 1) in which neosexism develops in individuals who believe that equality between the sexes would result in a loss of advantages. So neosexism is due to considerations of the collective interest. Therefore it is triggered both by traditional openly sexist discriminatory attitudes and by collective interests of the social group that are not openly declared. This attitude leads to resistance and hostile reactions towards affirmative actions or programs aimed to develop equality between the sexes (Tougas et al., 1991).

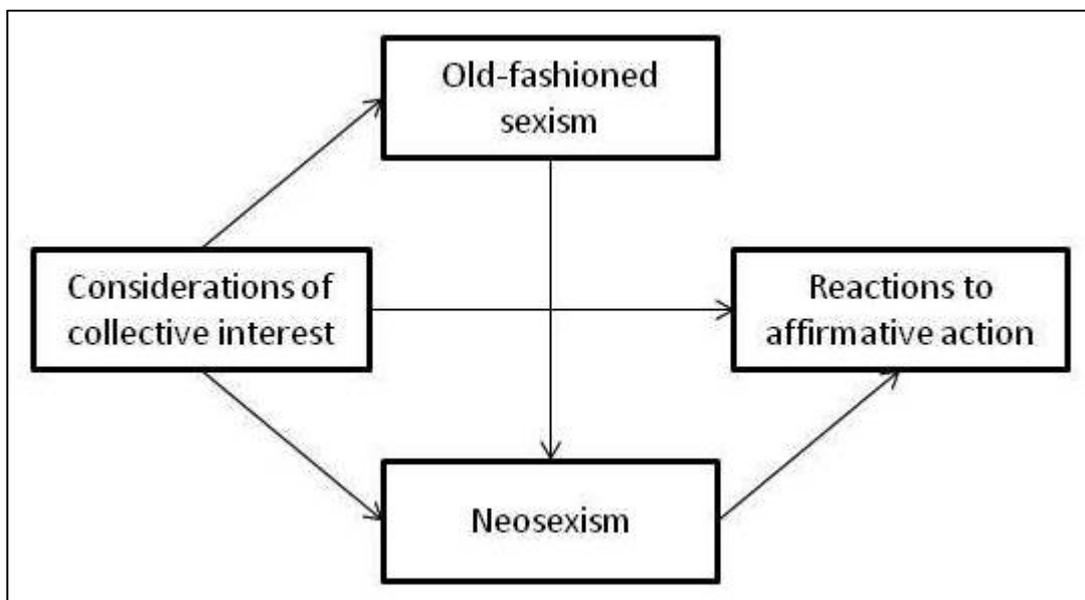


Figure 5. Model of neosexism and prediction of attitudes toward affirmative action
(source: Tougas et al., 1995)

Using a method similar to McConahay (1983) for measuring neo-racism, Tougas et al. (1995) also developed a scale for measuring modern sexism, called the Neosexism Scale.

In addition to the conceptualization of Tougas et al. (1995) of contemporary sexism as composed of a mainly negative affect, Glick and Fiske (1997; 2001)

proposed that it is rather characterized by ambivalence, that is, by the coexistence of positive and negative affects.

According to the authors, traditional theories of sexism only assessed hostility towards women, subjectively neglecting the positive or benevolent side of sexism. Thus, they distinguished between hostile sexism, or hostility and antipathy towards women, and benevolent sexism, or the tendency to stereotypically believe that women have special abilities to apply in specific restricted contexts (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Specifically, benevolent sexism has been defined as “*subjectively positive (for the sexist) attitudes toward women in traditional roles: protective paternalism, idealization of women, and desire for intimate relations*” (Glick & Fiske, 1997, p. 119). At the same time, hostile sexism has been defined as “*the negative equivalents on each dimension: dominative paternalism, derogatory beliefs, and heterosexual hostility*” (Glick & Fiske, 1997, p. 119).

The hypothesized coexistence of both positive and negative affects is similar to that proposed in the theory of ambivalent racism (Katz et al., 1988).

Infact, Katz et al. (1988) suggested that in North America, both the positive and negative affects of whites towards blacks could coexist due to a tension between egalitarianism and individualism. This results in whites seeing blacks as needing help (egalitarianism), but equally responsible for their own circumstances (individualism).

Glick and Fiske (1997) proposed that positive and negative affects do not arise from opposing value systems (for example, benevolent sexism does not derive from egalitarian beliefs) but from evaluative ambivalence. In particular, Glick and Fiske (2001) characterized hostile and benevolent beliefs as ambivalent because “*even if the beliefs about women that generate hostile and benevolent sexism are positively correlated, they have opposite evaluative implications, satisfying the literal meaning of ambivalence*” (p. 494).

Both forms of sexism derive from three sources: patriarchy, or the condition whereby men have better status and more power than women; gender differentiation, or the fact that different and specific social roles are attributed to men and women;

and sexual reproduction, which conditions the relationship between men and women by creating addiction and intimacy (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

These three sources led the authors to develop a model (shown in Figure 2) in which hostile and benevolent sexism are correlated and in which the latter is composed of three sub-factors: protective paternalism, or the tendency to consider women as people to be defended and protected; complementary gender differentiations, that is to say, that women are purer than men; and heterosexual intimacy, that is a common thought that every man should have a woman to adore (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

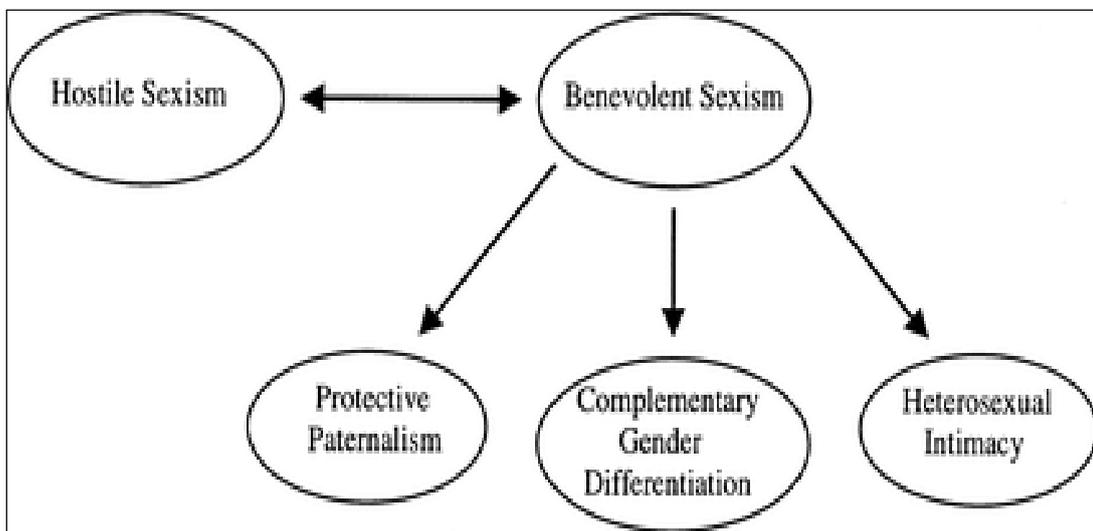


Figure 6. Factorial model of ambivalent sexism (source: Glick & Fiske, 2001).

In conclusion, in light of the phenomenon's complexity, it is clear that sexism is far from a closed issue, which instead requires the development of new studies and effective strategies to deepen and address it.

Martínez et al. (2010) found that neosexism understood as resistance to changing gender relationships and roles, plays an important role in gender awareness. This result agrees with that obtained by Tougas et al. (1995), who found that, particularly in women, neosexism has a more prominent effect, than their perceived discrimination in their attempts at social mobility.

This means that the sexist attitude is not attributable only to men, but is also rooted in women. Therefore, it cannot be considered as a sort of personality trait or characteristic of a single person or individual social groups, but must be treated as a far-reaching phenomenon that involves the entire cultural system of many Western countries.

3. Well-being, fairness and mattering for women in the ecological perspective

As previously highlighted, discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women are an outdated phenomenon. Indeed, discrimination is evident if we see the European data relating to the gender gap in recent years.

In a report, the European Union (2020b) highlighted that women are less present in the labour market than men: 67.3% of women are employed than 79% of men, and women earn on average 14.1% less per hour than men. The EU (2020b) stressed that these gender differences go beyond the simple issue of discrimination but are instead a consequence of various inequalities women face in accessing employment, maintenance and career development.

Indeed first, about 30% of the total gender pay gap is explained by the high presence of women in relatively low-paying sectors, such as care and education. Second, because of the work-family balance, women spend on average fewer hours in paid work than men but more hours in unpaid work. In total, by caring more for the family, women have more weekly working hours than men, influencing their career choices. Third, the executive positions are mostly occupied by men, with only less than 10% of the CEOs of major companies being women. In addition, regarding company executives, women receive a wage that is 23% lower than men. Last but not least, although the European treaties since 1957 have established the principle of equal pay, due to discrimination, women often earn less than men to do jobs of equal value (EU, 2020b).

Stereotypes, gender roles and discriminatory attitudes, therefore, influence the working conditions of men and women, but not only. They determine asymmetrical

power relations between men and women (Shen et al., 2012; Reyes et al., 2016) and can lead, in extreme situations, to the implementation of forms of violence. The feminist perspective (Cannon et al., 2015) underlined the influence of patriarchal culture and its role in unleashing violent dynamics. In patriarchal culture, men automatically feel themselves in a position of domination (Misso et al., 2019) and these beliefs regarding the social position of men are shaped and acquired culturally and socially through their families of origin, their experiences in early childhood, their experiences of life and their social attitudes (Bell & Naugle, 2008). More specifically, gender stereotypes not only establish the characteristics designated as masculine and feminine but, more importantly, delineate expectations regarding masculine and feminine actions. From this point of view, violent episodes are induced by adherence to traditional cultural rules and gender roles that attribute to men a type of masculinity supported by virility that recognizes itself in power, strength and control over others (Faramarzi et al., 2005).

Given the dangerous drift to which the relational asymmetry between men and women lead, many indications on gender dynamics come from studies that have examined the phenomenon of violence against women (Gordon, 2000; Caldwell et al., 2012; Cho, 2012).

Many studies have explained the difference in power and the dynamics that lead to gender-based violence, proposing interventions and strategies for resolving this problem (Whathen & MacMillan, 2003; Hall, 2015; Esposito et al., 2020). However, most programs promoting gender equality focus on promoting individual change, often neglecting the variables present in the living environment, both as sources of malaise and as change elements (Ahrens, 2018).

WHO (2012) stressed that it is necessary to address violence against women, to implement strategies that do not concern only individuals, but all the social levels in which he/she is inserted, that is to assume an ecological approach.

In this regard, Di Napoli et al. (2019), studying violence against women, proposed applying the ecological approach to assessing the inequality of power between men and women and, therefore, ultimately promoting gender equity and well-being of

women. As previously highlighted, the ecological model studies and acts on well-being, investigating the different levels that influence an individual's life and also highlights the close relationship between well-being and the social justice of the context (Prilleltensky et al., 2001). Addressing gender inequalities and gender-based violence from an ecological perspective, therefore, means jointly taking into account the equity and well-being of women.

Arcidiacono & Bocchino (2007) identified the protective and risk factors determining at different levels: personal, relational, organizational, community and social. On a personal and relational level, the fundamental resources for women's well-being are psychological preparation, physical health, friendship, good interpersonal skills and mutual support. However, these resources can suffer the effects of risks such as lack of health, the absence of family care, relational conflict and social isolation. At the organizational and community level, the protective factors live in an adequate context, cohesion and support, and access to health services. In contrast, the risk factors are the loss of social networks, living in a marginal situation, unemployment and undeclared work. On a social level, it is important as protective elements to live in a healthy environment, have a job, have a developed social network and perceive social justice. On the other hand, risk factors at this level are material, social and educational poverty, social exclusion, injustice and discrimination.

To these considerations, it must be pointed out that in addition to social justice, and therefore gender equity, there is another aspect to consider in determining women's well-being that is mattering. It was widely demonstrated that well-being depends on the perception of being important (Rayle, 2005; Flett et al., 2019) and that this perception depends on living in a fair context, in which there is equality between people and the rights of all are recognized (Prilleltensky, 2014; Garcia-Ramirez et al., 2020). However, in Western countries, equality between social groups and even just gender equality still seems not to have been achieved (Verloo, 2018). Stereotyped conceptions of gender roles persist in many countries today, i.e. what is more appropriate for women or men. For example, women do twice as much

housework as men (Coltrane, 2000). Due to this overload, women often report negative emotions and moods, such as stress, frustration, exhaustion and boredom (Gager, 2008). However, women do not perceive this work overload as an injustice since domestic services are hardly recognized as a job worthy of attention and value.

In this regard, Kawamura and Brown (2010), examining mattering in the relationships between men and women, found that it is positively correlated with the perceived fairness of wives in the division of domestic work. Husbands' feelings of respect and concern are associated with wives being more likely to report that the family division of labour is fair. This evidence shows that to implement social equity and, consequently, women's well-being, it is necessary to consider mattering.

Matera et al. (2020) stressed that mattering should receive more attention as a psychosocial construct, given its significant implications for the general functioning of individuals. So, interventions to improve people's well-being should focus not only on intrapsychic characteristics such as self-esteem but also on the perception of a relationship construct such as mattering, which is a direct predictor of well-being. This could be particularly important concerning the women's well-being, for whom not only a positive self-concept but also the perception of being important to others can be protective factors from damages that stereotypes cause on psychological functioning. (Morgades-Bamba et al., 2019).

CHAPTER 5 - Study 1. Testing cross-cultural psychometric validity of the I COPPE scale, for measuring well-being: a comparison between Italy and Argentina

In this chapter a cross-cultural study is presented. The main purposes of this section are two:

1) to present a study that investigated the reliability and validity of the I COPPE scale for measuring well-being across two countries, namely Italy and Argentina;

2) to report the results obtained from the study, which offer indications about:

- the configural and metric invariance, and therefore on the possibility of using the I COPPE scale also in different socio-cultural contexts,

- scalar invariance to detect differences in the levels of well-being in two different countries, such as Italy and Argentina.

Introduction

As pointed out in the previous chapters, people's well-being is strictly connected to socio-cultural factors specific in a context. Indeed, many studies (Haworth & Hart, 2007; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006; Alatartseva & Barysheva, 2015; Bilan et al., 2020) reported how the social, economic and employment aspects of a country affect the health and psychological well-being of individuals.

Italy and Argentina are two countries that are very distant geographically and that differ greatly in the levels of industrialization, levels of training and well-being of people (Sarti & Rodriguez Espinola, 2018).

Despite this, given the strong emigration of Italians to South America, which took place between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, there are strong cultural similarities between the two countries. Furthermore, from an economic point of view, both countries have had a negative trend in recent years (Rodriguez Espinola, 2017).

Like most Latin American countries, Argentina has been marked by underdevelopment and severe social inequalities, leading to internal conflicts. Argentine society presents a clear division between social classes and high levels of marginalization and poverty of a large slice of the population, equal to about 30% (Rodriguez Espinola, 2017; Salvia et al., 2015).

Moreover, Italy, despite being among the most developed countries, experienced a serious economic crisis starting from the early 2000s, which had strong repercussions on the economic-working structure of the country, increasing the unemployment rate, and on the socio-cultural structure, increasing the gap between the wealthiest and poorest social classes (Odone et al., 2018).

Despite this similarity regarding the economic aspects, Italy and Argentina have very different levels of health care, well-being and life expectancy of people (WHO, 2013; 2015). Italians have a higher life expectancy, have better lifestyles and have a good family welfare system, which functions as protective factors against physical and psychological health (Sarti & Rodriguez Espinola, 2018).

On the other hand, Argentines can rely less on family and social resources, and their health system also generates disparities between people in the possibilities of receiving assistance (Rodriguez Espinola, 2017).

Therefore, the social inequality present in Argentina affects the health conditions of individuals belonging to the lower social classes, who do not receive assistance from the social system (Salvia et al., 2015).

Sarti and Rodriguez Espinola (2018) found that the Italians have less psychological stress than the Argentines and that the level of education seems to be important in determining this difference.

In light of what emerged in the literature, this study aimed to confirm the reliability and validity of the I COPPE scale across different countries and investigate the difference in the levels of well-being between Italian and Argentine people.

Method

Participants and procedure

The research involved two samples: one of the Italian students and one of the Argentine students. The participants involved in Italy were 638 students from the Federico II University of Naples. This sample consisted of 272 males and 411 females and had a mean age of 23.20 years ($SD = 2.88$).

The participants in Argentina were 482 students from the Universidad Nacional de Tucumán. Among them, 175 were males and 307 were females, and their mean age was 22.17 years ($SD = 3.01$).

As shown in Table 1, the two samples are homogeneous regarding gender and age. In fact, in both groups, the females are about 60% and the mean age is about 22-23 years.

The participants were recruited through convenience sampling in Italy and Argentina, carried out with the snowball sampling technique. The researchers asked a group of students to fill in the questionnaire during the lessons, thanks to the cooperation of some teachers. Subsequently, these first participants were asked to

disseminate the questionnaire (created specifically in the online form) to other university students through the SurveyMonkey digital platform.

In addition, to facilitate the dissemination and retrieval of the access link to the questionnaire, a Facebook page called *Well-being among university students* was created.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of Italian and Argentinean samples.

	Italian sample n = 683	Argentinean sample n = 482
<i>Age</i>	M = 23.20 (SD = 2.88)	M = 22.17 (SD = 3.01)
	N (%)	N (%)
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	272 (39.8%)	175 (36.3%)
Female	411 (60.2%)	307 (63.7%)
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	316 (46.3%)	436 (90.5%)
With partner	348 (51.0%)	27 (5.6%)
Married	16 (2.3%)	18 (3.7%)
Separated/Divorced	3 (0.4%)	1 (0.2%)

Measure

Participants completed an online self-report questionnaire consisting of a socio-demographic section and the *I COPPE scale* (Prilleltensky et al., 2015), which measures both the satisfaction of individuals with their overall living conditions and their perception of well-being in six specific domains: interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological and economic.

The scale includes 21 items, three for each dimension of well-being investigated: the first evaluates the perception of well-being in the present, the second the perception of well-being in the past, and the third the expectation of well-being in the future.

Participants must express their level of well-being for each item, using a cantril scale ranging from 0 (the minimum possible) to 10 (the maximum possible).

For Italy's application, the I COPPE scale was used in its Italian version (Di Martino et al., 2018). Since there was not already a validated version of the scale for Argentina, we first proceeded to produce an adaptation of the scale in Spanish through a translation and back-translation procedure (metti I riferimenti del metodo).

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the statistical software SPSS.20 and Mplus 8.0. The first software was used for preliminary analyzes (means, frequencies, correlations), while the second was used to perform multigroup confirmatory factor analysis to test factorial invariance between Italian and Argentine students. The statistical technique used refers to the Structural Equations Modeling (SEM; Kline, 2016).

Maximum Likelihood (ML) was chosen as the main estimator. Missing values were treated with list-wise deletion, causing a small loss of cases in all instances (i.e. 9 cases in the Italian group, 10 cases in the Argentinean group).

First, CFAs were implemented to verify that the scale structure was stable in both groups. Then reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity were assessed for both samples. Reliability was assessed through Composite Reliability (CR). Values of CR higher than .7 are considered a sign of good reliability (Raykov, 1997). Convergent validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Values of AVE higher than .5 are indicative of good convergent validity. In addition, discriminant validity can be established if AVE is higher than both Maximum Squared Shared Variance (MSV) and Average Shared Square Variance (ASV) (Hair et al., 2010).

Multigroup confirmatory factor analysis was applied to test three types of invariance between groups: configural invariance, to verify that the same observed variables indicate the latent constructs holds across groups; metric invariance, to verify that the psychological meaning of the variables is the same across groups; and

scalar invariance, to verify whether the levels of the latent variables are the same across the samples (Abrams et al., 2013; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000).

To verify the goodness of fit of the models of the single samples' models and the configuration model, the Chi-square value was observed. When it is not significant (at .05 alpha level) indicates a good fit of the model to the data. However, since this value is greatly influenced by the sample size, further indices were evaluated to verify the goodness of the fit: the Standardized Root Mean square Residual (SRMR), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Tukey -Lewis Index (TLI), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI).

For the SRMR, values lower than .08 indicate a good fit; for the RMSEA, the values must not exceed the threshold of .05; finally, for the CFI and the TLI values equal to or greater than .9 indicate a good fit, while values equal to or greater than .95 indicate an excellent fit of the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Finally, to compare the configural model with the metric model and the scalar model, Chi-square difference tests were applied.

Results

CFAs, Reliability and psychometric validity

The results of the CFAs show a good fit of the 7-factor structure of the I COPPE scale for both groups involved in the study. The models have excellent fit indices: $\chi^2 (270) = 372.71$, RMSEA = .026 (.019, .032), SRMR = .038, CFI = .988 and TLI = .981 for Italian sample; and $\chi^2 (270) = 372.71$, RMSEA = .026 (.019, .032), SRMR = .038, CFI = .988 and TLI = .981 for Argentinean sample.

Furthermore, as reported in Table 2, all factor loadings are significant for an alpha level of 0.01 and have good inter-item reliability (R^2) values. The highest values are for Community well-being present with .95 ($R^2 = .90$) in the Italian sample and .98 ($R^2 = .92$) in the Argentine sample. Instead, the lowest values are .46 ($R^2 = .13$) for Psychological well-being past in the Italian sample and .51 ($R^2 = .18$) for Overall well-being past in the Argentine sample.

Table 2. Factor loadings and inter-item reliability (R^2) in the two samples.

Latent variable	Item	Italian Sample	Argentinean sample
		Standardized factor loadings (R^2)	Standardized factor loadings (R^2)
Overall well-being	Overall well-being (present)	.88(.78)	.91(.86)
	Overall well-being (past)	.48(.15)	.51(.18)
	Overall well-being (future)	.62(.40)	.69(.34)
Interpersonal well-being	Interpersonal well-being (present)	.89(.81)	.87(.81)
	Interpersonal well-being (past)	.49(.24)	.59(.71)
	Interpersonal well-being (future)	.80(.64)	.83(.62)
Community well-being	Community well-being (present)	.95(.90)	.98(.92)
	Community well-being (past)	.68(.47)	.75(.92)
	Community well-being (future)	.74(.58)	.77(.57)
Occupational well-being	Occupational well-being (present)	.88(.78)	.86(.81)
	Occupational well-being (past)	.56(.32)	.57(.81)
	Occupational well-being (future)	.65(.43)	.77(.41)
Physical well-being	Physical well-being (present)	.90(.81)	.86(.82)
	Physical well-being (past)	.48(.23)	.57(.82)

	Physical well-being (future)	.77(.59)	.83(.49)
Psychological well-being	Psychological well-being (present)	.86(.74)	.85(.86)
	Psychological well-being (past)	.46(.13)	.57(.86)
	Psychological well-being (future)	.70(.49)	.80(.40)
	Economic well-being (present)	.88(.78)	.89(.81)
Economic well-being	Economic well-being (past)	.70(.49)	.69(.81)
	Economic well-being (future)	.68(.46)	.64(.43)
	N	676	472

N.B. all values are significant at .1% alpha level.

Regarding reliability, all the Composite Reliability (CR) indices calculated for each factor exceed the threshold of .7, indicating a good level of reliability of the I COPPE scale in both groups. As for convergent validity, the results showed good Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for almost all factors. However, some of these values did not exceed the .5 threshold. In the Italian sample, these are the Psychological Well-being and Overall Well-being factors, which have values of .456 and .475, respectively. As for the Argentine sample, the value that does not exceed the threshold is .491 for the Overall Well-being factor.

Finally, the analysis showed that the scale also has a good level of discriminating validity. The AVE indices of almost all factors are greater than the respective values of Maximum Squared Shared Variance (MSV) and Average Shared Square Variance (ASV). The only exceptions are Psychological well-being and Overall well-being in the Italian group. The AVE indices of these two latent variables are, in fact, lower than the MSV values, which are equal in both cases to .576.

All results relating to the reliability and validity indices and the correlation coefficients between the factors, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor Correlations, Reliability and Validity Measures.

Sample	Latent Variable	IN_WB	CO_WB	OC_WB	PH_WB	PS_WB	EC_WB	OV_WB
Italian sample (n = 672)	IN_WB	1						
	CO_WB	.270	1					
	OC_WB	.322	.407	1				
	PH_WB	.391	.286	.356	1			
	PS_WB	.533	.317	.563	.501	1		
	EC_WB	.261	.269	.440	.391	.392	1	
	OV_WB	.528	.422	.649	.413	.759	.440	1
Reliability and Validity Measures								
	CR	.785	.840	.748	.771	.700	.800	.714
	AVE	.562	.640	.507	.543	.456	.575	.475
	MSV	.284	.178	.421	.251	.576	.194	.576
	ASV	.160	.112	.221	.156	.284	.139	.303
	Latent	IN_	CO_	OC_	PH_	PS_	EC_	OV_

	Variable	WB	WB	WB	WB	WB	WB	WB
Argentinean sample (n = 472)	IN_WB	1						
	CO_WB	.265	1					
	OC_WB	.374	.180	1				
	PH_WB	.361	.272	.449	1			
	PS_WB	.489	.313	.526	.631	1		
	EC_WB	.337	.309	.413	.379	.436	1	
	OV_WB	.563	.226	.631	.469	.639	.354	1

Reliability and Validity Measures

CR	.813	.893	.783	.804	.800	.788	.726
AVE	.598	.737	.552	.584	.579	.559	.491
MSV	.325	.098	.398	.398	.408	.190	.408
ASV	.168	.070	.203	.195	.268	.140	.253

Note. All values are significant at the .1% alpha level; CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, MSV = Maximum Squared Shared Variance, ASV= Average Shared Square Variance.

Multigroup confirmatory factor analysis

Once the validity of the 7-factor structure of the scale had been verified for both the Italian and Argentine samples, a multi-group invariance analysis was conducted.

As seen in Table 4, first the configural model was tested. It has excellent fit indices: χ^2 (270) = 372.71, RMSEA = .026 (.019, .032), SRMR = .038, CFI = .988 and TLI = .981. This indicates that the same latent variables can be represented by the same number of items in the two groups, i.e. it can be assumed that across the two groups the configural variance holds.

Subsequently, the configural model was compared with the metric model and a $\Delta\chi^2$ (14) = 23.771 with $p > .01$ resulted. This means that the same latent variables are represented by the same items equivalent to the two groups. So also, the metric invariance holds across the two samples.

Finally, the scalar invariance was verified. The comparison between the metric and scalar models showed a $\Delta\chi^2$ (14) = 71.244 with $p < .01$. This indicates the absence of scalar invariance. In other words, the means of the latent variables differ across the two samples.

Table 4. Indices of model fit for single samples and for invariance models.

Model	χ^2 (df)	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR	CFI	TLI	$\Delta\chi^2$ (df)
Italian Model	175.48 (130)	0.023 (.013, .031)	0.037	0.990	0.984	
Argentinean Model	197.506 (140)	0.029 (.019, .039)	0.039	0.985	0.977	
Configural Invariance	372.708 (270)	0.026 (.019, .032)	0.038	0.988	0.981	
Metric Invariance	396.595 (284)	0.026 (.020, .032)	0.041	0.987	0.981	23.77 (14)

Scalar	456.099	0.030	0.044	0.982	0.974	71.24*
Invariance	(298)	(.025, .036)				(14)

Note. * $p < .01$

Given that the scalar invariance does not hold across the two groups, the difference between the means of the Italian and Argentine samples was observed. As reported in Table 5, it was found that, except for economic well-being, for all the other latent variables, the difference between the means in the two groups is significant for the .01 alpha level. In particular, Interpersonal, Community, Occupational and Overall well-being have the highest values.

Table 5. Means Differences of the latent variables in Italian and Argentinean samples.

Latent Variable	Mean difference (Italian - Argentinean)
Interpersonal well-being	.457**
Community well-being	-.677**
Occupational well-being	.514**
Physical well-being	.246*
Psychological well-being	.372**
Economic well-being	.141
Overall well-being	.492**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

The results confirmed two fundamental aspects of the I COPPE scale.

First, given the configural and metric invariance across Italy and Argentina, it means that the I COPPE scale can be applied in a different country without difficulties. The multidimensional well-being construct has the same psychological meaning in the Italian and Argentine groups. Therefore linguistic, social and cultural

differences do not affect the ability of the I COPPE scale to provide valid measures of people's well-being.

This aspect is essential to ensure the reliability and validity of a measuring instrument. Xu and Tracey (2017) pointed out that the invariance analysis is a very useful technique for establishing whether the measurement model holds across groups. Moreover, establishing the invariance of the measurement model is a necessary prerequisite for testing the scalar invariance, and therefore investigating whether the levels of a construct vary across two groups.

Secondly, given the absence of scalar invariance, it can be concluded that the I COPPE scale can correctly detect differences in the levels of well-being among two different cultural groups.

Specifically, the differences between the means showed that interpersonal, occupational, physical, psychological and overall well-being are greater in the sample of Italian students and that only community well-being is greater in the Argentine sample. On the other hand, regarding the level of economic well-being, it does not differ in the two samples.

This result is in line with the study of Conigliaro (2020), who investigated subjective well-being in all Italian regions. The scholar found that the highest indicators of well-being are those connected to the relational area (having help from others, someone to speak), the work area (being satisfied with the job and with a/the financial situation), the psychical area (being satisfied with own health status), the psychological area (feeling happy, calm, nervous or depressed) and well-being in general (being satisfied with your life).

As a further confirmation of the results of this study, Conigliaro (2020) also highlighted that instead, the indicators of well-being with the lowest levels in the Italian regions are those related to the area of the social community, such as trust in justice and trust in the political-institutional system.

As for the Argentines, several studies (Keeling, 1996; Arizaga, 1999; García et al., 1999; Roitman, 2005) showed that they have particularly high community values. However, it should be noted that in this case, the term community does not mean the

largest social group, regional or national, but rather small local communities, such as the neighbourhood.

Indeed, Coy and Pöhler (2002) underlined the particular situation of South America, and Argentina in particular, in which there is little social cohesion between the different areas of the country. Instead, there are small gated communities, closed toward the outside, but with a great sense of unity between the people inside it.

Limitations and future proposals

Despite the good results obtained from the study, they must be considered in light of some limitations.

First, despite the excellent reliability of all the dimensions of well-being included in the I COPPE scale, some do not have adequate convergent and discriminating validity values. In particular, these are Psychological and Overall well-being. This criticality could be due to the not very high factor loadings of the past items of these two variables (see Table 2).

A future study could investigate this issue and perhaps solve it by developing a short-form, which includes only the of the present future dimensions for each dimension of well-being. Indeed, according to Gallup (2009), these two-time points may be sufficient to assess individuals' well-being accurately.

Another limitation concerns the sample recruitment technique. The snowball sampling technique is not probabilistic, and this does not allow the generalisation of the results obtained in the present study.

Finally, a further limitation to the possibility of generalizing the results concerns the composition of the samples. Having collected data only on university students, it is not possible to extend the conclusions of this study to the general Italian and Argentine populations.

Future research will confirm the results of this study, investigating subjective well-being in these two countries, recruiting participants who better represent the characteristics of their respective populations.

CHAPTER 6 - Study 2. Neosexism and the effect of belief in a just world and on Italians' well-being, via mattering

In this chapter a further empirical study is presented. The objective was to investigate the effect of neosexism and belief in a just world, direct and mediated by mattering, on well-being in a sample of Italian people.

The main purposes of this section are:

- 1) to present an excursus of the psychological literature that investigated the relationships between these four variables;*
- 2) to present the research, explaining in detail the procedures, tools and methodology used;*
- 3) to present and discuss in depth the results obtained, also explaining the limitations and proposals for future studies on the topic.*

Introduction

The well-being of people is closely connected to their way of perceiving the world and how much they feel they are important in the world (Flett et al., 2019). The more individuals feel that others recognize his/her own value, the more he/she lives well (Matera et al., 2020).

Indeed, Prilleltensky (2019) strongly emphasized the link between well-being and mattering. If an individual does not feel valued by himself/herself, by others significant to him/her, by the work context and by the community, he/she will be less happy, more stressed, and will have more risk of developing anxious or depressive symptoms.

To this aspect, it is necessary to add that feeling valued is in close connection with the perception of social justice (Prilleltensky, 2014). If people feel treated fairly, receive fair rewards for their work, and have a voice in the decisions that affect them, they feel more satisfied with their life (Poon et al., 2017).

Correia et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between belief in a just world and the subjective level of well-being perceived by individuals. According to the authors, subjective well-being is given by an overall assessment of people's lives, which has two components: a cognitive component, which refers to a global assessment of one's life and which therefore defines the level of life satisfaction; and an emotional component, relating to an evaluation of the events of one's life, based on emotions and moods (Diener et al., 2010).

The belief in a just world seems to directly influence the cognitive component of subjective well-being, that is, life satisfaction. Furthermore, an increase in life satisfaction corresponds to a linear increase in the belief in a just world (Correia et al., 2009).

Some studies also investigated justice about gender, noting how much the perception of justice in the social context is connected to having discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women (Rhode, 1991; Foley et al., 2005; Bhugra, 2016).

Sakallı-Uğurlu and colleagues (2007) found that individuals with higher levels of neosexism tend to believe the world is a just place. This means that those who possess sexist attitudes and behaviours also tend to consider that the world is all in all just and that, consequently, women are not treated differently from men.

The belief in a just world, in fact, activates a mechanism by which any injustice suffered by a woman is re-signified. Individuals who believe that the world is fair will tend to find a cause that causes injustice, regardless of whether it happened to a female individual (Callan & Ellard, 2010; Hafer & Bègue, 2005).

Let's say a woman is rejected at a job interview simply because she is recently married and, therefore, potentially can be a mother soon. In such a case, individuals who believe that the world keeps their belief intact will associate the woman's failure to hire for reasons unrelated to her gender, such as inexperience, lack of specific skills, the presence of best candidates, etc.

Based on these premises, the present study aimed to investigate the effect, direct and mediated by mattering, of belief in a just world, and neosexism on well-being.

In particular, the following hypotheses were examined:

H1: Personal and General Belief in a Just World will have a positive relationship with all the dimensions of well-being.

H2: Neosexism will have a negative relationship with all the dimensions of well-being.

H3: Mattering has a positive relationship with all the dimensions of well-being.

H4: The relationships between Personal and General Belief in a Just World and all the dimensions of well-being are mediated by Mattering, that is, Personal and General Belief in a Just World have a positive, indirect relationship with all the dimensions of well-being via Mattering.

H5: The relationships between Neosexism and all the dimensions of well-being are mediated by Mattering; that is, Neosexism has a negative, indirect relationship with all the dimensions of well-being via Mattering.

In addition, the relationship between the variables considered, in particular well-being, and some socio-demographic characteristics (such as sex, age, etc.) was also evaluated.

Method

Participants and procedures

The research involved 2520 Italian citizens. The sample was 62% of females and 38% of males and had an mean age of 29.8 years (SD = 12.8). The participants came from all Italian regions: 36% were from the North, 45% were from the Centre, and 19% were from the South.

As shown in Table 1, in the sample, the prevailing qualification was the high school diploma (57%). Regarding marital status, 55% of participants said they had a partner, but the percentage of singles was still high (40%). Finally, as regards the main occupation, the sample was quite heterogeneous.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants.

<i>Age</i>	Range [18; 88]	M = 29.8	SD = 12.8
		N	%
<i>Sex</i>	Female	1557	61.8%
	Male	963	38.2%
<i>Territorial area</i>	North	904	35.9%
	Centre	1128	44.8%
	South	488	19.4%
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	1021	40.5%
	With partner/Married	1389	55.1%
	Separated/Divorced	80	3.2%
	Widower	11	0.4%
	Other marital status	19	0.8%
<i>Educational Level</i>	Primary School	3	0.1%

	Middle School	181	7.2%
	High School	1424	56.5%
	University Degree	746	29.6%
	Post-graduate degree	166	6.6%
<i>Employment status</i>	Unemployed	595	23.6%
	Full-time worker	875	34.7%
	Part-time worker	276	11.0%
	Student	653	25.9%
	Retired	38	1.5%
	Other employment status	83	3.3%
Total		2520	100%

The recruitment of the sample took place through the snowball sampling technique. A group of students-trainees in Psychology were involved in a workshop that aimed to train them in the Computer-Assisted Survey Information Collection (CASIC, Couper, 2000). Once trained, they were asked to recruit different people in all Italian regions, starting from their network of contacts, to ask them to fill out an online questionnaire created using the SurveyMonkey platform. To facilitate the compilation, the access link to the questionnaire was shared with the participants thanks to a Facebook page created specifically for conducting the research.

The responses obtained through this technique were reduced based on some criteria: participants with age under 18, or who reported not living in Italy, or who filled out less than 80% of the questionnaire were excluded from the research.

Measures

Participants were asked to fill in an online self-report questionnaire consisting of a socio-demographic section and a section that included the following measurement scales:

- The *Personal and General Belief in Just World Scales (P-G-BJWs)*; Dalbert, 1999), translated and adapted into Italian (Esposito, 2021a), measures belief in

a just world for oneself and a just world in general. The two scales include respectively 7 and 6 items, which in both cases are statements on which the participants must express their degree of agreement, choosing a value from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

- The *Neosexism Scale (NS)*; Tougas, 1995) measures modern sexism, that is, the manifestation of negative feelings towards women, despite egalitarian values. The scale has 11 items, consisting of statements with which the participants report their degree of agreement, using a 7-point-scale where 1 indicates "completely disagree", and 7 indicates "completely agree".
- The *Mattering in Domains of Life Scale (MIDLS)*; Prilleltensky et al. 2021) translated and validated in Italian (Di Napoli et al., 2021), which measures the general mattering of individuals and the levels of mattering in four specific domains: personal, interpersonal, occupational, community. The scale evaluates two aspects of mattering for each of these dimensions,: feeling valued and adding value. For the general mattering and the two aspects of each specific domain, there is an item for the perception of the current level of mattering (present), an item for the perception of the level of the previous year (past), and finally, an item for the level that is imagined in the next year (future).

In total, therefore, the scale includes 27 items, for each of which the participants must express their level of mattering, choosing from the values of a Cantril scale ranging from 0 (the minimum possible) to 10 (the maximum possible);

- The *I COPPE Scale* (Prilleltensky et al., 2015) translated and validated in Italian (Di Martino et al., 2018), which measures both overall well-being and the perception of well-being in six specific domains: interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological and economic. Specifically, a short form of the I COPPE Scale (Esposito et al., 2021b), which includes 14 items instead of 21 as in the extended form, was used in the study.

For each of the seven dimensions of well-being investigated, the scale includes two items: one that evaluates the perception in the present and the other that evaluates the expectation in the future, one year from the time of compilation. Participants must express their level of well-being for each item, using a Cantril scale ranging from 0 (the minimum possible) to 10 (the maximum possible).

Data analysis

The programs used for data analysis were SPSS (version 20) and M-plus 8.0. The first software was used for preliminary analyses (means, frequencies, correlations), while the second was used to test confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs), multiple mediation modeling and MIMIC modeling.

The analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM; Kline, 2016). The choice of this statistical model is justified because it relates to the complexity of the phenomena and is based on the analysis of the covariance.

Maximum Likelihood (ML) was chosen as an estimator, and missing values were treated with list-wise deletion, causing a negligible loss of 162 cases (i.e. approximately 6% of the collected data).

For each dimension considered by the scales, the following were also verified: composite reliability, using the Joreskog CV (ρ_c) index; convergent validity, through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) index; and discriminant validity, by comparing the AVE with the Maximum Squared Shared Variance (MSV) and the Average Shared Square Variance (ASV) (Hair et al., 2010). Values of CR higher than .7 are considered a sign of good reliability, while values of AVE higher than .5 are indicative of good convergent validity (Raykov, 1997).

The hypotheses were tested through a multiple mediation model. The hypothesized model included many mediations: Personal Belief in a Just World, General Belief in a Just World and Neosexism were used as the independent variables, the seven domains of well-being as the dependent ones, and all these relationships were mediated by Mattering.

Bootstrap estimation was used to test the significance of the results (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with 1000 samples. The bias-corrected 95% CI was computed by determining the effects at the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles are no 0 in the CI; the indirect effects are significant.

Finally, a MIMIC modeling was applied to test the relation of demographic variables with all the latent variables investigated in the research.

To verify the goodness of fit, the Chi-square value was first observed, which when it is not significant (at .05 alpha level), indicates a good fit of the model to the data. However, given that the sample size greatly influences this value, further indices were also evaluated to verify the goodness of fit: the Standardized Root Mean square Residual (SRMR), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Tukey -Lewis Index (TLI), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI).

For the SRMR, values lower than .08 indicate a good fit; for the RMSEA, the values must not exceed the threshold of .05; for the CFI and the TLI, finally, values equal to or greater than .9 indicate a good fit, while values equal to or greater than .95 indicate an excellent fit of the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Results

CFAs and Reliability

The CFAs confirmed the factorial structures of all scales used in the research, despite limitations in some cases.

- a) *P-G-BJWs*. For the Personal and General Belief in a Just World Scale, the model proposed by the original validation study (Dalbart, 1999) was tested: seven items create a latent variable called Personal BJW, and six items create a latent variable called General BJW. As shown in Table 2, the CFAs showed significant and acceptable factor loadings and adequate inter-item reliability values (R2) for most of the items. However, some of these items have not very high standardized values. In particular, the first item of the Personal BJW

presents a standardized value well below the threshold in both samples (.18). Also, as regards the inter-item reliability values, this item has a low value (.03).

Regarding psychometric validity, as shown in Table 3, Composite Reliability (CR) indices show good reliability for the two latent variables (CR = .77 for Personal BJW and CR = .79 for General BJW). However, the AVE indices are lower than the threshold of .5 (AVE = .35 for Personal BJW and AVE = .39 for General BJW), demonstrating poor convergent validity of the scales. Despite this, the discriminant validity is high since the AVE indices of the two latent variables are larger than the respective values of MSV and ASV.

Finally, the indices of fit are adequate: RMSEA = .05, CFI = .96, TLI = .95 and SRMR = .03.

- b) *NS*. Regarding the Neosexism Scale, the CFA verified the original structure (Tougas, 1995), in which all 11 items load on a single latent variable called Neosexism. Also, in this case, the factor loadings and the inter-item reliability values (R^2) were significant and adequate for almost all the items. But even in this case, some items have values below the .5 threshold. As seen in Table 2, the problematic items are NS_2 with a value of .32 ($R^2 = .10$), NS_5 with a value of .20 ($R^2 = .04$), and NS_11 with a value of .35 ($R^2 = .12$).

Despite these items with low factor loadings, the scale presents a good level of composite reliability (CR = .82) and discriminant validity since the AVE index is larger than the values of MSV and ASV. However, the convergent validity is not high, given that the AVE index has a value of only .32.

Finally, the fit indices are good: RMSEA = .05, CFI = .95, TLI = .93 and SRMR = .04.

- c) *MIDLS*. For the Mattering in Domains of Life Scale, given the structure of the original scale (Prilleltensky et al., 2021), it was necessary to conduct a three-level CFA.

In the first-order CFA, the single observed variables were related to nine latent variables. 3 items created the Overall Mattering factor. The 12 items related to Feel valued created the factors: Self Mattering FV, Interpersonal Mattering FV, Occupational Mattering FV, and Community Mattering FV. Finally, the 12 items related to Add value created the captures: Self Mattering AV, Interpersonal Mattering AV, Occupational Mattering AV, and Community Mattering AV.

Subsequently, in the second-order CFA, all the latent variables of Feel Valued and Add Value were related to four further latent variables: Self Mattering; Interpersonal Mattering; Occupational Mattering; and Community Mattering.

Finally, in the third-order CFA, these four latent variables and the Overall Mattering were related to a last superordinate latent variable called Mattering.

Figure 1 clearly shows the three-level structure of the MIDLS, also reporting the factor loading and inter-item reliability values (R2) for each level of the CFA.

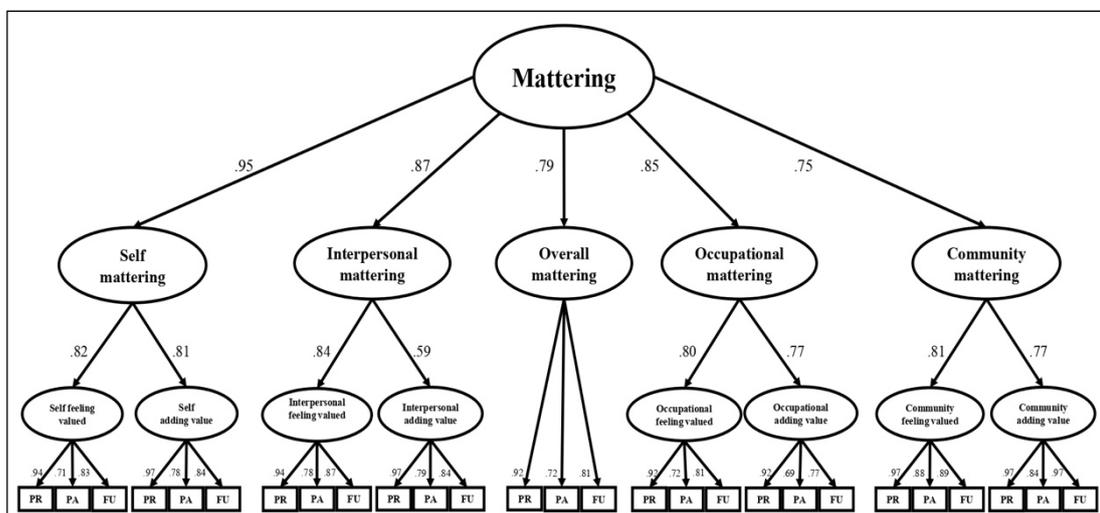


Figure 1. 3rd order factorial structure of Mattering In Domains of Life Scale (MIDLS).

Note. All standardized coefficients are significant for $p < .01$.

The scale presents significant and very high factors loadings and also high inter-item reliability values in terms of parameters estimates. Referring to the last level of the CFA, in Table 2, it can be seen that the minimum value is .75 ($R^2 = .57$) for Community Mattering, and the maximum value is .95 ($R^2 = .91$) for Self Mattering.

Also, concerning reliability and validity measures, MIDLS has excellent values. As shown in Table 3, the composite reliability ($CR = .93$) and convergent validity ($AVE = .70$) are very high. Furthermore, since the AVE value is higher than both MSV and ASV, it can be assumed that the scale also has good discriminant validity.

Finally, the indices of fit are excellent: $RMSEA = .02$, $CFI = .99$, $TLI = .98$ and $SRMR = .04$.

d) *I COPPE Short Form*. Following the structure of the original I COPPE scale (Prilleltensky et al., 2015) and its short version (Esposito, 2021b), a 7-factor correlated-trait model was applied. In particular, the 14 items were related to seven latent variables: Interpersonal Well-being, Community Well-being, Occupational Well-being, Physical Well-being, Psychological Well-being, Economic Well-being, and Overall Well-being.

In terms of parameters estimates, Table 2 shows that the I COPPE scale short form presents highly significant factor loadings and inter-item reliability values, with a minimum of .76 ($R^2 = .59$) for Occupational well-being Future and a maximum of .94 ($R^2 = .89$) for Community well-being Present.

Table 2 shows that the I COPPE short form presents high composite reliability values, which range from a minimum of .79 for Economic well-being, to a maximum of .90 for Community well-being. In terms of convergent validity, all the AVE values exceed the threshold of .5, with the minimum values of .65 for Psychological well-being and the maximum values of .85 for Economic well-being. Finally, the scale also has good discriminant validity

since all the AVE values are higher than both Maximum Shared Variance and Average Shared Variance.

Finally, the indices of model fit are excellent: RMSEA = .01, CFI = .99, TLI = .99 and SRMR = .01.

Table 2. Factor loadings and inter-item reliability (R²).

Scales	Latent variables	Items	Standardized factor loadings (R²)
Personal and General Belief in a Just World Scales	Personal BJW	PBJW_1	.18 (.03)
		PBJW_2	.63 (.40)
		PBJW_3	.62 (.38)
		PBJW_4	.66 (.44)
		PBJW_5	.58 (.34)
		PBJW_6	.69 (.48)
		PBJW_7	.59 (.35)
	General BJW	GBJW_1	.60 (.36)
		GBJW_2	.63 (.39)
		GBJW_3	.68 (.46)
		GBJW_4	.54 (.29)
		GBJW_5	.72 (.51)
Neosexism Scale	Neosexism	NS_1	.50 (.24)
		NS_2	.32 (.10)
		NS_3	.55 (.30)
		NS_4	.67 (.44)
		NS_5	.20 (.04)
		NS_6	.78 (.60)
		NS_7	.76 (.57)
		NS_8	.51 (.26)
		NS_9	.57 (.33)
		NS_10	.51 (.26)
		NS_11	.35 (.12)
Mattering in Domains of Life Scale (MIDLS)	Mattering	SELF_MAT	.95 (.91)
		INT_MAT	.87 (.75)
		OCC_MAT	.85 (.73)
		COM_MAT	.75 (.57)
		OV_MAT	.79 (.62)
I COPPE Scale - Short Form	Interpersonal well-being	IN-WB Present	.89 (.80)
		IN-WB Future	.77 (.59)

Community well-being	CO-WB Present	.94 (.89)
	CO-WB Future	.87 (.76)
Occupational well-being	OC-WB Present	.85 (.72)
	OC-WB Future	.76 (.59)
Physical well-being	PH-WB Present	.89 (.81)
	PH-WB Future	.78 (.62)
Psychological well-being	PS-WB Present	.89 (.79)
	PS-WB Future	.77 (.59)
Economic well-being	EC-WB Present	.85 (.73)
	EC-WB Future	.79 (.62)
Overall well-being	OV-WB Present	.92 (.86)
	OV-WB Future	.78 (.60)

Note. All values are significant at .1% alpha level.

Table 3. Reliability and Validity Measures.

Latent variable	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Personal BJW	.77	.35	.34	.15
General BJW	.79	.39	.34	.09
Neosexism	.82	.32	.04	.01
Mattering	.93	.70	.45	.24
Interpersonal well-being	.82	.70	.29	.05
Community well-being	.90	.82	.20	.04
Occupational well-being	.85	.74	.29	.05
Physical well-being	.82	.71	.23	.06
Psychological well-being	.83	.69	.38	.10
Economic well-being	.79	.85	.23	.06
Overall well-being	.84	.73	.45	.11

Mediation model

The model showed excellent indices of fit: RMSEA = .03, CFI = .93, TLI = 92 and SRMR = .04. It explained 39% of Mattering variance, 46% of Interpersonal well-being variance, 30% of Community well-being variance, 48% of Occupational well-being variance, 37% of Physical well-being variance, 60% of Psychological well-being variance, 37% of Economic well-being variance, and 66% of Overall well-being one.

The hypotheses were partially confirmed. Regarding H1, Personal Belief in a Just World has a positive direct effect on all domains of well-being, except Community well-being. Vice versa General Belief in a Just World has a positive direct effect only on Community well-being.

About H2, Neosexism has a negative direct effect only on Interpersonal well-being.

H3 is fully confirmed, given that Mattering has a direct positive effect on all well-being domains.

As for H4, Personal Belief in a Just World has a significant indirect effect via Mattering on all the domains of well-being. Conversely, General Belief in a Just World has no indirect effect via Mattering on the domains of well-being.

Finally, regarding H5, Neosexism has significant indirect negative effects via Mattering on all the domains of well-being.

Table 4 shows all the direct, indirect, and total standardized effects (B), their Standard Errors (SE), and their 95% CI.

Moreover, Figure 2 graphically shows the variables' relationships, emerged from the data analysis.

Table 4. Summary of direct, indirect, and total effects.

	Paths	B (SE)	BC 95% CI
Direct effects	Personal BJW → Mattering	.54* (.03)	[.47, .59]
	General BJW → Mattering	.05 (.03)	[-.01, .11]
	Personal BJW → Interpersonal WB	.10* (.04)	[.03, .17]
	General BJW → Interpersonal WB	.03 (.04)	[-.11, .03]
	Personal BJW → Community WB	.02 (.04)	[-.06, .11]
	General BJW → Community WB	.17* (.03)	[.10, .23]
	Personal BJW → Occupational WB	.14* (.04)	[.05, .21]

General BJW → Occupational WB	.01 (.03)	[-.06, .08]
Personal BJW → Physical WB	.22* (.04)	[.14, .29]
General BJW → Physical WB	-.08 (.03)	[-.14, .01]
Personal BJW → Psychological WB	.19* (.04)	[.11, .25]
General BJW → Psychological WB	-.06 (.03)	[-.12, .00]
Personal BJW → Economic WB	.30* (.04)	[.21, .38]
General BJW → Economic WB	-.04 (.04)	[-.10, .03]
Personal BJW → Overall WB	.18* (.03)	[.12, .24]
General BJW → Overall WB	-.05* (.03)	[-.10, .00]
Neosexism → Mattering	-.08* (.02)	[-.14, -.03]
Neosexism → Interpersonal WB	-.08* (.03)	[-.14, -.03]
Neosexism → Community WB	.04 (.03)	[-.01, .09]
Neosexism → Occupational WB	.01 (.03)	[-.02, .09]
Neosexism → Physical WB	-.04 (.03)	[-.09, .02]
Neosexism → Psychological WB	-.01 (.02)	[-.05, .37]
Neosexism → Economic WB	-.01 (.02)	[-.06, .04]
Neosexism → Overall WB	-.04 (.02)	[-.09, .01]
Mattering → Interpersonal WB	.59* (.03)	[.53, .65]
Mattering → Community WB	.41* (.03)	[.32, .47]
Mattering → Occupational WB	.56* (.04)	[.48, .62]
Mattering → Physical WB	.48* (.03)	[.41, .53]

	Mattering → Psychological WB	.66* (.03)	[.58, .71]
	Mattering → Economic WB	.36* (.04)	[.27, .42]
	Mattering → Overall WB	.69* (.03)	[.62, .74]
Indirect effects	Personal BJW → Mattering → Interper. WB	.32* (.03)	[.26, .37]
	General BJW → Mattering → Interper. WB	.03 (.02)	[-.01, .07]
	Personal BJW → Mattering → Comm. WB	.22* (.03)	[.17, .27]
	General BJW → Mattering → Comm. WB	.02 (.01)	[-.01, .05]
	Personal BJW → Mattering → Occup. WB	.30* (.03)	[.02, .35]
	General BJW → Mattering → Occup. WB	.03 (.02)	[-.01, .07]
	Personal BJW → Mattering → Phys. WB	.26* (.02)	[.21, .30]
	General BJW → Mattering → Phys. WB	.03 (.02)	[-.01, .06]
	Personal BJW → Mattering → Psyc. WB	.35* (.03)	[.30, .40]
	General BJW → Mattering → Psyc. WB	.04 (.02)	[-.01, .08]
	Personal BJW → Mattering → Econ. WB	.19* (.02)	[.15, .24]
	General BJW → Mattering → Econ. WB	.02 (.01)	[-.01, .05]
	Personal BJW → Mattering → Ove. WB	.37* (.03)	[.31, .43]
	General BJW → Mattering → Ove. WB	.04 (.02)	[-.01, .08]
	Neosexism → Mattering → Interper. WB	-.05* (.02)	[-.08, -.20]
	Neosexism → Mattering → Comm. WB	-.03* (.01)	[-.06, -.01]
	Neosexism → Mattering → Occup. WB	-.05* (.02)	[-.08, -.02]
	Neosexism → Mattering → Phys. WB	-.04* (.03)	[-.07, -.02]

	Neosexism → Mattering → Psyc. WB	-.05* (.02)	[-.09, -.02]
	Neosexism → Mattering → Econ. WB	-.03* (.01)	[-.05, -.01]
	Neosexism → Mattering → Ove. WB	-.06* (.02)	[-.09, -.02]
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Total effects	Personal BJW → Interpersonal WB	.42* (.04)	[.35, .49]
	General BJW → Interpersonal WB	-.01 (.04)	[-.08, .06]
	Personal BJW → Community WB	.24* (.04)	[.17, .31]
	General BJW → Community WB	.19* (.03)	[.12, .25]
	Personal BJW → Occupational WB	.44* (.04)	[.36, .50]
	General BJW → Occupational WB	.04 (.04)	[-.03, .12]
	Personal BJW → Physical WB	.48* (.04)	[.40, .54]
	General BJW → Physical WB	-.06 (.04)	[-.13, .02]
	Personal BJW → Psychological WB	.54* (.03)	[.47, .60]
	General BJW → Psychological WB	-.02 (.03)	[-.09, .05]
	Personal BJW → Economic WB	.49* (.04)	[.42, .60]
	General BJW → Economic WB	-.02 (.04)	[-.09, .06]
	Personal BJW → Overall WB	.55* (.03)	[.49, .61]
	General BJW → Overall WB	-.01 (.03)	[-.08, .05]
	Neosexism → Interpersonal WB	-.13* (.03)	[-.19, .07]
	Neosexism → Community WB	.01 (.03)	[-.04, .06]
	Neosexism → Occupational WB	-.01 (.03)	[-.07, .04]
	Neosexism → Physical WB	-.07* (.03)	[-.13, -.02]

Neosexism → Psychological WB	-0.06* (.03)	[-.12, -.01]
Neosexism → Economic WB	-0.04 (.02)	[-.09, .01]
Neosexism → Overall WB	-0.09* (.03)	[-.15, -.04]

Note. * $p < .001$.

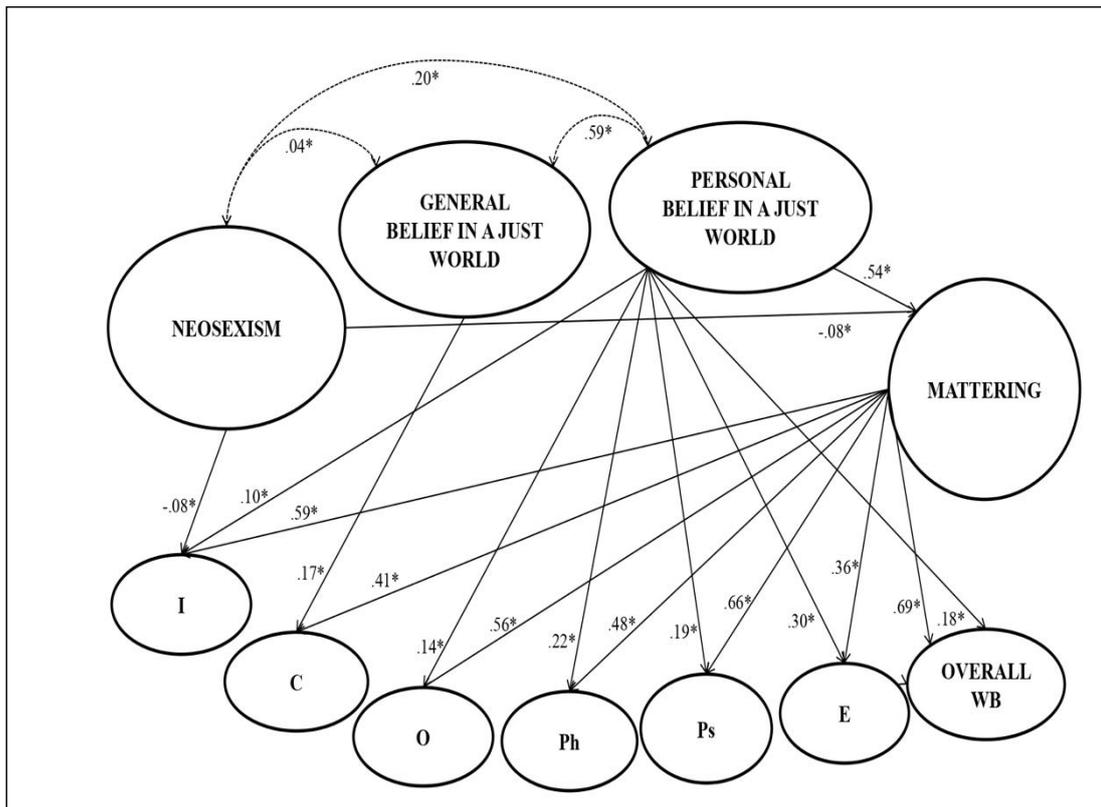


Figure 2. Model of the relations between latent variables.

Note. * $p < .01$.

I = Interpersonal well-being; C = Community well-being; O = Occupational well-being; Ph = Physical well-being; Ps = Psychological well-being; E = Economic well-being

MIMIC modeling

MIMIC modeling entails the analysis of a single covariance matrix that includes the dummy codes conveying group membership in addition to the latent variables.

Following this approach, the latent variables (Personal BJW, General BJW, Mattering and the I COPPE domains of well-being) were regressed onto dummy codes denoting group membership. A significant direct effect of the dummy code on the latent variable indicates population heterogeneity, that is, group differences on latent means.

So, except for the metric variable age and the variable sex, which includes only two categories, the demographic variables were broken down into the single categories that compose them. A reference category was then chosen for each variable, against which all the others should be compared. For the territorial area variable, the reference category chosen was South; for the marital status variable, the reference category was Single; for the educational status variable, the reference category was Elementary license; and finally, for the employment status variable, the reference category was Unemployed.

As shown in Table 5, demographic variables appear to be related to many latent variables.

Starting from age, there is a significant negative correlation with occupational and physical well-being. As for sex, females seem to have significantly lower levels of Personal and General Belief in a Just World, Neosexism and Physical and Psychological well-being than males.

Concerning territorial area, compared to those who live in Southern Italy, the inhabitants of the North report higher scores in Personal Belief in a Just World and Community and Economic well-being. On the other hand, there is no statistically significant difference between the inhabitants of the South and those of the Centre.

Regarding educational status, compared to those with an elementary school certificate, those with a middle school certificate, a diploma, a degree, or a post-university degree seem to have significantly higher values of Psychological and Overall well-being, but much lower values of Community well-being

Finally, with regard to employment status, compared to the unemployed, full-time workers and retirees seem to have significantly higher levels of Personal Belief in a Just World and Occupational and Economic well-being.

Table 5. Results of MIMIC modeling: the effects of demographic variables on latent variables.

Demographic variables Dummy codes	Latent variables (dependent variables)										
	PER- BJW	GEN- BJW	NEOS EX	MAT	IN- WB	CO- WB	OC- WB	PH- WB	PS- WB	EC- WB	OV- WB
Age	-.02	-.03	-.01	.07	-.05	-.02	-.13*	-.14*	.02	-.13*	-.12*
Sex (r. cat: Male)											
Female	-.17*	-.21*	-.91*	-.05	.03	.03	-.04	-.15*	-.15*	-.07	-.01
Territorial area (r. cat: South)											
North	.16*	-.07	-.02	-.03	.07	.51*	.14	.10	.00	.12*	.07
Centre	.05	-.14	-.05	.02	.02	.23	.08	-.02	.05	.03	.00
Marital status (r. cat: Single)											
With partner	.17*	-.04	-.07	.13*	.41*	-.03	-.03	-.08	.10*	-.09	.31*
Separated/ Divorced	-.11	-.11	.26	-.01	.25	.02	.24	-.15	.22	-.10	.23
Widower	-.14	-.20	-.22	.18	-.02	.73*	-.13	-.06	-.02	-.02	-.19
Other marital status	-.27	-.33	-.03	.04	-.33	.26	.04	.20	.05	-.15	.23
Educational status (r. cat: Primary school)											
Middle school	-.76	-.02	-.10	-.09	-.04	-.99*	-.12	.21	.97*	.5	.90*
High school	-.51	.03	-.23	.15	-.08	-.80*	.07	.23	.98*	.05	.98*

University degree	-.46	-.04	-.40	-.07	-.06	-.74*	.10	.16	.97*	-.04	.99*
Post-graduate degree	-.42	-.09	-.52	-.13	-.10	-.88*	.06	.19	.98*	.03	.90*
Employment status (r. cat: Unemployed)											
Full-time worker	.29*	-.01	-.09	.07	-.05	-.04	.35*	-.11	-.04	.19*	.01
Part-time worker	.20	-.05	-.08	-.10	-.07	-.03	.13	-.16	-.04	-.05	-.06
Student	-.08	-.18	-.08	-.13	-.06	-.05	.17	-.04	.01	-.03	-.14
Retired	.89*	.15	-.24	.05	.06	.15	.81*	.30	.29	.77*	.33
Other employ. Status	.04	.01	-.05	.07	-.07	.00	.16	-.02	-.07	.17	-.04

Note. * $p < .01$. *B* coefficient for age are standardized; All other *B* coefficients are partially standardized.

PER-BJW = Personal Belief in a Just World; GEN-BJW = General Belief in a Just World;

NEOSEX = Neosexism; MAT = Mattering; IN-WB = Interpersonal well-being;

CO-WB = Community well-being; OC-WB = Occupational well-being;

PH-WB = Physical well-being; PS-WB = Psychological well-being; EC-WB = Economic well-being; OV-WB = Overall well-being; r. cat = reference category.

Discussion

The effect of Belief in a just world and neosexism on well-being, via mattering

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between belief in a just world and subjective well-being. In particular, it wanted to verify whether the personal belief in a just world has a different effect on well-being than the belief in a just world in general. In fact, Lipkus et al. (1996) found that Personal Belief in a Just World, but not General Belief, was associated with certain dimensions of well-being, such as a decrease in stress and depression and an increase in life satisfaction.

In line with many studies (Lupfer et al., 1998; Hafer & Correy, 1999; Dalbet, 2001; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2002), the present research has found that the belief in a just world has a direct effect on almost all the dimensions of well-being considered: interpersonal, occupational, physical, psychological and overall. On the contrary, according to Sutton and Douglas (2005), the General belief in a just world is associated with social attitudes and, in fact, is connected only to the community well-being.

In addition, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between belief in a just world and well-being, taking into consideration two other variables, namely neosexism and mattering. It has been hypothesized that neosexism positively correlates with the belief in a just world (both personal and general). That mattering instead acts as a mediator between these variables and well-being domains.

As for neosexism, or modern sexism, the literature showed that it correlates positively with the belief in a just world (Valor-Segura et al., 2011; Pedersen & Strömwall, 2013), while it negatively affects the well-being of people (Dinh et al., 2014).

The study results reported a positive relationship with both types of beliefs, confirming that individuals who have discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women tend to believe that the world is a just place.

However, neosexism turns out to have a negative effect on mattering, that is, the feeling of being important and adding value.

Furthermore, regarding the relationship between neosexism and well-being, it has been found that there is a direct (negative) effect of the former only on interpersonal well-being. This result shows that sexist people do not experience their interpersonal relationships positively.

To this, it is necessary to add that even the indirect effects, mediated by mattering, of neosexism on all dimensions of well-being are negative.

So, on one hand, it emerges, in line with the literature (Fischer & Holz, 2007; Gee et al., 2007; Dinh et al., 2014), that those who possess discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women are less satisfied with their lives in the personal and interpersonal spheres, as well as in the work and community contexts.

On the other hand, however, it should be emphasized that neosexism has no direct effects on almost any dimension of well-being. Moreover the only significant effects, on mattering and interpersonal well-being, are particularly low (both are just -.08). This aspect is particularly relevant because it is partially discordant with previous literature reporting a strong negative effect of sexism on the two constructs considered. Indeed, the present study suggests rather that there is no direct and particularly significant effects of discriminatory attitudes against women on well-being, much less on mattering.

To this it is important to add, that even the significant correlation between neosexism and general belief in a just world has a low coefficient (just .04).

These results therefore highlight the need for further more in-depth studies on the relationship between neosexism, perception of justice, mattering and well-being.

As for the relationship between social justice and well-being, a distinction must be made between the personal and the general belief in a just world.

According to Lipkus et al. (1996) and Sutton & Douglas (2005), the general belief in a just world does not affect any well-being domain, except for the community one, neither directly nor through the mediation of mattering.

The personal belief in a just world, on the other hand, has a strong impact on all dimensions of well-being, except for the community one, both directly and indirectly through mattering.

This result coincides with many other studies (Dalbert, 1999; 2001; 2009; Lupfer, et al., 1998; Hafer, & Correy, 1999).

According to Dalbert (2001), the personal belief in a just world equips individuals with a conceptual framework that supports their construal of personal experiences of injustice in a meaningful way.

People who believe that the world is a just place for themselves show fewer symptoms of depression (Otto et al., 2006), reduced insomnia severity (Jensen et al., 1998), increased life satisfaction (Dzuka & Dalbert, 2002) and greater purpose in life (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003).

Personal belief in a just world can be especially helpful for individuals trying to cope with critical life events, such as victims of natural disasters (Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007; Fatima & Suhail, 2010; Nasser et al., 2011; Christandl, 2013).

In sum, the Personal belief in a just world functions as an important personal resource (Dalbert, 2001) that helps people cope with injustice in their personal lives.

The effect of socio-demographics variables on well-being

Many studies showed that socio-demographic characteristics can influence subjective well-being (Clark et al., 2007; Inglehart et al., 2008; Diener et al., 2010).

However, the literature provided contradictory information. Regarding sex, for example, on the one hand, Hervás (2009) concluded that this aspect has little or no influence on subjective well-being. On the other hand, some studies found that sex is a significant variable regarding happiness and well-being (Alesina et al., 2004; Barra, 2010).

Regarding age, Lacey and colleagues (2011) concluded that age was one of the few variables where research agreed on its effect on happiness. One of the most credited theories in this regard is that of U-shaped happiness, according to the highest happiness levels are experienced before the 20s and after the 50s (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2006; Stone et al., 2010).

Regarding marital status (Hervás, 2009), an education level (Gerstenbluth et al., 2008) and employment/economic situation (Stutzer, 2004), studies indicated that

happiness increases with support networks, work, income and higher levels of education.

However, even in this case, the scholars were discordant. While Graham (2009) and Cornelis (2010) argued that there is no clear relationship between happiness and socioeconomic level, there was a growing body of evidence (Diener et al., 2010) that supported the opposite view; that is, that money can buy at least some happiness.

Moreover, research showed that higher levels of human capital in nations are linked to higher happiness levels (Simmons et al., 2007). However, these studies also indicated that this relationship is complex and varies according to country's wealth. For example, highly educated people in less developed countries feel less happy than their counterparts in higher-income countries (Mellander et al., 2010).

The confusion found in the literature may be because well-being is not always considered in a multidimensional way. A demographic variable such as sex or age could, for example, be related with one dimension of well-being but not with the others. In this regard, the results obtained in the present study can help to bring clarity to this issue. Indeed, it provides an overview of the subjective well-being (considered a multidimensional construct) of Italian people, considering their socio-demographic characteristics.

This study found that age is negatively related only with occupational and physical well-being. As for sex, it seems that women have less well-being than men in the physical and psychological domains. As regards the territorial area, compared to those who live in the South, the inhabitants of Northern Italy report greater community and economic well-being. Regarding education, those with a higher qualification could have greater psychological and overall well-being, but less community well-being, than those with a lower qualification. Finally, as regards employment status, to be a full-time worker or a retirees seems to be strongly related with occupational and economic well-being levels.

These results can provide information about population groups with which to make interventions to improve their conditions and consequently promote their well-being. However, they cannot offer certain and definitive indications, as the

relationship between well-being and some socio-demographic variables could be mediated by other variables, that are difficult to detect. This important aspect deserves further in-depth studies in the future.

Limits and future proposals

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out that the present study results must be considered in light of some limitations.

First of all, both Personal and General Belief in a Just World Scales and Neosexism Scale presented very low factor loads for some items.

Although this did not cause problems for these scales' reliability and convergent validity, the convergent validity was not high.

Therefore, future studies are advised to verify and perhaps modify the factorial structures of the scales. For example, for the Personal and General Belief in a Just World Scales, a new version, without item PBJW_1, could be tested. While for the Neosexism scale, a new version without NS_2, NS_5 and NS_11, could be tested.

A second limitation of the study relates to the method of recruitment. In fact, the use of a non-probabilistic technique, such as snowball sampling, does not generalise the results obtained.

Finally, a further limit to the possibility of generalizing the data to the Italian population is given by the sample's composition. It shows a lack of homogeneity in the territorial area, given that the participants from the South are much less than those from the Centre and the North of the country.

Moreover, possibly due to the online recruitment process, many of the participants involved turn out to be young. In fact, the mean age of the sample, equal to about 30 years, is much lower than the mean age of the Italian population, which is currently about 45 years (Istat, 2020).

To overcome these last limitations, future research could investigate the validity of the proposed model, selecting through a random recruitment a new sample of Italians more homogeneous with respect to the territorial area and a mean age more comparable with that of the general population.

CHAPTER 7 - Study 3. Gender issues and Well-being among Italian students during COVID-19 pandemic

A longitudinal study regarding well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic is presented in this chapter,. The main purposes of this first section are the following:

- 1) to present the recent studies that investigated the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on people's well-being, specifically considering its effects on men and women;*
- 2) to present the research, explaining in detail the procedures, tools and methodology used;*
- 3) to present and discuss in depth the results obtained, also explaining limitations and proposals for future studies on the topic.*

Introduction

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the whole world. The risk of contagion and the containment measures applied by governments to safeguard health have brought about changes that have modified people's daily lives in different areas, such as work, school, leisure and interpersonal relationships.

Indeed, most of the studies that have evaluated the effects of COVID-19 on individuals' well-being have focused on the lockdown period (between March and May 2020) imposed by several European countries as a measure to combat the pandemic.

This preventative measure has had many effects. It was highlighted, for example, that quarantine, physical expulsion and isolation increased feelings of uncertainty and loneliness (Anderson et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2020; VanBavel et al., 2020). Furthermore, during this time, people experienced multiple stressors such as health concerns, job insecurity, work-family conflicts and discrimination (Blustein et al., 2020; Restubog et al., 2020; Rudolph et al., 2020).

However, it was also noted that the lockdown did not lead to a decrease in the well-being of all people indiscriminately. Indeed, the personal and social factors that worked as attenuators or worsers of well-being were also analyzed.

In this regard, the first factor highlighted was the type of population examined. Even if most of the studies focused on the national population, some assessed the well-being in specific age groups, such as adolescents and the elderly, who were most affected by the behavioural limits imposed to counteract the pandemic. For adolescents, it appears that mental health was primarily associated with characteristics related to the activities they maintained, the quality of relationships, and the way adults around them were affected by isolation (Ezpeleta et al., 2020). Furthermore, the state of emergency caused a decrease in adolescents' sense of security (Commodori & La Rosa, 2020) and highlighted the importance of young people's daily routine (Shanahan et al., 2020). As for the elderly, the reduction in social relationships increased negative affects and the sense of loneliness (Macdonald & Hülür, 2020). The psychological well-being of the elderly, in fact, is

strongly associated with the bond with others, especially with family members (Cugmas et al., 2021).

The roles of psychological resources such as coping strategies and psychological flexibility were also explored. Dawson and Golijani-Moghaddam (2020) found that while coping strategies did not appear to have a particular effect in improving well-being levels, psychological flexibility worked as a buffer for COVID-19 distress, such as anxiety and depression. Furthermore, it was shown that positive affect was positively correlated with the evaluation of stress as a challenge and as controllable, active coping, the use of emotional support and religion and negatively correlated with the evaluation of threat and humour (Zacher & Rudolph, 2020).

Finally, among the variables most considered in assessing psychological well-being during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were social factors. For example, Paolini and colleagues (2020) found that the different level of social identification (i.e. national, European or as a human) turns out to be a mediator between trust in social and political actors and individual well-being, interpersonal happiness and anguish. Furthermore, having confidence in the information received about COVID-19, respecting government measures and the belief that these measures are just led to positive feelings (Commodori & La Rosa, 2020). Satisfaction in communicating with others during the pandemic acted as a buffer for the negative effects of the blockade (Macdonald & Hülür, 2020). In particular digital communication, thanks to the mediation of perceived social support, decreased the feelings of loneliness, anger, irritability and boredom and instead increased the sense of belonging (Gabbiadini et al., 2020).

Starting from this first empirical evidence provided by the young literature regarding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the present study aimed to detect the change in Italian people's well-being, from the lockdown to the country's reopening.

Method

Participants and procedure

The research was carried out in two waves. Data were collected on the same group of Italian university students at two different times: during the lockdown (in March 2020) and the country's reopening phase (in May 2020).

Students were recruited by their community psychology teacher in the first wave, who invited them to fill out an online questionnaire, via the SurveyMonkey digital platform. This procedure involved 811 participants (682 females and 129 males), with a mean age of 22.12 years (SD = 4.68).

To carry out the second wave, the same students were contacted through the e-mail addresses or mobile numbers they had left as contact info in the first compilation of the questionnaire. In this second data collection, 364 participants completed the questionnaire again. Of these, 288 were females and 76 males, and the mean age, in this case, was 23.93 years (SD = 4.71).

All the sample characteristics in the two different times are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample in the two waves.

	First wave n = 811	Second wave n = 364
<i>Age</i>	M = 22.12 (SD = 4.68)	M = 23.93 (SD = 4.71)
	N (%)	N (%)
<i>Sex</i>		
Female	682 (84%)	288 (79%)
Male	129 (16%)	76 (21%)
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	511 (63%)	237 (65%)
With partner	243 (30%)	113 (31%)
Married	49 (6%)	13 (3.5%)
Separated/Divorced	8 (1%)	1 (0.5%)

Measure

Participants completed an online self-report questionnaire consisting of a socio-demographic section and of the *I COPPE scale - short form* (Esposito et al., 2021b), which measures the overall well-being and six specific dimensions: interpersonal, community, occupational, physical, psychological and economic well-being.

The scale includes 14 items, two for each well-being dimension: the first item evaluates the perception of well-being in the present, while the second one evaluates the perception of well-being in the future. Participants must express their level of well-being For each item, using a cantril scale ranging from 0 (the minimum possible) to 10 (the maximum possible).

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the statistical software Mplus 8.0. The statistical techniques refer to the Structural Equations Modeling (SEM; Kline, 2016). Maximum Likelihood (ML) was chosen as the main estimator. Missing values were treated with list-wise deletion.

First, CFAs were implemented to verify that the scale structure was stable. Then reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity were assessed. The reliability of the model was assessed through Composite Reliability (CR). Values of CR higher than .7 are considered a sign of good reliability (Raykov, 1997). Convergent validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Values of AVE higher than .5 are indicative of good convergent validity. In addition, discriminant validity can be established if AVE is higher than both Maximum Squared Shared Variance (MSV) and Average Shared Square Variance (ASV) (Hair et al., 2010).

Then, confirmatory factor analysis (CFAs) examined longitudinal measurement invariance. Three types of longitudinal invariance between two waves were tested: configural, metric and scalar. Configural invariance is to verify that the latent constructs are indicated by the same observed variables across two waves. Metric invariance is to verify that the psychological meaning of the variables is the same across two waves. Finally, scalar invariance is to verify whether the levels of the

latent variables are the same across two waves (Abrams et al., 2013; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000).

Furthermore, men and women were compared to verify if the invariance held between these two groups and if there were differences in the levels of well-being in the two sexes.

To verify the goodness of fit of the model, the following indices were observed: the Standardized Root Mean square Residual (SRMR), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Tukey -Lewis Index (TLI), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). For the SRMR values lower than .08, indicating a good fit; for the RMSEA, the values must not exceed the threshold of .05; finally for the CFI and the TLI values equal to or greater than .9 indicate a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Finally, to compare the configural model with the metric model, and this one with the scalar model, Chi-square difference tests were applied.

Results

CFAs, Reliability and psychometric validity

CFAs showed a good fit of the 7-factor structure of the I COPPE scale –short form in both the waves. The models have excellent fit indices for both temporal points: RMSEA = .033 (.028, .039), SRMR = .037, CFI = .980 and TLI = .974 for the first wave; and RMSEA = .036 (.027, .041), SRMR = .041, CFI = .965 and TLI = .952 for the second wave.

As reported in Table 2, all factor loadings are significant for an alpha level of 0.01 and have good inter-item reliability (R^2) values. The highest values are .98 ($R^2 = .96$) for the Economic well-being future in the first wave and .98 ($R^2 = .96$) for the Physical well-being future in the second wave. At the same time, the lowest values are for Psychological well-being in both waves, with .58 ($R^2 = .34$) in the first one and .63 ($R^2 = .39$) in the second one.

Table 2. Factor loadings and inter-item reliability (R^2) in the two waves.

Latent variable	Item	1 st wave	2 nd wave
		Standardized factor loadings (R^2)	Standardized factor loadings (R^2)
Overall well-being	Overall well-being (present)	.71(.50)	.74(.54)
	Overall well-being (future)	.91(.82)	.92(.85)
Interpersonal well-being	Interpersonal well-being (present)	.65(.42)	.76(.58)
	Interpersonal well-being (future)	.87(.75)	.90(.82)
Community well-being	Community well-being (present)	.79(.62)	.84(.71)
	Community well-being (future)	.94(.88)	.91(.82)
Occupational well-being	Occupational well-being (present)	.58(.34)	.63(.39)
	Occupational well-being (future)	.94(.89)	.97(.93)
Physical well-being	Physical well-being (present)	.69(.47)	.74(.55)
	Physical well-being (future)	.91(.82)	.98(.96)
Psychological well-being	Psychological well-being (present)	.66(.43)	.71(.51)
	Psychological well-being (future)	.91(.84)	.97(.93)
Economic well-being	Economic well-being (present)	.69(.48)	.67(.45)
	Economic well-being (future)	.98(.96)	.97(.95)

Note. All values are significant at .1% alpha level.

Regarding reliability, all the Composite Reliability (CR) indices demonstrated a good level of reliability of the I COPPE scale in both waves. As for convergent validity, the analyzes showed good Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for almost all factors. Finally, the scale also has a good level of discriminating validity, as the AVE indices of each factor are greater than the respective values of Maximum Squared Shared Variance (MSV) and of Average Shared Square Variance (ASV). All reliability and validity measures, as well as correlation coefficients, are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor Correlations, Reliability and Validity Measures.

	Latent Variable	IN_WB	CO_WB	OC_WB	PH_WB	PS_WB	EC_WB	OV_WB
1st wave	IN_WB	1						
	CO_WB	.237	1					
	OC_WB	.373	.306	1				
	PH_WB	.473	.433	.440	1			
	PS_WB	.544	.424	.456	.647	1		
	EC_WB	.391	.501	.455	.476	.585	1	
	OV_WB	.576	.416	.521	.686	.744	.635	1
Reliability and Validity Measures								
	CR	.74	.86	.75	.79	.77	.83	.80
	AVE	.59	.75	.61	.65	.63	.72	.67

	MSV	.33	.25	.27	.47	.55	.40	.55
	ASV	.33	.16	.19	.29	.33	.26	.37
	Latent Variable	IN_WB	CO_WB	OC_WB	PH_WB	PS_WB	EC_WB	OV_WB
2nd wave	IN_WB	1						
	CO_WB	.398	1					
	OC_WB	.527	.251	1				
	PH_WB	.541	.342	.544	1			
	PS_WB	.610	.374	.498	.667	1		
	EC_WB	.461	.319	.471	.532	.488	1	
	OV_WB	.713	.400	.596	.675	.776	.682	1

Reliability and Validity Measures

CR	.82	.87	.79	.86	.84	.82	.82
AVE	.69	.77	.67	.75	.72	.70	.70
MSV	.51	.16	.36	.46	.60	.46	.60
ASV	.30	.12	.24	.31	.34	.25	.42

Note. All values are significant at the .1% alpha level; CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, MSV = Maximum Squared Shared Variance, ASV = Average Shared Square Variance

Longitudinal measurement invariance

Once the validity of the 7-factor structure of the scale had been verified, longitudinal measurement invariance across the two waves was assessed.

As shown in Table 4, first, the configural model was tested. It has excellent fit indices: χ^2 (212) = 320.52, RMSEA = .038 (.029; .046), SRMR = .046, CFI = .978 and TLI = .961. This indicates that the same latent variables can be represented by the same number of items in the two waves, i.e. it can be assumed that across the two-time points, the configural variance holds.

Subsequently, the configural model was compared with the metric model, and a $\Delta\chi^2$ (7) = 11.737 with $p > .01$ resulted. This means that the same items represent the same latent variables equivalent to the two waves. So also, the metric invariance holds across the two-time points.

Finally, the scalar invariance was verified. The comparison between the metric and scalar models showed a $\Delta\chi^2$ (3) = 30.673 with $p < .01$. This result indicates the absence of scalar invariance. In other words, the means of the latent variables differ across the two waves.

Table 4. Indices of fit for invariance models.

Model	χ^2 (df)	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR	CFI	TLI	$\Delta\chi^2$ (df)
1st wave	155.32 (118)	0.033 (.028; .039)	0.037	0.980	0.974	
2nd wave	165.202 (94)	0.036 (.027; .041)	0.041	0.965	0.952	
Configural Invariance (TWO WAVES)	320.522 (212)	0.038 (.029; .046)	0.046	0.978	0.961	
Metric Invariance (TWO WAVES)	332.259 (219)	0.036 (.027; .044)	0.046	0.979	0.964	11.74 (7)

Scalar Invariance (TWO WAVES)	362.932 (222)	0.041 (.033; .048)	0.05	0.972	0.954	30.67* (3)
Female Model	96.688	.069 (.053; .084)	.060	.966	.935	
Male Model	73.264	.063 (.048; .071)	.057	.952	.912	
Configural Invariance (SEX)	169.952 (80)	.079 (.062; .095)	.047	.956	.918	
Metric Invariance (SEX)	171.536 (87)	.073 (.057; .089)	.06	.967	.932	8.706 (7)
Scalar Invariance (SEX)	184.123 (94)	.069 (.053; .084)	.06	.966	.937	12.59* (7)

Note. * $p < .01$

Given that the scalar invariance does not hold across the two-time points, the difference between the mean of well-being dimensions across the two waves was observed. As reported in Table 5, it was found that, in general, students' well-being declined between the first and second waves, in almost all dimensions. However, most of the differences between the means were not statistically significant. The only dimensions that seem to have undergone a significant change in the two-time points are physical and economic well-being. Specifically, the former has decreased, while the latter has increased.

Table 5. Means Differences of the latent variables across two waves.

Latent Variable	Mean difference (2nd wave - 1st wave)
Interpersonal well-being	-.013
Community well-being	.021
Occupational well-being	-.003
Physical well-being	-.091*

Psychological well-being	-.021
Economic well-being	.156**
Overall well-being	-.044

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Multigroup invariance: a comparison between men and women

Finally, the study tested the invariance between men and women (see Table 4). The configuration model showed that the same factors are represented by the same number of items in the two sexes, providing good fit indices: $\chi^2 (80) = 169.95$, RMSEA = .079 (.062, .095), SRMR = .047, CFI = .962 and TLI = .915.

Subsequently, the comparison between the configural model and the metric model has shown that the metric invariance holds; that is, it can be assumed that the latent variables, that is, the dimensions of well-being, are represented by the same items in an equivalent way across two groups. Indeed, the comparison gave a $\Delta\chi^2 (7) = 8.706$ with $p > .01$.

Since the metric model holds, it was then compared with the scalar model, and, in this case, the invariance is not confirmed. The comparison provided a $\Delta\chi^2 (7) = 12.587$ with $p < .01$ and this indicates that the levels of latent variables differ in the two groups, i.e. men and women presented different levels of well-being (to some extent), during the beginnings of the pandemic.

Finally, to verify in which well-being domains the two sexes reported different levels, the differences between the latent variables were observed. As shown in Table 6, the only domain that presents a significant difference between the means is physical well-being. This difference is in favour of men, i.e. women have perceived lower levels of physical well-being during the lockdown compared to other sex. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that, even if they are not significant, the other differences between the means also have a negative sign for women, i.e. their well-being was lower than men, in all the domains considered.

Table 6. Means Differences of the latent variables across male and female.

Latent Variable	Mean difference (female - male)
Interpersonal well-being	-.077
Community well-being	-.157
Occupational well-being	-.305
Physical well-being	-.446*
Psychological well-being	-.199
Economic well-being	-.222
Overall well-being	-.283

Note. * $p < .05$.

Discussion

The spread of the COVID-19 had an unprecedented impact on the whole world. In many Western countries, governments took steps to restrict the movement of people out of their homes and thereby slow the spread of the virus.

In particular, in Italy, which was the first Western country to notice the circulation of the virus, from 9 March to 4 May 2020, the government established a lockdown throughout the national territory. For about two months, the Italian peoples were forced to remain in their homes and the restrictions suspended all commercial and working activities in the presence (except for services deemed essential, such as supermarkets and pharmacies).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect on people's well-being in this extraordinary emergency. Specifically, the well-being levels of a group of university students measured at two different times were compared. A first detection was carried out during the lockdown (at the end of March 2020), at the moment of maximum spread of the virus. The second one was carried out shortly after the reopening of the country (at the beginning of May 2020), which gave Italians the possibility of resuming their work and relationship activities and "leaving home".

The results of this longitudinal study found a statistically significant reduction in physical well-being across two time points. Although they were almost all not significant, the differences between the means of the latent variables, between the

first and second wave, showed, in general, a lowering of well-being (except for community and economic well-being). This result is in line with what was found by Zacher and Rudolph (2020), who conducted a longitudinal study with a sample of elderly Germans and found that subjective well-being decreased between the beginning of March and the beginning of May 2020.

Furthermore, Macdonald & Hülür (2020) also found a similar result in Switzerland, reporting that the pandemic had substantial negative effects on the subjective well-being and loneliness of the elderly. In addition, the study of Sibley and colleagues (2020) found higher levels of mental issues and distress in people in New Zealand during the lockdown than before the pandemic.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that in this study, there was also a particular result: unlike the other dimensions, economic well-being has significantly increased. This result could be explained by referring to the nature of the sample involved. In fact, before the lockdown, Italian university students tended to have an active social life, hanging out with friends and going out in the evening (Gallè et al., 2019). The obligation to stay at home has eliminated these costs of free time and also others related to university life (bus ticket, coffee, lunch out, etc.), improving the economic situation of students. In addition, as regards off-site students, many of them, with the imposition of the lockdown, left the city where they study and return to their family home (Hall & Zygmunt, 2021). This return led to a reduction of substantial costs, such as rent, and therefore no longer economic worries.

Finally, the difference found between men and women in the reported well-being levels is interesting. In fact, the analyses show that women perceived less well-being than men in all dimensions particularly in the physical dimension. This finding is in line with the study by Wenham and colleagues (2020), who found that the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 fall harder on women than on men and highlighted that governments should ensure that all their citizens have the same possibilities of safety, shelter and protection. Indeed, even when the pandemic is over, it is essential to develop programs aimed at reducing gender inequality and increasing women's well-being.

Limitations and future proposals

The results of this study should be interpreted, taking into account some limitations. First of all, the research involved a convenient sample, and it was recruited using a non-random technique. This does not allow generalizing the results obtained.

Secondly, as the participants are university students, the sample is very young, with a mean age of about 22 years. This characteristic constitutes a limitation, given that it does not allow a comparison of the levels of well-being, across two waves, between different ages.

Moreover, regarding the comparison between men and women, the fact that the sample is composed of about 80% of women and therefore is not homogeneous with respect to the sex variable may have affected the validity of the multigroup analysis. Further research will then be needed to confirm the evidence of this study relating to this area.

Finally, as mentioned, many differences between the means of well-being levels in the two waves are not significant. And it should be added that, for the significant differences, the beta values were not very high (just $-.09$ for physical well-being and $.16$ for economic well-being). So the differences found are minimal. This aspect is probably due to the short time elapsed between the first and the second survey (just two months). In fact, to measure the changes in well-being due to such an exceptional event as the COVID-19 pandemic, it will probably be necessary to wait much longer.

Therefore, in consideration of these limitations, this study can only offer initial indications on subjective well-being during the moment of maximum contagion and immediately after the (apparent) return to normal. However, further studies will certainly be needed to evaluate the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown experience on people's well-being.

CONCLUSION

The results obtained from the studies presented in this thesis offer useful information for research on the aspects that affect subjective well-being and therefore on the programs and actions to be put into practice to promote it.

First of all, a preliminary consideration concerns the need to think about the usefulness of adequate tools to measure well-being in a multidimensional perspective. Several studies showed that it is not enough to consider well-being only as general life satisfaction or only in a few specific domains, such as emotional, relational or social (Diener et al., 2010; Seligman, 2011; Chmiel et al., 2012; Linton et al., 2016). Instead, it is essential to evaluate many different dimensions simultaneously to have the widest possible vision of an individual's well-being (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006).

The multidimensionality of well-being is underlined by the fact that a deficiency in one domain can lead to a deficiency in the others as well. In this perspective, the results deriving from Study 1 reported in this thesis give us useful information concerning the robustness of our tools.

Moreover, Study 1, comparing Italy and Argentina, found that Italians have greater well-being in all domains except the community one. In a more industrialized and richer country, such as Italy, community well-being is lower than in a country with greater economic and social difficulties, such as Argentina, which is noteworthy.

This aspect is particularly problematic if we consider that community well-being is connected to social capital (Western et al., 2005), to people's resilience (McCrea et al., 2014) and also to their individual well-being (Atkinson et al., 2020).

From these ideas, it is clear that it is a mistake to study and investigate only the individual's well-being, forgetting that it is indissolubly dependent on the well-being of the entire community of which he/she is a part. Furthermore, this introduces the usefulness of a tool to consider life context in their relationship with the individual feature.

The main result concerns the difference between the sexes in the levels of well-being. The literature showed confusion on this issue. On the one hand, Hervás (2009) concluded that this aspect has little or no influence on subjective well-being. On the other hand, some studies found that sex is a significant variable regarding happiness and well-being (Alesina et al., 2004; Barra, 2010).

Instead, study 2 and study 3 of the present thesis provide a clear result in this regard: women experience lower levels of well-being than men. And this is especially true for physical well-being but also for psychological well-being. This aspect must be strongly emphasized because it is impossible not to think that this difference in well-being is linked to the lack of gender equity (Prilleltensky, 2013; Verloo, 2018). This result must serve as an engine for developing programs and strategies to promote gender equality, and the well-being of women. To be effective, these strategies must have two fundamental characteristics: they must be activated in an ecological perspective, considering all levels (personal, interpersonal, organizational and community) of the context of which an individual is a part (Arcidiacono & Bocchino, 2007; Di Napoli et al., 2019); they must be focused on developing the mattering of individuals, and of women in particular (Morgades-Bamba et al., 2017; Matera et al., 2020). Seeing that others recognize one's values fundamental for social justice and, therefore, for well-being.

Finally, the last consideration concerns the changes in well-being over time with the occurrence of unexpected and traumatic events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of study 3, presented in this thesis, showed that the lockdown experience had a negative impact on people's well-being, which is particularly true for physical well-being.

This finding is in line with the literature, which showed that traumatic events and the way people cope with them play a crucial role not only in the development of PTSD (Marx & Sloan, 2005; Yehuda et al., 2015) but potentially also in the development of other forms of mental issues, such as anxiety, depression, panic attacks (Mueser et al., 2002; Connorton et al., 2012).

Surely it should be noted that the study took place very close to the traumatic event of the lockdown (during and shortly after its term), so the results do not provide particular indications on long-term effects. However, future studies could confirm this trend of decline in the various domains of well-being, even after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is, therefore, necessary to think already today of actions, initiatives, and projects that protect and promote the well-being of people, especially the psychological one.

These possible negative effects are potentially more serious if considered in relation to gender issues. The data collected so far show that women are among those who have paid the highest price of the pandemic and the consequent lockdown. The European Union (2021) reported that around 84% of working women are employed in the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 crisis and facing job losses. The lockdown also had a strong impact on female-dominated jobs, such as nursery, secretarial and domestic work. What's more, women are also much more likely to take free time to care for children and relatives and, with lockdown, they have often had to combine remote work and childcare.

It is necessary to add another aspect to these negative data, perhaps even more worrying. At the beginning of the lockdown in Italy and other European countries, there was a phenomenon of collective unity and social solidarity; however, these good feelings do not seem to have lasted very long. Over time, on the contrary, fear, frustration and anger due to the emergency seem to have led people to feel more hatred towards others, leading to what someone has called a "hate pandemic". Amnesty International (2021), through *The hate barometer*, which is annual monitoring of online hate speech, found that posts, tweets and comments on social media with discriminatory content have increased by 40%. These incitements to hatred and violence mainly concern foreigners and migrants, but also women. About 35% of discriminatory posts or comments, in fact, refer to the sexist sphere and allude to the alleged inferiority of women compared to men.

These manifestations of hate online often have repercussions in real life and lead to actual hate actions. Indeed, since the beginning of the pandemic, femicides and

violence against women, in general, have increased exponentially. At the same time, the possibility of closing aid has decreased due to restrictions (EU, 2021).

In line with the results found in this thesis, all these observations emphasize the need, made even more urgent by the current emergency situation, that European governments will promote social fairness in general and gender equality in particular. Only in a country where all citizens are treated equally and valued for their abilities it is possible that a positive attitude towards others, different from oneself, develops. Only without hatred, discrimination and sexism are it possible to promote the well-being of both men and women.

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