GENDER POSITIVITY IN SICILIAN PREADOLESCENTS: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LIFE SKILLS, WELL-BEING, AND COPING STRATEGIES

Maria Luisa Indiana
Department of Educational Sciences, University of Catania
mluisa.indiana@gmail.com
Elisabetta Sagone
Department of Educational Sciences, University of Catania
esagone@unict.it

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is focused on the analysis of gender differences in psychological well-being, self-efficacy in life skills, and coping strategies in a sample of 550 Sicilian preadolescents between 11 and 14 years old (264 boys and 286 girls). Measures: 1) Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving (Andolfi et al., 2017) to examine the dimensions of psychological well-being; 2) Self-Efficacy in Life Skills Scales (Sagone & Indiana, 2017) to analyze problem solving ability, interpersonal and social communication ability, and managing of positive and negative emotions; 3) Children's Coping Strategies Checklist (Camisasca et al., 2012) to study the coping. Results indicated significant differences for gender in the following dimensions: boys show higher levels of psychological well-being than girls, reporting high sense of belonging (t=2.620, p=.009) and optimism (t=2.761, p=.006) and being more satisfied with their life (t=2.340, p=.020); further, boys express negative emotions more than girls (t=4.081, p<.001) while girls report higher loneliness than boys (t=-3.108, p=.002). In relation to self-efficacy in life skills, boys perceive themselves highly efficient in managing of negative emotions (t=3.766, p<.001), while girls consider themselves highly efficient in interpersonal and social communication (t=-3.208, p=.001). Lastly, with reference to coping strategies, boys avoid critical situations trying to suppress them (t=3.716, p<.001), while girls think that things will improve in the end (t=-2.369, p=.018). Future research will deep the relationships among the analyzed topics in groups of adolescents of high schools and young adults.

Keywords: gender; preadolescents; life skills; coping; well-being

RESUMEN

La positividad de género en los preadolescentes sicilianos: diferencias de género en las habilidades para la vida, el bienestar y las estrategias de afrontamiento. El objetivo de este estudio se centra en el análisis de las diferencias de género en el bienestar psicológico, la autoeficacia en las habilidades

International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psychology
INFAD Revista de Psicología, Nº1 - Volumen 2, 2022. ISSN: 0214-9877. pp:245-256

245

para la vida y las estrategias de afrontamiento en una muestra de 550 pre-adolescentes sicilianos entre 11 y 14 años (264 niños y 286 niñas). Medidas: 1) Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving (Andolfi et al., 2017) para examinar las dimensiones del bienestar psicológico; 2) Self-Efficacy in Life Skills Scales (Sagone y Indiana, 2017) para analizar la capacidad de resolución de problemas, la capacidad de comunicación interpersonal y socialy el manejo de las emociones positivas y negativas; 3) Children's Coping Strategies Checklist (Camisasca et al., 2012) para estudiar el afrontamiento. Los resultados indicaron diferencias significativas de género en las siguientes dimensiones: los niños muestran niveles más altos de bienestar psicológico que las niñas, con un alto sentido de pertenencia (t=2,620, p=. 009) y optimismo (t=2.761, p=. 006) y más satisfacción con su vida (t=2.340, p=. 020); además, los niños expresan emociones negativas más que las niñas (t= 4.081, p<.001) mientras las niñas muestran mayor soledad que los niños (t=-3.108, p=. 002). En relación a la autoeficacia en habilidades para la vida, los niños se perciben altamente eficientes en el manejo de las emociones negativas (t=3.766, p<. 001), mientras que las niñas se consideran altamente eficientes en la comunicación interpersonal y social (t= -3.208, p=. 001). Por último, con referencia a las estrategias de afrontamiento, los niños evitan situaciones críticas intentando suprimirlas (t=3.716, p<. 001), mientras que las niñas piensan que las cosas mejorarán al final (t=-2.369, p=. 018). Futuras investigaciones profundizarán las relaciones entre los temas analizados en grupos de adolescentes de escuelas secundarias y adultos jóvenes.

Palabras clave: género; pre-adolescentes; habilidades para la vida; afrontamiento; bienestar

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, psychological well-being, coping strategies, and self-efficacy have become the main focus of psychological research that deals with analysis of these topics in relation to the period of adolescence. This period, especially the "early adolescence", is a time characterized by various, rapid changes and multiple new social demands, having a significant impact on psychological development (Benjet, & Hernandez-Guzman, 2001). The pre-existing literature shows how boys and girls deal differently with this period (Duan et al., 2016; Hausler et al., 2017; Wiese at al., 2018; Hampel & Petermann, 2005; Winkler Metzke & Steinhausen, 2002); therefore, the main focus of this study is to examine the gender differences in relation to the self-efficacy in life skills, psychological well-being, and coping strategies in preadolescents.

Self-efficacy in life skills in adolescence

The life skills are "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal efficiently with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (World Health Organization, 2003). In the Italian context, Caprara and colleagues (2001) have allowed us to identify four different types of perceived self-efficacy in life skills: the ability to express positive emotions in terms of joy and happiness in response to the success; the ability to manage negative emotions linked to the modification of negative emotional states in response to critical events; the ability to find different and creative solutions to cope in critical situations; lastly, the ability to efficiently communicate in interpersonal and social relations (Caprara et al.,2008). Such evidence is based on the concept of perceived self-efficacy proposed by Bandura: self-efficacy is defined as the set of "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments" (1997, p. 3). Previous studies demonstrated gender differences in perceived self-efficacy in relation to the abovementioned life skills (Caprara et al., 2006; Sagone & Indiana, 2017; Sagone et al., 2018). In detail, Caprara and colleagues (2006) found that, in a sample of 664 Italian adolescents, boys expressed a stronger sense of efficacy in regulating and managing negative emotions, while girls felt themselves more efficient in the expression of positive emotions. More recently, the same results were obtained by Sagone and Indiana (2017) about the perceived self-efficacy in life skills, positive and negative affect, and resilience in a group of 147 healthy adolescents between 15 to 19 years old: the results show that, also in this case, boys perceive themselves as more efficient in managing negative emotions than girls, while girls perceive themselves as more able to express positive emotions than boys. In addition, gender differences emerged in another study focused on the analysis of psychological well-being, positive

body self-esteem, and perceived self-efficacy in life skills in a group of 49 Italian preadolescents (12-14 years old): the findings indicate that boys perceived themselves as less efficient in managing positive emotions than girls, while girls perceived themselves as less efficient in solution of problems and difficulties than boys (Sagone & Indiana, 2018).

Psychological well-being in adolescence

Psychological well-being has been notoriously described according to different perspective: the "hedonic approach"considered it as a subjective state composed by a personal judgment on the satisfaction with life (cognitive component) and a prevalence of positive emotional experiences over negative ones (affettive component) (Diener, 2009; Huppert & So, 2009); the "eudaimonic approach"defined it as positive psychological functioning, considering the psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct consisting of personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance, autonomy, and enviromental mastery (Ryff, 1989; 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Delle Fave et al., 2011). Successively, Su and colleagues (2014) have integrated these two different approaches developing the Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving (CIT) that is the most used measure to investigate the psychological well-being during preadolescence. According to this new approach, it is possible to assess all components of human positive functioning: the subjective well-being, in terms of high life satisfaction and positive/negative feelings (Diener, 1984); the supportive and enriching relationships, understood as a sense of belonging, loneliness, respect, and support received (Lucas & Dyrenforth,2006); the interest and engagement in daily activities (Ryff, 2014); the sense of mastery in terms of skills, learning, and self-worth linked to the awareness of having certain skills, adequately using them, and the feeling of accomplishment after utilizing those skills to solve problems (Su et al.2014); finally, the optimistic orientation about the future (Wiese et al., 2018). Regarding the gender differences emerged in the analysis of well-being during preadolescence, Andolfi and colleagues (2017) found that, except for loneliness, optimism, and negative feelings, girls reached higher scores than boys in all subscales. In detail, Italian females adolescents showed higher levels of subjective well-being (life satisfaction and positive feelings), supportive and enriching relationships (support, respect and belonging), engagement and mastery (skills, learning and self-worth) than male ones. Similar results emerged in different countries with the use of CIT (e.g., China, Germany, Spain): also in this case, gender differences produce high or low levels of well-being in adolescence (Duan et al., 2016; Hausler et al., 2017; Wiese et al., 2018). Recently, Villanueva and colleagues (2022) carried out a study, with 381 Spanish preadolescents (aged 12-16 years old), to investigate subjective well-being, self-esteem, and perceived stress: contrary to the previous results, girls reported lower levels of self-esteem and subjective well-being (in terms of life satisfaction) and higher levels of perceived stress than boys.

Coping strategies in preadolescence

The way in which people cope with stressful situations is important for the impact of stress on adjustment and health. Lazarus and Folkman defined the coping as "a constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (1984, p. 141). Scientific literature about coping in children and adolescents were focused on two specific coping strategies: the "problem-focused strategies", aimed to find practical solutions for reacting to difficulties, and "emotion-focused strategies" such as support seeking or emotion regulation. Additional types of coping have been added to these strategies, such as "avoidance strategies", including efforts to disengage from the stressor, and "distraction", including a variety of alternative and pleasurable activities (Eschenbeck et al., 2006). Gender differences in coping were found for social-support seeking: female preadolescents reported higher scores than male ones, while male preadolescents were more likely to use avoidant coping strategies than females (Hampel & Petermann, 2005; Winkler Metzke & Steinhausen, 2002).Other studies found that the girls had higher scores in avoidant coping (Griffith et al., 2000; Remillard & Lamb, 2005). Regarding emotion regulation strategies, female preadolescents used less distraction/recreation and more aggression than their male peers

International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psychology
INFAD Revista de Psicología, Nº1 - Volumen 2, 2022. ISSN: 0214-9877. pp:245-256

247

(Hampel & Petermann, 2005). In addition, girls used more social-support seeking and problem-solving coping than boys, whereas boys used more distancing and externalizing coping than girls (Eschenbeck & Kohlmann, 2002). The same results were obtained in the study carried out by Eschenbeck and colleagues (2007) in a sample of 1990 German children and adolescents (aged 7-16 years old): also in this case, girls scored higher in social-support seeking and problem-solving, whereas boys scored higher in avoidant coping than girls.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the gender differences in psychological well-being, self-efficacy in life skills, and coping strategies in a sample of Sicilian preadolescents, and to verify the presence of possible relationships among these psychological constructs. In line with the previous literature, we hypothesized the following results:

- boys will show higher levels of psychological well-being than girls (H_1);

- boys will perceive themselves as more efficient in managing and expressing emotions than girls (H_{2a}); girls will perceive themselves as more efficient in interpersonal and social communication than boys (H_{2b});

-girls will use more problem-focused coping strategies and social-support seeking than boys, while boys will use more coping strategies linked to avoidance than girls (H_3);

-the more the preadolescents will perceive themselves as more efficient in life skills, the more they will achieve higher levels of psychological well-being (H_4);

-the more the preadolescents will perceive themselves as more efficient in life skills, the more they will adopt functional coping strategies (H_5);

-the more the preadolescents will achieve high levels of psychological well-being, the more they will adopt functional coping strategies (H_6).

PARTICIPANTS

The sample consisted of 550 preadolescents (264 boys and 286 girls) aged between 11 and 14 years old (*M*=12,78; *sd*=1,18) and randomly recruited by two State Junior Schools sited in Catania (Sicily, Italy). Preadolescents did not receive any compensation for their participation to this investigation.

MEASURES

For data collection a self-report and anonymous questionnaire was administered through the platform Google Forms containing the following scales.

The Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving (CIT-CHILD: Su et al., 2014) is chosen to examine the dimensions of psychological well-being in preadolescents. We used the Italian version of CIT by Andolfi and colleagues (2017), composed by 36 items, divided in 12 different subscales (3 items for each subscale) (Cronbach's =0.90): support, respect, loneliness, belonging, engagement, skills, learning, self-worth, optimism, life satisfaction, positive feelings, and negative feelings. Participants were asked to indicate how much they were agree or disagree with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (equal to "fully disagree") and 5 (equal to "strongly agree").

The Self-Efficacy Scales in Life Skills are used to measure the perceived self-efficacy in specific life skills. The original version (Caprara et al., 2001; Sagone & Indiana, 2017) is composed by 50 items, articulated in four sub-scales: the first subscale analyzes the ability to efficiently regulate the expression of positive emotions (PSES-PE); the second subscale evaluates the ability to efficiently manage the expression of negative emotions (PSES-NE); the third subscale investigates the ability to efficiently communicate in interpersonal and social relations(PSES-IC/SC); finally, the last subscale assesses the ability to respond in problem-solving situations in an efficient way (PSES-PS). For this study, we used a reduced version of the scale consisting of 20 items (5 for each subscale) (Cronbach's =0.82). Participants were asked to indicate how they were able to cope with each situation

on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (equal to "not at all efficient") to 7 intervals (equal to "completely efficient").

The Children's Coping Strategies Checklist-Revision1 (CCSCR-R1: Ayers & Sandler, 1999; Camisasca et al., 2012) investigates the coping strategies in children and adolescents. Specifically, this check-list examines four coping strategies with 45 items (Cronbach's =0.92). The first strategy is the problem-focused coping, according to which the individual faces a critical situation by seeking concrete solutions: it is measured by 12 items belonging to three different subscales (CDM-*cognitive decision making*; DPS-*direct problem solving*; SU-*seeking understanding*). The second strategy is the positive cognitive restructuring, referring to the individual ability to restructure cognitively and in a positive way the problematic situation to be addressed (12 items: PO-*positivity*; CON-*control*; OPT-*optimism*). The third strategy is the avoidance: the individuals engage in behaviours useful to avoid the critical situation (12 items: AVA-*avoidant actions*; REP-*repression*; WISH-*wishful thinking*). Finally, the last strategy is the support-seeking (9 items: SUPA-*support for actions*; SUPF-*support for feelings*). Participants were asked to respond what they did when they had problems in reference to the last month on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (equal to "never") to 4 intervals (equal to "most of the times").

Data collection was carried out in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic from February to April 2021. Participation of preadolescents was voluntary, and formal consent was obtained by their parents before starting the study. The research was performed according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by IERB (Internal Ethic Review Board of Psychology Research), Department of Educational Sciences, University of Catania.

RESULTS

In line with the main objective of this study, we examined the gender differences in the selected issues. Results pointed out that boys perceive themselves highly efficient in managing of negative emotions (Mboys=17,58, *sd*=3,87; Mgirls=16,21, *sd*=4,59)(t=3.766, p<.001), while girls consider themselves highly efficient in interpersonal and social communication (Mboys=19,23, *sd*=2,98; Mgirls=20,06, *sd*=3,13)(t=-3.208, p=.001). Regarding to psychological well-being, boys express higher levels of psychological well-being than girls, reporting high sense of belonging (t=2.620, p=.009) and optimism (t=2.761, p=.006) and high levels of satisfaction with their life (t=2.340, p=.020); further, boys express negative emotions more than girls (t= 4.081, p<.001) while girls show higher loneliness than boys (t=-3.108, p=.002) (Tab.1).

Tab.1-Differences for gender in dimensions of CIT

Tab.1-Differences for gender in dimensions of CIT	Gender	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
Loneliness	Boys	264	2,01	1,03
	Girls	286	2,31	1,22
Belonging	Boys	264	4,26	,91
	Girls	286	4,04	1,04
Optimism	Boys	264	3,86	,96
	Girls	286	3,63	1,01
Life Satisfaction	Boys	264	4,11	,88
	Girls	286	3,92	,99
Negative feelings	Boys	264	3,91	,99
	Girls	286	3,53	1,22

With references to coping strategies, gender differences are observed in the different ways in which preadolescents adopt the strategies of avoidance: so, boys avoid critical situations trying to suppress them (Mboys=2,40, *sd*=,864; Mgirls=2,20, *sd*=,62) (*t*=3.716, *p*<.001), while girls think that things will improve in the end (Mboys=3,20, *sd*=,58; Mgirls=3,32, *sd*=,54) (*t*=-2.369, *p*=.018).

To analyze the associations among the chosen topics (with *r*> 0.30), we carried out the Pearson's correlations for total sample. Self-efficacy in problem-solving is positively correlated with all dimensions of psychological well-being, except with loneliness, belonging, optimism, and negative feelings; self-efficacy in interpersonal and social communication is positively correlated with support, engagement, skills, learning, and self-worth; self-efficacy in managing negative emotions is positively correlated with engagement, skills, life satisfaction, positive and negative feelings; at last, self-efficacy in the expression of positive emotions is correlated positively with all dimensions of psychological well-being, but negatively only with loneliness (Tab.2).

Tab.2-Correlations between self-efficacy and psychological well-being

Tab.2-Correlations between self-efficacy and psychological well-being		PSES-PS	PSES-IC/SC	PSES-PN	PSES-PE
Support	*r*	**,310****	**,346****	,189**	**,474****
	Sig.	**,000**	**,000**	,000	**,000**
Respect	*r*	**,309****	,242**	,245**	**,366****
	Sign.	**,000**	,000	,000	**,000**
Loneliness	*r*	-,191**	-,102*	-,280**	**-,372****
	Sign.	,000	,017	,000	**,000**
Belonging	*r*	,190**	,131**	,205**	**,329****
	Sign.	,000	,002	,000	**,000**
Engagement	*r*	**,474****	**,349****	**,388****	**,480****
	Sign.	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**
Skills	*r*	**,463****	**,366****	**,354****	**,428****
	Sign.	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**
Learning	*r*	**,392****	**,376****	,266**	**,452****
	Sign.	**,000**	**,000**	,000	**,000**
Self-worth	*r*	**,375****	**,380****	,234**	**,467****
	Sign.	**,000**	**,000**	,000	**,000**
Optimism	*r*	,277**	,269**	,285**	**,489****
	Sign.	,000	,000	,000	**,000**
Lifesatisfaction	*r*	**,361****	,258**	**,351****	**,503****
	Sign.	**,000**	,000	**,000**	**,000**
Positive feelings	*r*	**,370****	,214**	**,432****	**,523****
	Sign.	**,000**	,000	**,000**	**,000**
Negative feelings	*r*	,184**	,079	**,347****	**,406****
	Sign.	,000	,063	**,000**	**,000**

Self-efficacy in problem-solving is positively correlated with the strategies of cognitive decision making, direct problem solving, seeking understanding, positivity, control, and support for actions; self-efficacy in interpersonal and social communication is positively correlated with cognitive decision making, direct problem solving, seeking understanding, control, optimism, wishful seeking, support for actions, and support for feeling; self-efficacy in managing negative emotions is positively correlated with cognitive decision making, direct problem

solving, positivity, and control; lastly, self-efficacy in the expression of positive emotions is positively correlated with all coping strategies, except for avoidance actions and repression (Tab.3).

Tab.3- Correlations between self-efficacy and coping strategies

Tab.3- Correlations between self-efficacy and coping strategies		PSES-PS	PSES-IC/SC	PSES-PN	PSES-PE
CDM	*r*	**,454**[**]	**,406**[**]	**,378**[**]	**,324**[**]
	Sig.	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**
DPS	*r*	**,464**[**]	**,405**[**]	**,310**[**]	**,436**[**]
	Sign.	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**
SU	*r*	**,391**[**]	**,415**[**]	,222[**]	**,346**[**]
	Sign.	**,000**	**,000**	,000	**,000**
POS	*r*	**,335**[**]	,288[**]	**,351**[**]	**,418**[**]
	Sign.	**,000**	,000	**,000**	**,000**
CON	*r*	**,420**[**]	**,430**[**]	**,325**[**]	**,373**[**]
	Sign.	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**
OPT	*r*	,257[**]	**,325**[**]	,189[**]	**,323**[**]
	Sign.	,000	**,000**	,000	**,000**
AVA	*r*	,012	,072	-,003	,071
	Sign.	,784	,089	,936	,098
REP	*r*	-,024	-,045	,014	-,051
	Sign.	,567	,295	,736	,236
WISH	*r*	,235[**]	**,313**[**]	,054	**,327**[**]
	Sign.	,000	**,000**	,206	**,000**
SUPA	*r*	**,320**[**]	**,413**[**]	,145[**]	**,390**[**]
	Sign.	**,000**	**,000**	,001	**,000**
SUPF	*r*	,271[**]	**,383**[**]	,140[**]	**,374**[**]
	Sign.	,000	**,000**	,001	**,000**

In conclusion, most of the dimensions of psychological well-being are positively correlated with coping strategies: specifically, support is positively correlated with the strategies of support for action and for feeling; engagement is positively correlated with the strategies of cognitive decision making, direct problem solving, positivity, and control; the dimension of skills is positively correlated with the strategies of direct problem solving, control, and support for actions; learning is positively correlated with cognitive decision making, and direct problem solving; self-worth is positively correlated with the strategies of direct problem solving, seeking understanding, positivity, control, optimism, support for actions and for feeling; optimism and life satisfaction are positively correlated with the strategies of direct problem solving, positivity, control, optimism, support for actions and for feeling; lastly, the positive feeling is positively correlated with the strategies of direct problem solving, positivity, control, optimism, and support for actions (Tab.4).

Tab.4- Correlations between psychological well-being and coping strategies

Tab.4- Correlations between psychological well-being and coping strategies		Support	Engagement	Skills	Learning	Self-worth	Optimism	Life satisfaction	Positive feelings	Negative feelings
CDM	r	,226**	**,314****	,280**	**,317****	,287**	,256**	,292**	,293**	,177**
	Sig.	,000	**,000**	,000	**,000**	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
DPS	r	,242**	**,408****	**,413****	**,405****	**,427****	**,341****	**,370****	**,371****	,206**
	Sign.	,000	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	,000
SU	r	,276**	,283**	,254**	,277**	**,304****	,170**	,246**	,220**	,060
	Sign.	,000	,000	,000	,000	**,000**	,000	,000	,000	,162
POS	r	,193**	**,395****	,359**	,292**	**,398****	**,540****	**,580****	**,539****	**,367****
	Sign.	,000	**,000**	,000	,000	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**
CON	r	,230**	**,387****	,375**	,292**	**,387****	**,426****	**,461****	**,398****	,174**
	Sign.	,000	**,000**	**,000**	,000	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	,000
OPT	r	,172**	,273**	,268**	,249**	**,344****	**,410****	**,379****	**,322****	,145**
	Sign.	,000	,000	,000	,000	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	,001
SUPA	r	**,315****	,278**	**,325****	,299**	**,405****	**,337****	**,366****	**,308****	,177**
	Sign.	**,000**	,000	**,000**	,000	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	,000
SUPF	r	**,339****	,293**	,291**	,288**	**,370****	**,304****	**,320****	,277**	,168**
	Sign.	**,000**	,000	,000	,000	**,000**	**,000**	**,000**	,000	,000

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is focused on the analysis of gender differences in psychological well-being, self-efficacy in life skills, and coping strategies during early adolescence. For psychological well-being, the first hypothesis (H_1) is partially confirmed: boys show higher levels of psychological well-being than girls in terms of sense of belonging, optimism, and satisfaction with their life, but expressed higher negative emotions than girls; in addition, girls show higher loneliness than boys. Regarding to self-efficacy in life skills, boys perceive themselves highly efficient in managing of negative emotions, while girls consider themselves highly efficient in interpersonal and social communication, confirming the second hypothesis (H_2). At last, no differences are found for problem-focused coping strategies and social-support seeking (H_3); results indicate different ways in which preadolescents adopt the strategies of avoidance: boys avoid critical situations trying to suppress them, while girls think that things will improve in the end. In line with our initial hypothesis (H_4, H_5, H_6), the results report positive relationships among these psychological constructs: the more preadolescents perceived themselves as more efficient in life skills, the more they achieved higher levels of psychological well-being and adopted functional coping strategies. Some of these findings are in line with the previous results (Caprara, 2001; Wiese et al., 2018; Sagone

& Indiana, 2017; 2018; Villanueva et al., 2022) and in opposition with the research about gender differences in coping strategies (Winkler Metzke &Steinhausen, 2002; Hampel & Peterman, 2005; Eschenbeck & Kohlmann, 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of literature revealed the lack of studies carried out with samples of preadolescents when compared with studies analyzing the same variables in adolescents and adults (Graves et al., 2021; Eisenbarth, 2019; Matud et al., 2019; Zach et al., 2016). So, this study enriches the existing literature showing further possible gender differences about the chosen topics. Future research will deep the relationships among other psychological variables that seem to play a determining role in the optimal development of individuals and the proposal to compare other levels of age (adolescents and young adults). A limitation of this study could be connected with the COVID-19 pandemic: this variable has been excluded by the authors of the current study because the impossibility to carry out a pre-COVID/post-COVID comparisons in the examined constructs in preadolescence: however, it is possible to imagine that this unexpected and forced condition of isolation, with the concomitant reduction of daily routines, may have affected the perception of self-efficacy in life skills, the psychological well-being, and the use of different coping strategies.

REFERENCES BIBLIOGRAPHIC

Andolfi, V. R., Tay, L., Confalonieri, E., & Traficante, D. (2017). Assessing Well-Being in Children: Italian Adaptation of the Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving for Children (CIT-CHILD). *TPM: Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, *24*(1), 127-145.

Ayers, T. A., & Sandler, I. N. (1999, September). Manual for the Children's Coping Strategies Checklist & how I coped under pressure scale. Retrieved June 10, 2006, from Arizona State Prevention Research Center Web site: http//www.asu.edu/clas/asuprc/.

Benjet, C., & Hernandez-Guzman, L. (2001). Gender differences in psychological well-being of Mexican early adolescents. *Adolescence*, *36*(141), 47-65.

Camisasca, E., Caravita, S., Milani, L., & Di Blasio, P. (2012). The Children's Coping Strategies Checklist-Revision1: A validation study in the Italian population. *TPM: Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, *19*(3), 197-218.

Caprara, G. V. (Ed.). (2001). *La valutazione dell'autoefficacia*. Trento (Italy): Erickson.

Caprara, G. V., Fida, R., Vecchione, M., Del Bove, G., Vecchio, G. M., Barbaranelli, C., & Bandura, A. (2008). Longitudinal analysis of the role of perceived self-efficacy for self-regulated learning in academic continuance and achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*(3), 525–534.

Caprara, G. V., Gerbino, M., & Delle Fratte, A. (2001), Autoefficacia interpersonale. In G.V. Caprara (Ed.), *La valutazione dell'autoefficacia. Costrutti e strumenti* (pp. 51-62). Trento: Erickson.

Caprara, G. V., Steca, P., Gerbino, M., Paciello, M., & Vecchio, G. M. (2006). Looking for Adolescents' Well-being: Self-Efficacy Beliefs as Determinants of Positive Thinking and Happiness. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, *15*, 30-43.

Delle Fave, A., Brdar, I., Freire, T., Vella-Brodrick, D., & Wissing, M. (2011). The eudaimonic and hedonic components of happiness: Qualitative and quantitative findings. *Social Indicators Research*, *100*,185-207.

Diener, E. (1984). Subjective Well-Being. *Psychological Bulletin*, *95*, 542-575.

Diener, E. (2009). Subjective Well-Being. In E. Diener (Ed), *The Science of Well-Being* (Vol. 37, pp. 11-58). New York: Springer.

Duan, W., Guan, Y., &Gan, F. (2016). Brief Inventory of Thriving: A comprehensive measure of well-being. *Chinese Sociological Dialogue*, *1* (1), 15–31.

Eisenbarth, C.A. (2019). Coping with Stress: Gender Differences among College Students, *College Student*

Journal, 53(2), 151-162.

Eschenbeck, H., & Kohlmann, C.-W. (2002). Geschlechtsunterschiedein der Stressbewältigung von Grundschulkindern[Gender differences in coping strategies in childhood]. *Zeitschriftfür Gesundheitspsychologie, 10*, 1–7.

Eschenbeck, H., Kohlmann, C. W., & Lohaus, A. (2007). Gender differences in coping strategies in children and adolescents. *Journal of Individual Differences*,*28*(1), 18-26.

Eschenbeck, H., Kohlmann, C.-W., Lohaus, A., & Klein-Heßling, J. (2006). The assessment of coping with the "German Stress and Coping Questionnaire in Children andAdolescents" (SSKJ 3–8): Factorial and psycho-metric analyses. *Diagnostica, 52*, 131–142.

Graves, B. S., Hall, M. E., Dias-Karch, C., Haischer, M. H., & Apter, C. (2021). Gender differences in perceived stress and coping among college students. *PloSone*, *16*(8), e0255634.

Griffith, M.A., Dubow, E.F., & Ippolito, M.F. (2000). Developmental and cross-situational differences in adoles-cents' coping strategies. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 29*, 183–204.

Hampel, P., & Petermann, F. (2005). Age and gender effects on coping in children and adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*,*34*, 73–83.

Hausler, M., Huber, A., Strecker, C., Brenner, M., Hoege, T., & Hoefer, S. (2017). Validation of a holistic measure for the construct of well-being-The German version of the Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving (CIT) and the short version Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT). *Diagnostica*, *63*(3), 219-228.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.

Lucas, R. E., & Dyrenforth, P. S. (2006). Does the Existence of Social Relationships Matter for Subjective Well-Being? In K. D. Vohs, & E. J. Finkel (Eds.), *Self and Relationships: Connecting Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Processes* (pp. 254-273). New York: Guilford Press.

Matud, M. P., López-Curbelo, M., & Fortes, D. (2019). Gender and psychological well-being. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *16*(19), 3531

Pastorelli, C., Vecchio, G. M., & Boda, G. (2001). Autoefficacia nelle life skills: Soluzione dei problemi e comu-nicazione interpersonale. In G. V. Caprara (Ed.), *La valutazione dell'autoefficacia. Costrutti e strumenti* (pp. 137-146). Trento: Erickson.

Remillard, A. M., & Lamb, S. (2005). Adolescent girls' coping with relational aggression. *Sex Roles*, *53*(3), 221-229.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*,*52*(1), 141-166.

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*,*57*(6), 1069- 1081.

Ryff, C. D. (2014). Psychological Well-Being Revisited: Advances in the Science and Practice of Eudaimonia. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, *83*, 10-28.

Sagone, E., & Indiana, M. L. (2017). The relationship of positive affect with resilience and self-efficacy in life skills in Italian adolescents. *Psychology*, *8*, 2226–2239.

Sagone, E., De Caroli, M. E., & Indiana, M. L. (2018). Psychological well-being and self-efficacy in life skills among Italian preadolescents with positive body esteem: Preliminary results of an intervention project. *Psychology*, *9*(06), 1383-1396.

Su, R., Tay, L., & Diener, E. (2014). The development and validation of the Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving (CIT) and the Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT). *Applied Psychology: Health and Well Being*,*6*(3), 251-279.

Villanueva, L., Prado-Gascó, V., & Montoya-Castilla, I. (2022). Longitudinal analysis of subjective well-being in preadolescents: The role of emotional intelligence, self-esteem and perceived stress. *Journal of Health Psychology*,*27*(2), 278-291.

Wiese, C. W., Tay, L., Su, R., & Diener, E. (2018). Measuring Thriving across Nations: Examining the

Measurement Equivalence of the Comprehensive Inventory of Thriving (CIT) and the Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT). *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, *10*, 127-148.

World Health Organization (2003). *Skills for Health, Information Series on School Health*, Document Number 9.

Zach, S., Yazdi-Ugav, O., & Zeev, A. (2016). Academic achievements, behavioural problems, and loneliness as predictors of social skills among students with and without learning disorders. *School Psychology International*,*37*(4), 378-396.