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LONGITUDINAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY RESILIENCE AND PARENTS' SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

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The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between different family resilience dimensions (i.e., family problem solving, utilising social and economic resources, and family spirituality) and subjective well-being (SWB) of mothers and fathers. The data was collected from 848 pairs of mothers and fathers of elementary school-aged children, as a part of the three-year longitudinal project. Using paper-pencil questionnaires, mothers and fathers assessed family resilience, their life satisfaction and happiness in two study waves. The results of structural equation modelling showed that, among family resilience dimensions, only family problem solving was reliably longitudinally associated with greater SWB in both parents two years later. Other family resilience dimensions did not contribute significantly to either parent's SWB, after controlling for their SWB measured in the first wave of the study. Family resilience explained only a small portion of the variance in both mothers' and fathers' SWB, indicating that although family resilience does play a role in the parents' SWB, there are other individual and family factors that should be considered.

Keywords: family resilience, subjective well-being, mother, father, longitudinal study



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INTRODUCTION

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as a person's cognitive and affective evaluation of his or her life (Diener et al., 2002) and is often represented by life satisfaction and an experience of pleasant or unpleasant emotions, such as happiness (Diener, 2013; Diener et al., 2002). Achieving high well-being is regarded as a fundamental human goal and a universal desire. However, for parents of early adolescents, it can be a difficult goal to attain, particularly when trying to balance their own needs with the demands of their family. According to Newland's (2015) theory of change model, individual parent's SWB is a component of a broader family well-being. This broader construct not only includes parental mental health and well-being, but also encompasses family-level characteristics such as family resilience and family self-sufficiency. The aim of this paper is to examine the interconnections between key components of family well-being, specifically parents' subjective well-being and family resilience. The primary focus is to explore whether family-level characteristics – such as family resilience – serve as predictors of parent-level outcomes, particularly parents' subjective well-being over time.

Family well-being

The definition of family well-being differs across the literature. McKeown and Sweeney (2001) state that family well-being has both a "relational" and an "economic" aspect, meaning it is formed by the quality of family relationships (especially the parent-child, but also the parent-parent relationship) and by the family's economic resources (financial, physical, human, and social). Newland (2014, 2015) introduced a model of family well-being as a complex, multi-dimensional construct that encompasses various individual and family-related factors. Though there are different definitions of family well-being, it generally includes the mental and physical health of parents (individual factors), the self-sufficiency of the family, and family resilience (family-level factors), as its essential components. These components of family well-being are often inter-related, i.e., families that are healthy in physical, emotional, and social aspects tend to be more resilient and self-sufficient, and vice versa (McKeown et al., 2003; Newland, 2014). Therefore, studying the relationships between different aspects of family well-being allows us to explore potential ways of improving the well-being of both individual family members and the family unit as a whole.

Family resilience

Family resilience, a vital component of family well-being, is defined as the ability of a family, as a functional system, to endure and recover from life's stressful challenges, emerging

stronger and more resourceful (Walsh, 1996, 2016). It is the ability of a family to strengthen its relationships and foster personal growth by effectively managing conflictual and stressful situations (Newland, 2015).

Drawing from a meta-analysis of research on resilience and family functioning, Walsh (2016) proposed a conceptual model of family resilience as a framework for family resilience research. She organised key transactional processes that facilitate family resilience in three domains or dimensions of family functioning. The first dimension is belief systems. These include making meaning of adversity (e.g., normalising distress, viewing crises as meaningful, manageable challenge, redefining adversity through positive attributions), a positive outlook (marked by hope, optimism, and confidence, focusing on strengths, and a "can-do" attitude, accepting what cannot be changed and tolerating uncertainty), and transcendence and spirituality (offering deeper meaning during hardship, through faith, a connection with nature, and social actions, learning from adversity and leading to growth and positive change). The second dimension includes organisational processes characterised by flexibility (adapting to new challenges, maintaining continuity, and providing strong leadership to nurture and protect others, in varied family forms), connectedness (with mutual support, and respect for individual needs), and mobilising social and economic resources (e.g., recruiting extended kin, and other social networks, building financial security, and using transactions with larger systems). The third dimension refers to communication/problem-solving processes which include clarity (delivering clear, consistent messages and clarifying ambiguous situations), open emotional sharing (allowing for expression of both painful feelings and positive emotions), and collaborative problem-solving (through shared decision-making, conflict resolutions, setting concrete goals, learning from setbacks, etc.). Walsh's model has been tested using several questionnaires developed based on the model. One of the most widely used is the Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS), constructed by Sixbey (2005). However, Walsh's model has received only limited empirical support. Sixbey (2005) was unable to replicate the theorised structure comprising nine subscales grouped into three overarching domains. Instead, a six-factor structure was proposed with the following factors – family communication and problem solving, utilising social and economic resources, maintaining a positive outlook, family connectedness, family spirituality and making meaning of adversity as subscales. The FRAS is often used as a measure of family resilience (Chiu et al., 2020) and it has been translated into many languages (Chew & Haase, 2016; Ferić et al., 2016; Li et al., 2016; Nadrowska et al., 2017).

Relationship between family resilience and parents' well-being

Different characteristics of families (and parents) have been studied in relation to child well-being, and to a lesser extent in relation to the well-being of parents. Also, studies focusing specifically on the relationship between family resilience and parents' well-being are especially scarce.

Research by Everri et al. (2022) indicated that family resilience was a key protective factor in supporting parents' well-being during the COVID-19 restrictions and home confinement. Parents who felt they could work together as a family to tackle the challenges of the pandemic – through hope, positive beliefs, effective communication, and utilising both internal and external resources – experienced less impact on their well-being. When families are resilient, it protects parents' well-being and, in turn, supports positive parent-child relationships and children's well-being. Aivalioti and Pezirkianidis (2020) conducted a study with parents in Greece to examine the relationship of family resilience with parental well-being and parental resilience. In their study, the only family resilience dimension that significantly predicted parental well-being was the family's coping strategies, while problem-solving communication and beliefs system were not significant predictors of parental well-being. Walsh's (1996, 2016) belief systems as a dimension of family resilience incorporates, among others, hope and spirituality. In his review of the relationship between hope and well-being, Murphy (2023) states that the current research continues to support positive effects of hope on happiness and overall well-being, explaining its effect within the hope theory. The theory suggests that an individual's well-being can be influenced by their ability to identify ways to achieve a goal (pathways) and their belief in their own ability to do so (agency), because this way of thinking increases the capacity of individuals to achieve their goals. During adversity, spiritual beliefs and practices offer meaning, support, and comfort, particularly in situations beyond control. The study by Greenfield et al. (2009) showed that increased spirituality was related to enhanced well-being, including positive affect, purpose in life, positive relations with others, personal growth, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Similarly, Ellison (1991) found that strong religious faith was associated with higher life satisfaction, increased happiness, and reduced negative psychological consequences from traumatic life events. The importance of other family resilience characteristics, connectedness and problem-solving processes, was emphasised by McKeown et al. (2003) in their study with Irish families. Their results showed that the key family processes affecting the well-being of men and women in two-parent families are

the quality of the couple relationship and the ability to satisfactorily resolve conflicts and arguments. This includes a problem-solving style which typically involves discussing problems and finding solutions which are acceptable to both. Thomas et al.'s (2017) review of the research on the role family relationships in adulthood (i.e., marital, parent-child, grandparent, and sibling relationships) play in an individual's well-being across the life course also stressed the importance of connectedness, and social resources. The quality of family relationships, including support (love, advice, care) and strain (arguments, criticism, excessive demands), affects well-being in various ways. Positive family dynamics help individuals cope with stress, adopt healthier behaviours, and boost self-esteem, leading to higher well-being. However, poor relationship quality, intense caregiving for family members, and marital issues can harm well-being, with these negative relationship aspects having a greater impact than the positive ones.

The present study

In the present study we wanted to fill several gaps in literature regarding the relationship between family resilience and individual parent's well-being. First, by using longitudinal design we focus on changes in parents' SWB and whether components of family resilience predict rank-order changes in parents' SWB over two years. We posit family resilience as a predictor because we assume that family resilience represents a more stable, contextual variable which may be less malleable to changes. Second, we employ a type of hybrid design with dyadic and individual-level components in our design. Dyadic level refers to our treatment of family resilience. We use a dyadic model called common fate model (Kenny et al., 2020) to model family resilience. The common fate model is a dyadic model which assumes that covariation between dyad members comes from some common unmeasured factor that affects both dyads (Kenny et al., 2020; Ledermann & Kenny, 2012). In such models, dyad members do not influence each other, instead, the same external force influences both members (Kenny et al., 2020). This type of model is appropriate when both members of the dyad assess the same variable, such as their own family's resilience. If they reported on their own resilience, the actor-partner model might be more appropriate, but instead they assess their whole family's resilience. In the common-fate model, the latent variable, such as family resilience in our case, represents the shared variance in both parents' perceptions of their own family. Third, we test our models separately for mothers and fathers because we are interested in changes in individual parents' SWB.

Our main goal was to examine whether components of family resilience predict rank-order changes in subjective well-being over two years for parents of underage children. We expected that higher components of family resilience – family spirituality, problem solving and utilisation of resources – would predict increases in subjective well-being for both mothers and fathers during two years.

METHODS

Participants

This study was based on data collected as part of the three-year longitudinal project. In the present study, participants were parents of children who, in the first wave of the study, attended third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade (age range 9-12 years) of elementary schools in Croatia. In the first wave of the study there were 1423 mothers and 1196 fathers. The specific sample for the present study was selected based on the following criteria: mothers and fathers participated in the first wave of the study, there were no duplicate entries for parents who gave their data for more than one child, parents reported living in the same household with their children, parents are married or cohabitating. Based on these criteria, a sample of 848 pairs of mothers ($M_{age} = 41.40$, $SD = 4.60$) and fathers ($M_{age} = 43.85$, $SD = 5.26$) who had data in the first wave were included in the study. Both parents mostly had high school (45% of mothers and 59.4% of fathers) or college education (33.3% of mothers and 23.3% of fathers). In the second wave, 645 mothers and 613 fathers remained in the study, leading to the attrition rate of 23.9% for mothers and 27.7% for fathers. Mothers who participated in both waves and those who left the study did not differ in their life satisfaction ($t(836) = 1.40$, $p > 0.05$), happiness ($t(846) = -0.69$, $p > 0.05$), problem solving ($t(810) = 1.04$, $p > 0.05$), utilisation of resources ($t(809) = 0.43$, $p > 0.05$), spirituality ($t(837) = 0.15$, $p > 0.05$), their health ($t(840) = 0.25$, $p > 0.05$), perceived COVID-19 impact ($t(836) = 0.06$, $p > 0.05$), age ($t(840) = -1.58$, $p > 0.05$), or income ($t(821) = 0.16$, $p > 0.05$). Mothers who did not participate in the second wave had more children ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 0.91$) compared to the mothers who participated in both waves ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.80$), ($t(839) = 2.22$, $p < 0.05$). For fathers, no differences were observed for life satisfaction ($t(835) = 1.50$, $p > 0.05$), happiness ($t(841) = 0.10$, $p > 0.05$), problem solving ($t(806) = 1.03$, $p > 0.05$), utilisation of resources ($t(817) = -1.51$, $p > 0.05$), spirituality ($t(824) = -1.49$, $p > 0.05$), their health ($t(838) = 1.65$, $p > 0.05$), perceived COVID-19 impact ($t(836) = -1.14$, $p > 0.05$), income ($t(807) = 0.24$, $p > 0.05$), age ($t(839) = -1.35$, $p > 0.05$), or number of children ($t(829) = 1.00$, $p > 0.05$).

Instruments

Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS; Sixbey, 2005) is a 54-item scale used to measure six dimensions of family resilience. In this study, parents (both mothers and fathers) completed a shortened version of the FRAS (36 items) assessing family communication and problem solving (9 items, e.g., "We discuss things until we reach a resolution"), utilising social and economic resources (8 items, e.g., "We can depend upon people in this community"), maintaining a positive outlook (6 items, e.g., "We have the strength to solve our problems"), family connectedness (6 items, e.g., "We show love and affection for family members"), ability to make meaning of adversity (3 items, e.g., "We accept stressful events as a part of life"), and family spirituality (4 items, e.g., "We have faith in a supreme being"). The participants' task is to indicate their agreement with each item on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The total score can be formed for the entire scale or for each subscale (i.e., family resilience dimension), as the average of responses on the corresponding items. In the present study, family communication and problem solving, maintaining a positive outlook, and the ability to make meaning of adversity were highly intercorrelated (correlations between 0.56 and 0.78 for both mothers and fathers). High intercorrelations between these subscales are reported in other studies as well. For instance, the family communication and problem-solving subscale and maintaining a positive outlook correlated 0.86 (Li et al., 2016) and 0.94 (Kaya & Arici, 2012). The ability to make meaning of adversity correlated around 0.60 with both subscales (Kaya & Arici, 2012). In a validation study for the Croatian translation of the FRAS, Ferić et al. (2016) found that all items but one for maintaining a positive outlook subscale loaded on the family communication and problem-solving factor. The correlation of that factor with the ability to make meaning of adversity was 0.70. High correlations between these factors may show that these subscales tackle the problem-solving construct which includes effective communication, good problem-solving skills, optimism in dealing with family problems, and the ability to deal with unsolvable problems. Due to these considerations and potential multicollinearity problems, we decided to combine these subscales. Therefore, the results on these subscales were standardised and averaged to make one general family problem-solving indicator. In the present study, the reliability of the FRAS subscales was high (i.e., for family problem solving $\alpha = 0.93$ for mothers and $\alpha = 0.94$ for fathers; for utilisation of resources $\alpha = 0.87$ for mothers and $\alpha = 0.86$ for fathers; for spirituality $\alpha = 0.84$ for both mothers and fathers), except for

the family connectedness subscale ($\alpha = 0.57$ for mothers and $\alpha = 0.59$ fathers), which was therefore excluded from further analyses. Our FRAS model consisted of a family problem-solving factor (based on the three combined subscales as indicators), family spirituality (4 items) and utilisation of resources (8 items). This three-factor structure was compared between mothers and fathers, and dyadic invariance was tested by conducting confirmatory factor analysis with maximum likelihood robust estimator. In the configural model, correlated residuals were allowed for two items from the utilisation of resources subscale for both mothers and fathers. This model had adequate fit statistics ($\chi^2(373) = 1158.63, p < 0.001, CFI = 0.936, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.06$). The model with equal loadings also had a good fit ($\chi^2(383) = 1172.791, p < 0.001, CFI = 0.935, RMSEA = 0.049, SRMR = 0.061$), and metric invariance was overall supported (Scaled Chi-Squared Test $\Delta\chi^2 = 14.87, \Delta df = 10, p = 0.137$).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) is a 5-item scale used to measure participants' subjective estimation of their general life satisfaction. The participants' task is to indicate the agreement with each item (e.g. "In most ways my life is close to my ideal") on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The total score is calculated by summing up the responses to all five items, with higher results indicating greater satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha in the present study was 0.89 or higher for both mothers and fathers, in both waves of the study.

Happiness was measured with one item, asking participants to indicate how happy they feel on a scale from 0 (*not at all happy*) to 10 (*extremely happy*).

Control variables

Parents' age, and other data from the second wave such as education, income per capita, employment status (binary employed vs unemployed), subjective health, and number of children were used as control variables. Additionally, the COVID-19 impact, which was only measured in the first wave, was also included. The COVID-19 impact was assessed with the following question: "When you take everything into account, how much has the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic worsened your daily life?" The rating scale range was from 0 (*not worse at all*) to 10 (*it worsened significantly*).

Procedure

The data was collected as part of the "Child well-being in family context (CHILD-WELL)" project, funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ-IP-2019-04-6198). Prior to data collection, all necessary approvals were obtained, including from

the Ethics Committee, the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, and the school principals. The research involved 15 elementary schools across two Croatian counties. The first wave of the study took place in spring 2021, and the second wave occurred two years later, in spring 2023. Parents/caregivers received envelopes containing consent forms and questionnaires, which they completed at home and returned in a sealed envelope via their child's teacher. Participation was voluntary, with assurances of data confidentiality and use solely for research purposes. Variables included in this study (except for the COVID-19 impact) were measured in both waves.

Data analysis

In this study, data analyses were run in SPSS and R. First, we examined descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among FRAS subscales between parents. Second, we ran a series of CFA models with maximum likelihood robust estimator and FIML to test the common fate model, its stability and hybrid model for our main research problem. We modelled the common fate model of family resilience based on the instructions by Ledermann and Kenny (2012). Mothers and fathers assessed their family problem solving, utilisation of resources and spirituality; therefore, three family-level factors were modelled, one for each component of family resilience. Ledermann and Kenny (2012) recommend for correlations between both partners' assessment of higher-level constructs to be at least 0.30. All family-level factors had two indicators – mothers' and fathers' assessment of the corresponding family resilience subscale – and they both had loadings constrained to be equal across parents for the same indicator. Family-level factors reflected the shared variance between mothers' and fathers' perceptions of different family resilience components. After that, we examined the longitudinal stability of that model by modelling family resilience with three family-level factors both in the first and the second wave. After demonstrating longitudinal stability, we proceeded to test our main research problem. To do that, we specified two hybrid models – one for mothers and one for fathers. The hybrid model consisted of family-level factors for family resilience as predictors of changes in rank-order in parents' SWB in the second wave. To predict changes in parents' SWB in the second wave, we included an autoregressive path from parents' SWB in the first wave to the second wave SWB. Control variables were included in these models by estimating their own variances and covariances in the model.

In the end, as part of the sensitivity test, we combined mothers' and fathers' hybrid models into one, where each parent's SWB from the first wave predicts their SWB in the second wave. To simplify that model, control variables were excluded.

In all models, the parameter estimates were obtained using the full information maximum likelihood robust method. Because the Chi-square test is sensitive to sample size, the model fit was evaluated based on several other fit indices, following Hu and Bentler's (1999) cutoff criteria: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.06, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > 0.95, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) > 0.95, and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) < 0.05.

RESULTS

To examine the relationships between the studied variables, descriptive statistics and correlations among all measured variables were calculated as an initial step.

☞ TABLE 1
Descriptive statistics for family resilience dimensions assessed by mothers and fathers

Family resilience	Min	Max	M	SD
M_family problem solving	1.70	4.00	3.49	0.37
M_utilising resources	1.00	4.00	2.88	0.57
M_family spirituality	1.00	4.00	2.42	0.79
F_family problem solving	1.44	4.00	3.48	0.39
F_utilising resources	1.00	4.00	2.85	0.54
F_family spirituality	1.00	4.00	2.34	0.79

Note. M – mothers' estimations, F – fathers' estimations

The results showed that mothers and fathers rated different family resilience dimensions similarly (Table 1). They both rated family problem solving (which in this study consisted of the three subscales – communication and problem solving, maintaining a positive outlook, and the ability to make meaning of adversity) the highest; average results on utilising social and economic resources were slightly above the middle of the theoretical range of the scale, while average results on family spirituality were slightly below the theoretical average. Regarding subjective well-being indicators, both mothers and fathers on average reported moderate life satisfaction and relatively high happiness in both waves of the study (Table 2).

☞ TABLE 2
Descriptive statistics for mothers' and fathers' subjective well-being indicators in the first (W1) and in the second (W2) wave of the study

Subjective well-being	W1				W2			
	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD
M_SWLS	1.00	35.00	26.37	5.31	5.00	35.00	25.82	4.87
M_Happiness	0.00	10.00	8.16	1.52	1.00	10.00	7.96	1.54
F_SWLS	6.00	35.00	25.91	5.21	5.00	35.00	26.02	4.94
F_Happiness	2.00	10.00	8.08	1.64	2.00	10.00	8.01	1.48

Note. M – mothers' estimations, F – fathers' estimations; SWLS – Satisfaction with Life Scale

Correlation analyses showed high positive correlations between life satisfaction and happiness within both waves of

the study, for mothers and for fathers, while correlations between the same SWB indicators between two waves were moderately high. All correlations among family resilience dimensions were statistically significant, both within and between parents, with the highest correlation between mothers' and fathers' estimation of family spirituality ($r = 0.73, p < 0.01$). Regarding correlations between family resilience dimensions and parents' SWB indicators, almost all were statistically significant, and somewhat higher within than between parents' estimations, as expected. The lowest correlations were between family spirituality and SWB indicators, and highest (although also low in size) between family problem solving and SWB.

TABLE 3
Correlations between
all study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 M_SWLS (W1)	1												
2 M_Happy (W1)	0.69**	1											
3 F_SWLS (W1)	0.44**	0.38**	1										
4 F_Happy (W1)	0.40**	0.43**	0.71**	1									
5 M_SWLS (W2)	0.56**	0.50**	0.33**	0.31**	1								
6 M_Happy (W2)	0.44**	0.56**	0.28**	0.32**	0.74**	1							
7 F_SWLS (W2)	0.29**	0.27**	0.49**	0.42**	0.49**	0.43**	1						
8 F_Happy (W2)	0.20**	0.25**	0.38**	0.46**	0.42**	0.49**	0.74**	1					
9 M_FPS	0.37**	0.42**	0.25**	0.29**	0.32**	0.32**	0.21**	0.24**	1				
10 M_UR	0.25**	0.25**	0.16**	0.17**	0.23**	0.22**	0.14**	0.11**	0.35**	1			
11 M_SP	0.12**	0.12**	0.08*	0.09**	0.13**	0.13**	0.09*	0.13**	0.20**	0.26**	1		
12 F_FPS	0.22**	0.23**	0.40**	0.43**	0.23**	0.22**	0.32**	0.36**	0.46**	0.13**	0.09*	1	
13 F_UR	0.19**	0.18**	0.24**	0.29**	0.19**	0.15**	0.22**	0.24**	0.19**	0.53**	0.19**	0.36**	1
14 F_SP	0.06	0.07	0.11**	0.14**	0.09*	0.08*	0.13**	0.16**	0.16**	0.19**	0.73**	0.15**	0.29**

Note. M – mothers' estimations, F – fathers' estimations, W1 – first wave of the study, W2 – second wave of the study, M/F_FPS – family problem solving, M/F_UR – utilising social and economic resources, M/F_SP – family spirituality, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

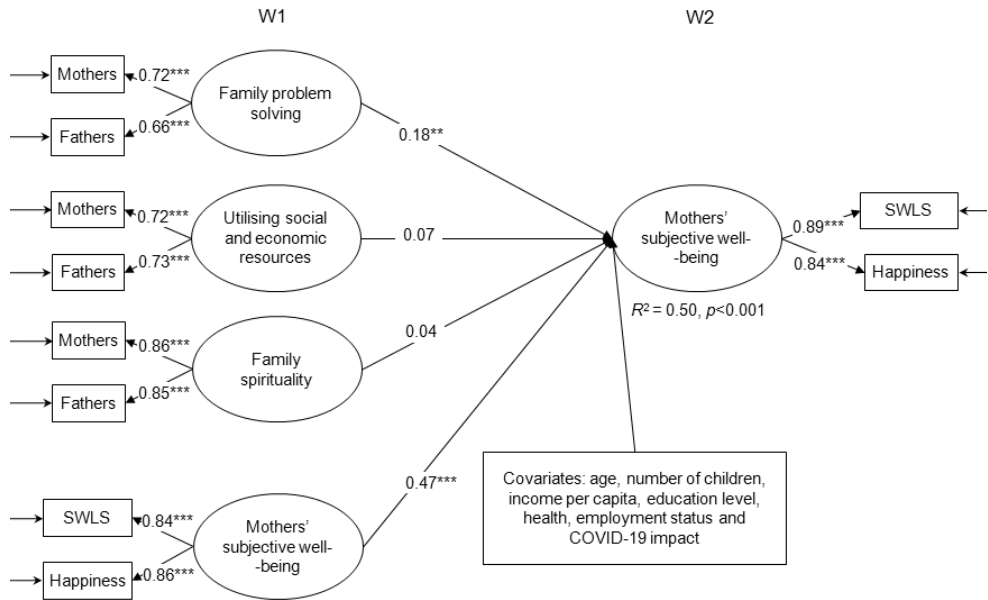
The longitudinal common fate model was set up next to explore its longitudinal invariance and stability. The model consisted of three family-level factors per wave with mothers' and fathers' perceptions of different family resilience subscales as indicators. First, we examined a configural model with free loadings for all indicators across time and raters (mothers and fathers). This model had a good fit statistics ($\chi^2(21) = 58.649, p < 0.001, CFI = 0.989, TLI = 0.967, RMSEA = 0.046, SRMR = 0.023$). Next, we tested a metric invariance model with equal loadings for the same indicators across time and raters. This model also had good fit statistics ($\chi^2(27) = 63.078, p < 0.001, CFI = 0.990, TLI = 0.975, RMSEA = 0.040, SRMR = 0.025$). The metric invariance model did not differ from the configural model (Scaled Chi-Squared Difference Test $\Delta\chi^2 = 6.2244, \Delta df = 6, p = 0.399$). In the last model, correlations between

two waves were 0.75 for family problem solving, 0.82 for utilising resources and 0.95 for family spirituality. Based on fit statistics and high correlations during time, it seems that family resilience maintains high rank-order stability over time.

To determine the longitudinal relationship between different family resilience dimensions and parents' SWB, structural equation modelling was used, with separate models for mothers (Figure 1) and fathers (Figure 2).

SWB was operationalised as a latent variable with measures of life satisfaction and happiness as indicators. Family resilience, modelled with common fate model, was used as a predictor of changes in SWB (SWB from the first wave of the study was included as a predictor as well, while SWB from the second wave of the study was a criterion). Parents' age, education level, employment status, income, number of children, health and COVID-19 impact were included as control variables.

FIGURE 1
Model of the relationship between family resilience dimensions and mothers' subjective well-being



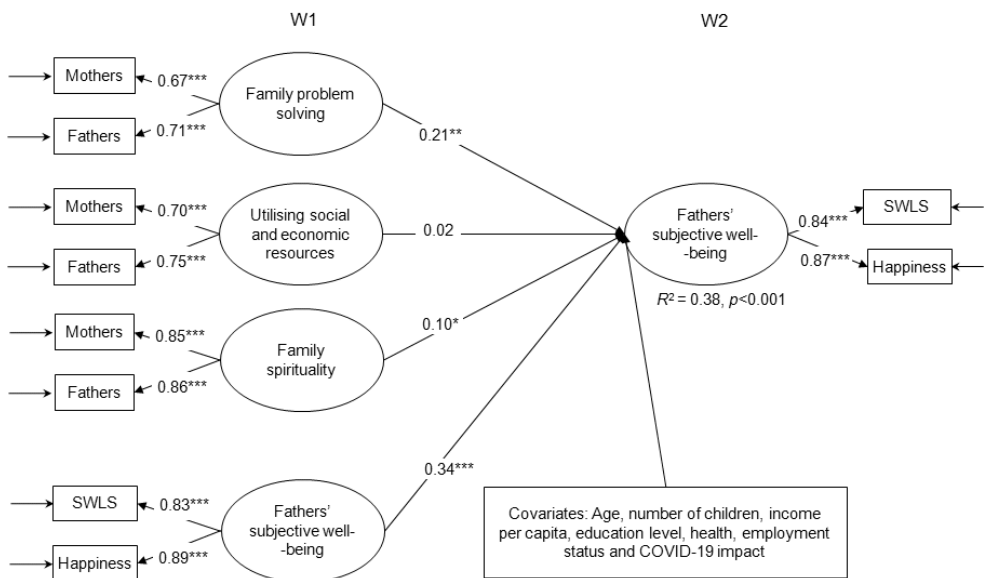
Note. Intercorrelations among predictors are not shown. The parameter estimates shown are standardised. W1 – first wave of the study, W2 – second wave of the study; ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; significant covariate paths were the ones for higher education level ($\beta = 0.09, p = 0.013$) and for higher subjective health ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.001$).

The model of the longitudinal relationship between family resilience dimensions and mothers' subjective well-being showed good fit to the data ($\chi^2(84) = 237.350, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.046, CFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.932, SRMR = 0.052$). After controlling for the mothers' SWB in the first wave of the study, and other con-

control variables, family-level problem solving positively predicted mothers' SWB two years later. Other family resilience dimensions were not significant predictors of mothers' SWB change. The predictors together explained 50% of the variance in mothers' SWB.

Regarding the longitudinal relationship between family resilience dimensions and fathers' subjective well-being, the model also showed good fit to the data ($\chi^2(84) = 229.562, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.045, CFI = 0.949, TLI = 0.931, SRMR = 0.063$), with the same pattern of relationships obtained for mothers – after controlling for the SWB in the first wave of the study, family level problem solving and family spirituality positively predicted fathers' SWB measured two years later. The predictors together explained 38% of the variance in fathers' SWB.

FIGURE 2
Model of the relationship between family resilience dimensions and fathers' subjective well-being

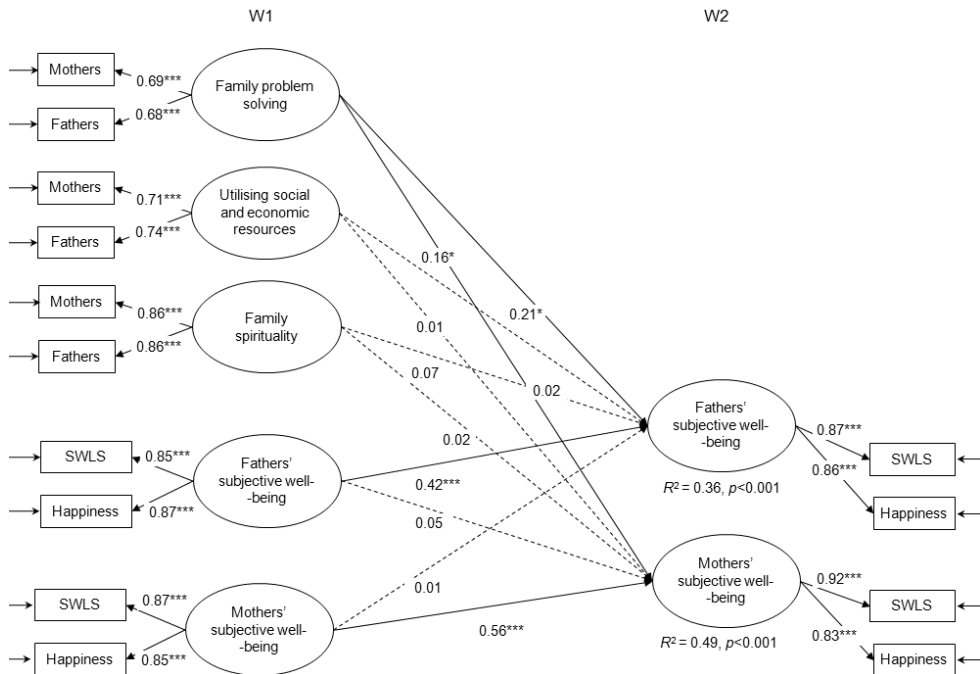


Note. Intercorrelations among predictors are not shown. The parameter estimates shown are standardised. W1 – first wave of the study, W2 – second wave of the study; ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; the only significant covariate path was the one for higher subjective health ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.001$).

As a sensitivity test, we tested a variation of the autoregressive cross-lagged model between parents' SWB during time with family resilience still modelled as a common fate factor. The only difference in that model compared to the previous models is the inclusion of cross-lagged paths from each parent's first wave SWB to their SWB two years later (Figure 3). That model fit the data well ($\chi^2(47) = 162.824, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.054, CFI = 0.973, TLI = 0.947, SRMR = 0.034$). In that model the only significant paths were autoregressive paths from each parent's SWB, and family problem solving which predicted

increases in both mothers' ($\beta = 0.16, p < 0.05$) and fathers' ($\beta = 0.21, p < 0.05$) SWB two years later. Lastly, because all variables were measured in both research waves, we specified an autoregressive cross-lagged model between each parent's SWB and family resilience. In these models, we explored whether parents' SWB from the first wave predicts changes in family resilience operationalised via family-level factors in the second wave, i.e., the existence of bidirectional links. The model for mothers ($\chi^2(63) = 137.872, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.037, CFI = 0.986, TLI = 0.972, SRMR = 0.039$) and fathers ($\chi^2(63) = 126.454, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.034, CFI = 0.987, TLI = 0.976, SRMR = 0.033$) fit the data well. Mothers' or fathers' SWB from the first wave did not predict any of the family resilience factors in the second wave. Regression paths for mothers' SWB predicting changes in family problem solving, family spirituality and utilising resources in the second wave were 0.11 ($p = 0.162$), -0.01 ($p = 0.851$), and 0.01 ($p = 0.895$), respectively. Standardised regression paths for fathers' SWB predicting changes in family problem solving, family spirituality and utilising resources in the second wave were 0.12 ($p = 0.162$), -0.03 ($p = 0.516$), and -0.08 ($p = 0.232$), respectively. Family problem solving predicted SWB two years later in both mothers' ($\beta = 0.19, p = 0.003$) and fathers' ($\beta = 0.25, p = 0.001$) model, therefore confirming the results from the prior analyses.

FIGURE 3
 Model of the relationship between family resilience dimensions and mothers' and fathers' subjective well-being



DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to examine the longitudinal relationship between different family resilience dimensions (i.e., family problem solving, utilising social and economic resources, and family spirituality) and parents' subjective well-being. More specifically, we wanted to examine whether components of family resilience predict rank-order changes in subjective well-being over two years for parents of underage children. We expected that higher components of family resilience – family problem solving, utilisation of resources and spirituality – would predict increases in subjective well-being for both mothers' and fathers' during two years. The results showed that, among family resilience dimensions, only family problem solving, assessed by both mothers and fathers, was longitudinally associated with greater SWB in both parents two years later. The other two family resilience dimensions, utilisation of social and economic resources, and family spirituality, did not have a significant contribution to either parent's SWB, after controlling for their SWB measured in the first wave of the study, and other control variables (parents' age, education level, employment status, income, number of children, health and COVID-19 impact). The dimensions of family resilience explained only a small portion of the variance in both mothers' and fathers' SWB.

Family resilience, as suggested by Newland's theory of change model (2015), is a vital component of family well-being – a complex, multi-dimensional construct that encompasses, besides family resilience, the mental and physical health of parents and the self-sufficiency of the family. Within this model, components of family well-being are considered inter-related, although empirical research specifically on the relationship between family resilience and parents' well-being is scarce.

Aivalioti and Pezirkianidis (2020) examined the relationship of family resilience with parental well-being (and parental resilience) in Greek parents and found that the only dimension of family resilience that significantly predicted parental well-being were the coping strategies that family uses (e.g., "We take an active attitude and persevere in our efforts to face and resolve problems"), while structural models, social support networks, financial support sources, problem-solving communication and belief system were not significant predictors. Although their results seem not to be in line with the results of the present study, the differences, at least in part, arise from different measures being used for assessing both constructs (e.g., the modified Greek version of Walsh's Family resilience question-

naire vs Sixbey's FRAS used in the present study). Research by Everri et al. (2022) with both Italian and Irish parents used only a total score on the Family resilience questionnaire to examine its role in parental well-being during the COVID-19 restrictions and home confinement. Their results showed family resilience to be a strong positive predictor of parents' well-being, together with low parental conflict. The authors concluded that parents who felt they could work together as a family to tackle the challenges of the pandemic (through hope, positive beliefs, effective communication, and utilising both internal and external resources) experienced less impact on their well-being.

McKeown et al.'s (2003) study with Irish families found that the key family processes affecting the well-being of men and women in two-parent families are the quality of the couple's relationship and the ability to satisfactorily resolve conflicts and arguments (with a problem-solving style which typically involves discussing problems and finding solutions which are acceptable to both). Taken together, these results point to the importance of some family conflict or problem solving processes for the well-being of parents, which is consistent with the determined significance of family problem solving for the well-being of both mothers and fathers in the present study.

This latent variable in the present study included three subdomains of family resilience (communication and problem solving, maintaining a positive outlook, and the ability to make meaning of adversity) corresponding to two different dimensions of family functioning Walsh (1996, 2016) identified as key processes in family resilience – belief systems and communication processes. This broader coverage of relevant family processes has probably contributed to the significance of this dimension of resilience to the well-being of both parents even longitudinally.

The association between resource utilisation and family spirituality with parental well-being was expected based on previous studies on the relationship between SWB and social support (e.g., Brajša-Žganec et al., 2018), income (e.g., Diener, 2013), feeling of financial security (e.g., McKeown et al., 2003), spirituality (e.g., Greenfield et al., 2009) and religious faith (Ellison, 1991). However, these associations were significant only at the level of bivariate correlations, and small in size, which is why they were not significant predictors of parental SWB when all family resilience dimensions were considered simultaneously in a model, especially with SWB from the first study wave included as control.

Implications, limitations and suggestions for future studies

Newland (2014) suggests that viewing the family through a "well-being lens" helps practitioners guide families in utilising protective factors to their advantage. This includes leveraging supportive relationships with extended family or friends, accessing community resources, and identifying and strengthening individual characteristics in both parents and children that are linked to resilience, such as effective coping strategies. Based on the results of the present study, parental well-being could be fostered by enhancing family communication and problem-solving abilities, and a positive outlook on life.

When interpreting the results of the present study, several limitations should be considered. For example, it relies entirely on self-report data. However, data were collected from both mothers and fathers, whose answers were taken together to form a family-level latent variable in the present study, allowing for a family perspective, which is not considered enough in studies. Nevertheless, families involved in the study are intact, functional families; parents rated their subjective well-being highly and assessed their family resilience as being relatively high. Therefore, the participants' representativeness and generalisability of the results is limited.

Walsh (2016) highlights that no universal model of healthy functioning applies to all families or their unique situations, and therefore family functioning should be evaluated within its specific context. Certain aspects of family resilience may be more important to a family than others during difficult times. Additionally, the processes that promote optimal functioning and well-being for family members may shift over time as new challenges arise and families change. During the transition from middle childhood to adolescence, which is the characteristic of the participants' children in the present study, families face challenges in adapting to different roles and family dynamics in response to the changing needs of adolescents. Therefore, it would be beneficial to consider family resilience at different time points in this period of the family life-cycle, alongside the SWB of family members at those various stages.

Finally, within Newland's model (2014, 2015), components of family well-being are inter-related, and therefore the bidirectionality of their relationships should be considered. For example, Soundararajan et al. (2023), utilising data from a nationally representative survey in the US involving parents/guardians of children aged 0-17, assessed the relationship between overall maternal health and family resilience. Their results indicate that both mental and physical health of mothers can influence how families cope with challenges, emphasising the need for interventions that address both aspects of maternal well-being in order to improve family resilience.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study revealed that higher family problem solving, assessed by both mothers and fathers, was longitudinally associated with greater SWB in both parents two years later. However, parental assessments of two other family resilience dimensions, utilisation of social and economic resources, and family spirituality, did not show a significant contribution to either parent's SWB, after controlling for their SWB measured in the first wave of the study, and other control variables. The dimensions of family resilience explained only a small portion of the variance in both mothers' and fathers' SWB indicating that although family resilience does play a role in the parents' SWB, there are other individual and family factors that should be considered when exploring the SWB of mothers and fathers.

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Longitudinalni odnos između obiteljske otpornosti i subjektivne dobrobiti roditelja

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Cilj je ovog istraživanja bio ispitati odnos između raznih dimenzija obiteljske otpornosti (obiteljskog rješavanja problema, upotrebe socijalnih i ekonomskih resursa i obiteljske duhovnosti) te subjektivne dobrobiti majki i očeva. Podaci su prikupljeni od 848 parova majki i očeva djece osnovnoškolske dobi u okviru trogodišnjega longitudinalnog projekta. Upotrebom upitnika u obliku papir-olovka majke i očevi procijenili su otpornost svoje obitelji te vlastito zadovoljstvo životom i sreću u dva vala istraživanja. Rezultati strukturalnoga modeliranja pokazali su da je među dimenzijama obiteljske otpornosti samo obiteljsko rješavanje problema longitudinalno povezano s većom subjektivnom dobrobiti obaju roditelja dvije godine kasnije. Druge dimenzije obiteljske otpornosti nisu značajno pridonijele dobrobiti roditelja nakon kontrole roditeljske dobrobiti iz prvoga vala istraživanja. Obiteljska otpornost objasnila je samo malen dio varijance dobrobiti majki i očeva, što

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pokazuje da, iako obiteljska otpornost ima ulogu u subjektivnoj dobrobiti roditelja, postoje i drugi individualni i obiteljski faktori koje treba uzeti u obzir.

Ključne riječi: obiteljska otpornost, subjektivna dobrobit, majka, otac, longitudinalno istraživanje



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