

THE ROLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS' WELL-BEING IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

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Abstract

Starting from contemporary contextual theoretical models, the student-teacher relationship is one of the main variables that present the quality indicator in the kindergarten. Their dimensions, such as closeness and conflict between early childhood educators and children of an early and preschool age, are the most studied ones. Previous studies revealed that closeness is predominant over conflict within the relationship between early childhood educators and children. In addition, research findings implied certain correlates that could serve as the elements for enhancing student-teacher relationships. One of the significant correlates is related to the early childhood educators' well-being, which showed to have a significant effect on the relationship between early childhood educators and children. So, it is of utmost importance to furthermore investigate the role of early childhood educators' well-being in their relationship with children in an educational context. According to that, the main aim of this study was to explore the relationship between early childhood educators' well-being and their relationship with children and the predictive power of educators' well-being on the quality of student-teacher relationships. The relationship between early childhood educators and children was operationalized and measured using the Student-teacher relationship scale and its two aspects: closeness and conflict. Early childhood educators' well-being was defined by life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness, so relevant self-assessment scales were used in this study. Thirty-two early childhood educators (all females) of an average age of $M=43.60$ years ($SD=11.39$) run self-evaluations of their well-being and evaluated their relationship with children from their kindergarten groups on an overall sample of 603 children (331 boys and 272 girls) of an average age $M=4.96$ years ($SD=1.15$). Cities and kindergartens from two counties in Croatia are chosen based on previous cooperation with the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka, and the principles of anonymity and data confidentiality were assured during the research. After data collection, scales showed satisfactory levels of reliability, so the descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses could be run for which SPSS 22 program was used. Determined results revealed higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict between early childhood educators and children of the early and preschool-aged they worked with in kindergartens. Also, early childhood educators evaluated a moderate level of their optimism and slightly higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness. Based on significant correlations between early childhood educators' well-being variables and the two aspects of their relationship with children, regression analyses revealed that educators' life satisfaction is the significant predictor of conflict and their happiness is the significant predictor of closeness. In addition, in the second steps of two regression analyses, it was determined that the evaluation of their difficulty to work and children's gender were also significant predictors of students-teachers relationship. Determined results were discussed in the frame of the importance of enhancing the students-teacher relationships with the lifelong learning programs and study programs aimed at empowering the well-being of early childhood educators.

Keywords: Children, early childhood educators, kindergarten, relationship, well-being.

1 INTRODUCTION

In contrast to the traditional paradigm of the student-teacher relationship, which was characterized by the distribution of power in the educational process ([1]), implying greater power of the teacher with the use of punitive strategies for students in the transmission of knowledge, the contemporary educational paradigm has completely changed the perception of the educational process. The emphasis is no longer on cognition, but on the importance of pedagogical interactions and socio-emotional development of children, especially preschool children ([2]). The quality of preschool education refers to the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships, the development of self-esteem, the expression and self-control of emotions, participation in challenging tasks and persistence in tasks, and the adoption of positive attitudes ([3]). A child's cognitive and socio-emotional development are interrelated, i.e., they are mutually dependent ([4]), and the application of a holistic approach to child development is one of the most important prerequisites for high quality early childhood and preschool

care and education ([5]). Pianta and colleagues ([6]) also pointed out that a child's motoric, socio-emotional, and cognitive development are not independent entities, but are involved in organized dynamic processes. This stance underscores the importance of creating positive relationships in the preschool years that will later be reflected at all levels of the child's development. The relationship between a child and an adult (parent, teacher, coach) has an important impact on the development of a child's competencies in preschool as well as in primary and secondary school ([7], [8]). In general, in education, but also in any other relationship, caring and trust are of great importance in creating positive relationships ([9]). Caring and trust are the foundation for building close and emotional relationships between children and early childhood and preschool educators. Numerous previous studies show that high quality relationships with children in an educational context have long-term positive effects on children's socio-emotional and cognitive development, as well as on their academic achievement ([10][11][12][13][14]). Therefore, it is extremely important to focus research on significant correlates and predictors of the student-teacher relationship.

1.1 Student-teacher relationship and early childhood educators' well-being

Positive relationships within any educational group are long-term processes due to a number of factors. Closeness, security and warmth of educators are of utmost importance for building positive relationships with children ([6]), while conflicts with children lead to a demotivating atmosphere within the group and thus have a negative impact on children's well-being. Therefore, positive relationships between educators and children require that the educator has a high level of well-being that enables him or her to be sensitive to the child's needs. Satisfying children's basic needs ensures children's free and spontaneous behavior and unhindered exploration of the environment in which the child is motivated to engage in learning activities ([10][15]). At the same time, the bond that a child builds with the educator is very similar to the bond with his or her primary caregiver ([16]). Through a good interaction between the educator and the child, the educator has the opportunity to get to know and understand the child and to establish and maintain a good relationship, which is crucial for the child's optimal development, especially in the area of attachment development and general socio-emotional development. A good relationship with a teacher has a positive impact on later academic performance. Bilić and Bašić ([17]) pointed out that children who have negative experiences with the teacher participate less in play, while the quality of attachment to the first teacher is the best predictor of the child's perception of the relationship with the teacher and peers at age nine. A positive relationship between educators and children has long-term effects on children's competencies in peer relationships, frustration tolerance, academic achievement, and success ([18]).

In the context of Pianta's systems theory ([10]) and in a previously conducted study, educators were found to have higher levels of closeness to children relative to conflict ([19]). The study showed a negative correlation between closeness and conflict, that is, the greater the closeness between educator and child, the lower the likelihood of conflict in their relationship. In the study conducted by Pianta and Hamre ([18]), a sample of 179 children was observed while attending preschool and eight-year school. The educators assessed the relationship with the child and the child's behavior. During the eight years of school, the child's work habits and behavior were observed. The study revealed that children who exhibited negative behaviors characterized by conflict in the preschool setting had an impact on learning outcomes and behavior in the eight-year school, indicating the aforementioned influence of early experiences on the child's later achievement. Although there are a large number of significant correlates of the student-teacher relationship, this work focuses on the well-being of early childhood educators. Its importance to children's well-being is clear from this simple statement, "*Well teachers, well students*" ([20]). It is operationalized within the framework of three focus variables: educators' life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness. Thus, the competencies of the educator are as important as the kind of person they are, which Hamachek ([21]:209) confirmed with the statement, "*Consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach who we are.*" The so-called personal card or personal characteristics of educators are extremely important in the educational system because they implicitly affect all areas of educational work with children, including the formation of relationships with them, which are often very complex ([22]).

Subjective well-being is determined by an individual's satisfaction with certain areas of his or her life. For example, if a person is satisfied with his life, i.e., with his marriage or his job, it can be assumed that he is satisfied with his life in general. Each person has his/her own assessment of satisfaction, which depends on his/her experiences, values and expectations, and at the same time, (s)he applies his/her own standards by which (s)he evaluates his/her life ([23]). Since the main task of an educator is to build positive relationships with children, it is very important that (s)he is satisfied with his/her life. An educator who is satisfied with his/her life can generate and transmit his/her positive emotions and be empathetic

to children ([24] [25]). A satisfied and good-humored educator will be creative and create a pleasant atmosphere, and all this affects the overall atmosphere in the group, where the child feels comfortable and safe. A high level of educators' satisfaction is crucial for the quality of educational work ([26]). Research has shown that people who are satisfied with their lives have better marriages, have better social relationships, are more resilient, have better emotional relationships, are more stable, and are more efficient at work ([27]). In a study on the relationship between life satisfaction, personality traits, and job burnout in educators (N=295), extraversion and neuroticism were found to have a significant impact on educators' life satisfaction ([28]). Moreover, extraversion was found to have a positive effect on life satisfaction, which was reflected in lower emotional exhaustion among educators. On the other hand, the study showed that neuroticism has a negative effect on educators' life satisfaction, which is reflected in increased emotional exhaustion and negative appraisal of their own performance. Finally, openness and conscientiousness also showed positive effects on life satisfaction. In a study on the relationship between professional and personal well-being of educators ([29]), it was found that participating educators were moderately satisfied with their work and that with increasing length of service and age, their job satisfaction and optimism decreased. Regarding their personal well-being, they showed moderate to high scores for optimism, positive emotions, flow, and life satisfaction. Finally, correlation analyzes revealed significant positive correlations between high levels of all dimensions of personal well-being and high levels of job satisfaction. In addition to the aspects mentioned above, this research also pointed out the importance of the cultural context in which educators live, as well as the specificities of the working conditions and educational system in which educators work professionally, which should be taken into account.

Regarding the variable of optimism, an educator who feels and thinks positively is a good role model for a child who has the opportunity to develop positive thinking. In order to develop positive emotions in the child, the educator should encourage communication with the child to obtain information about the child's feelings and thoughts. The educator respects and understands the child and encourages the development of a positive image of the child. An educator who himself has a high level of optimism and satisfaction with life is capable of these skills. Tatalović Vorkapić and Jelić Puhalo ([26]) found in a sample of N=339 educators that some personality traits are also important to be examined since they showed significant correlations with optimism, hope and life satisfaction. High scores on all personality traits (except neuroticism) and high levels of optimism in educators positively correlated with hope and life satisfaction. In addition, all personality traits were found to be positively correlated with hope, optimism, and life satisfaction (except neuroticism). Extraversion was also found to be negatively correlated with age and work experience. The study also found that hope was not related to educators' socio-demographic characteristics and that optimism and life satisfaction were not related to age.

Finally, happiness, defined as a personal assessment of a life filled with pleasant feelings ([23]), is extremely important for educators in forming relationships with children. Happiness is largely determined by the person themselves, their perspective on life, and their own actions. In addition to one's own activity, happiness is also determined by genetic and environmental factors ([30]). An individual is happy when his or her life is filled with happy moments, and happiness is often measured by the number of happy and unhappy moments in life. Numerous studies show that the happiness of the educator determines the happiness of the child, which in turn affects the child's academic success ([31]). A happy educator will transfer his positive emotions to the child and accordingly develop a positive climate in his group. Positive emotions create a pleasant atmosphere in which the child feels relaxed and safe. Therefore, it is understandable that the educator's overall well-being, as evidenced by his or her life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness, will have a significant impact on the quality of the student-teacher relationship.

2 RESEARCH AIM, TASKS AND HYPOTHESES

Considering the obvious lack of similar research, both in Croatia and in other countries around the world, and taking into account the significant influence of educators' well-being on the quality of student-teacher relationships, it is extremely important to analyze the mentioned variables and their interrelationships. Therefore, the main objective of this work was to investigate the role of educators' well-being in their relationship with the children they work with. Thus, there are three research tasks related to this main objective: (a) the analysis of descriptive parameters of educators' well-being (life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness) and their relationship with children (closeness and conflict); (b) the analysis of the relationship between educators' well-being (life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness) and their relationship with children (closeness and conflict); and (c) the analysis of the predictive power of educators' well-being (life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness) on the quality of the student-teacher relationship (closeness and conflict). All these analyzes take into account the relevance of some socio-demographic

variables such as age, gender, and diversity of children, as well as the age of educators and the estimated level of workload with children. It was expected that a medium to high level of educators' well-being and their closeness to children (with a lower level of conflict with children) would be found. In addition, it is expected that there is a positive relationship between educators' well-being and their closeness to children, and that educators' well-being is a significant predictor of their relationship with children.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

Thirty-two educators (all female) with an average age of $M=43.60$ years ($SD=11.39$) and an average work experience of $M=19.02$ years ($SD=12.08$) completed a self-assessment of their well-being. They also assessed their relationship with children from their kindergarten groups on a total sample of 603 children (331 boys and 272 girls) with an average age of $M=4.96$ years ($SD=1.15$). Fourteen of them had developmental difficulties (e.g., difficulties related to autism, Down syndrome, hearing, physical, and sensory difficulties). The kindergarten teachers rated the workload with the children lower ($M=3.91$, $SD=1.02$), i.e. the higher value meant lower level of work difficulties. Cities and kindergartens from two counties in Croatia were selected based on previous collaboration within university project on childhood transitions at Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka and represent a non-random sample of educators and children.

3.2 Measures & Procedure

The relationship between educators and children was operationalized and measured using the Student-Teacher Relationship scale and its two aspects - closeness and conflict. Educator well-being was defined by life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness, so the self-report scales described here were used in this study. The main purpose of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS, ([32]) is to measure the student-teacher relationship on two previously mentioned main dimensions: Closeness and Conflict. This scale is used by kindergarten teachers who rated their relationship with children using 15 items on a five-point Likert scale (from 1=*do not agree at all* to 5=*agree completely*). The closeness subscale includes 7 items (e.g. "*I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child*") and the conflict subscale includes 8 items (e.g. "*This child easily becomes angry at me*"). This scale was validated in Croatia ([19]) and showed satisfactory psychometric properties, similar to the original research ([32]), which was also confirmed in this study (Cronbach's alphas for: closeness $\alpha = .81$ and for conflict $\alpha = .85$).

Life satisfaction of the educators was measured using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) ([33]), which was adapted to the Croatian language ([23]). The educators were instructed to rate the satisfaction with their own lives, taking into account their personal criteria, using five items (item example: "*My living conditions are excellent*") on the same 5-point Likert scale. The calculated Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .86$) confirmed the previously determined high reliability of this scale ([33]). To measure educators' optimism, Scheier and Carver's ([34] [35]) measure of dispositional optimism, the Life Orientation Test (LOT-R), was used in its adapted version ([23]). It contains 6 items (item example: "*I am always optimistic about my future*") where educators also rate their optimism on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .82$, confirming its reliability from the original research ([34] [35]). Finally, educator satisfaction was measured using the Subjective Happiness Scale ([36]), which was translated and adapted into Croatian ([23]). This scale aims to capture the affective component of the individual's happiness in life using four simple statements (negative and positive form) (item example: "*In general, I consider myself: not a very happy person 1 2 3 4 5 a very happy person*"). This scale also showed a satisfactory reliability level Cronbach Alpha ($\alpha = .80$) in this study.

In order to maintain a high level of research ethics, the principles of anonymity and confidentiality of the data were ensured during the study, as codes were used for the kindergarten teachers who agreed to participate in the study after they had given their signed consent to be contacted. In addition, they were instructed to use their own coding system for the children they assessed, so that only they, and not the researcher, knew their identities. After data collection, the scales were tested for reliability, and then descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses were conducted using SPSS 22 software.

4 RESULTS

Bootstrapping (for a 95% confidence interval) was performed before each analysis because it allows for more accurate calculations, as this study used a small sample of educators that may not be fully representative of the population. The results and related discussion were structured according to the three research tasks formulated in the previous section.

4.1 Descriptive parameters of student-teacher relationship and early childhood educators' well-being

As might be expected, the results obtained showed higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict between the kindergarten teachers and the preschool-aged children with whom they worked in the kindergartens (Table 1). These findings confirmed earlier findings from previous studies ([19] [32] [37] [38] [39]). The observed high level of closeness and low level of conflict in the relationship with the children is a highly satisfactory result, considering the importance of the quality of this relationship. Research by Jerome and colleagues ([11]) and Choi and Dobbs-Oates ([40]) addressed the relationship between educator and child in kindergarten/school and found that the greatest closeness exists at kindergarten age, confirming the high level of closeness found in this study. The findings suggest that educators know or are able to form close relationships with children, which is extremely important because early relationships largely determine a child's development and success later in life ([6] [10]). Pianta and Hamre ([18]) confirmed in their research that children who had negative experiences characterized by conflict in preschool had lower achievement during the eight years of schooling, suggesting the great importance of the quality of the student-teacher relationship.

Table 1. Descriptive parameters (Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges) for two STSR-dimensions closeness and conflict in the relationship between early childhood educators and children, and for three variables of early childhood educators' well-being: life satisfaction, optimism and happiness

<i>Variables</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Students-teacher relationship	Closeness	4.20	.67	1.14-5
	Conflict	1.9	.83	1-4.71
Early childhood educators' well-being	Life satisfaction	3.83	.73	2.40-5
	Optimism	2.94	1.16	1.33-5
	Happiness	4.12	.79	2-5

In addition, educators rated their optimism as moderate and their life satisfaction and happiness as slightly higher. The results found were also as expected and satisfactory, since the positive characteristics of the educators were of great importance in shaping the relationships with the children, the atmosphere in the group and their influence on the well-being of the children. Indeed, children spend a large number of hours with educators every day, and thus a large part of their lives in the first years of life, which means that educators strongly shape their lives, consciously or unconsciously. The unconscious, implicit part of education and teaching actually has the greatest influence. For this reason, it is important that educators possess high levels of happiness, optimism, and life satisfaction. These qualities are certainly associated with a positive atmosphere in the group and, consequently, with better child development, motivated learning, and a strengthened sense of security ([26]). Numerous studies indicated that educator satisfaction is positively related to child satisfaction, resulting in higher academic achievement among children ([11]).

4.2 The relationship between student-teacher relationship and early childhood educators' well-being

Table 2 shows the calculated Pearson correlation coefficients (bold are those that are statistically significant at 5% and 1%) between the student-teacher relationship variables (closeness and conflict), educator well-being (life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness), and socio-demographic variables (age, gender, diversity, workload, and work experience). As expected, conflict and closeness showed a significant negative correlation, i.e., the closer the relationship was rated, educators reported the less conflict in relation to their relationships with children. This finding confirmed previous findings ([19] [32]

[38] [39]). As for the relationship between student-teacher relationship variables and educators' well-being, it can be stated that a significant relationship was found, especially significant for the dimension of conflict. The educators' assessments of being less satisfied with life, less optimistic, and less happy are significantly correlated with higher levels of conflict with the children. This is an understandable and expected finding, given that people who are rated lower in well-being are more likely to report conflict in their relationships. On the other hand, there are no significant correlations between closeness and educators' well-being except in relation to their happiness. In other words, educators who are less happy are closer to their children in the group. This is a very interesting result in terms of educator happiness, as it shows the same level and direction of correlation between happiness and two rather opposite dimensions of the student-teacher relationship. Nevertheless, this finding could be explained by the fact that educators who are less happy overall focus more on compensatory emotional relationships within their work and build closer relationships with children. However, this is a very rare study not only in Croatia but worldwide, so it strongly recommended to run similar research in the future. Moreover, educators who perceived their work as more difficult were significantly more likely to estimate higher levels of conflict and lower levels of closeness with children. Closer relationships with children are significantly associated with girls and children without special needs. On the other hand, more conflictual relationships with children are significantly associated with boys and children with special needs. Finally, older educators and educators with more professional experience estimated higher levels of conflictual relationships with children, which was also found in previous studies ([19] [38] [39]).

Table 2. Pearson's correlation coefficients with significance levels between student-teacher relationship variables (closeness and conflict), early childhood educators' well-being (life satisfaction, optimism and happiness) and socio-demographic variables (age, gender, diversity, workload and work experience)

Variables	Closeness	Conflict
Conflict	-.420**	
Life satisfaction	-.066	-.200**
Optimism	.044	-.112*
Happiness	-.115**	-.160**
Children's gender	.199**	-.181**
Children's age	.058	.024
Workload	.399**	-.595**
1=no 2=yes (diversity)	-.144**	.153**
Educators' age	.006	.167**
Educators' work experience	.032	.180**

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

4.3 The predictive role of early childhood educators' well-being for student-teacher relationship

To analyze the third research question, related to the predictive power of educators' well-being (life satisfaction, optimism, and happiness) for the quality of student-teacher relationships (closeness and conflict), a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted and the results are presented in Table 3. In general, teachers' life satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of conflict and their happiness was found to be a significant predictor of closeness. In addition, in the second steps of two regression analyses, it was found that the rating of the workload (for both relationship domains) and the gender of the children (for closeness only) were also significant predictors.

Table 3. Results of hierarchical regression analysis of student-teacher relationship (closeness and conflict) as criterion variables and early childhood educators' well-being (life satisfaction, optimism and happiness) (Model 1) and socio-demographic variables (Model 2) as predictors

		Predictors' variables	B	Beta	R R ² ΔR ²	F change (df)
Closeness as criterion variable	Model 1	Constant	4.597		.136*	3.328* (3, 530)
		Life satisfaction	.005	.005	.018*	
		Optimism	.014	.025	.013*	
		Happiness	-.109**	-.134**		
	Model 2	Constant	4.252		.464***	21.896*** (3, 524)
		Life satisfaction	-.038	-.041	.215***	
		Optimism	.010	.017	.202***	
		Happiness	-.116**	-.143**		
		Children's gender	.123*	.092*		
		Children's age	.014	.024		
		Children's diversity	-.271	-.063		
		Workload	.250***	.387***		
		Educators' age	-.014	-.244		
Educators' work experience	.012	.210				
Conflict as criterion variable	Model 1	Constant	2.988		.219***	8.319*** (3, 494)
		Life satisfaction	-.138*	-.121*	.048***	
		Optimism	-.057	-.080	.042***	
		Happiness	-.096	-.091		
	Model 2	Constant	3.647		.620***	44.529*** (3, 488)
		Life satisfaction	-.104	-.091	.385***	
		Optimism	-.030	-.043	.374***	
		Happiness	.045	.042		
		Children's gender	-.051	-.031		
		Children's age	.009	.013		
		Children's diversity	.170	.033		
		Workload	-.460***	-.565***		
		Educators' age	.002	.027		
Educators' work experience	.006	.093				

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Although the main effect of Model 1 was significant in the analysis of possible predictors of proximity, it explained only 2% of the total variance. Happiness proved to be a significant predictor, providing only 1% of the individual contribution to the prediction of closeness. However, in Model 2, the explanation of the total variance is much larger, 22%, which is due to the benefit of socio-demographic variables, especially workload and the gender of the children. In addition to happiness, which provides 1% of the individual contribution, workload contributed 14% and gender of children 1%. All other variables contributed 6%, but their contribution was not significant. As for the analysis of the predictors of conflict in the student-teacher relationship, Model 1 explained 5% and Model 2 38% of the total variance. According to Model 1, educators' life satisfaction was found to make 1% of the individual contribution to predicting conflict, which was similar to the results for predicting closeness through happiness. In Model 2, it was found that the only significant contribution was the difficulty of the job - it predicted 31% of the conflict in the relationship with the children individually. In general, the results showed that some variables of educators' well-being (more specifically, happiness for closeness and life satisfaction for conflict), workload and children's gender were significant in predicting the student-teacher relationship. However, the predictive power was much stronger for workload, which also had significant correlations with life satisfaction ($r = .146$, $p < 0.01$), happiness ($r = .152$, $p < 0.01$), and children's gender ($r = .267$,

$p < .01$). In other words, educators who estimated high levels of life satisfaction and happiness also estimated lower levels of workload, which were also lower for girls (and higher for boys). Thus, when interpreting and discussing these results, it is important to keep in mind that the influence of educators' well-being on their relationship with children is probably not direct, but indirect, through workload, which should be tested as a model in future studies. Finally, the results obtained should be understood in the context of the importance of improving student-teacher relationships through lifelong learning programs and study programs to enhance educators' well-being.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Although this study has certain limitations, such as a small number of educators who participated in the study and non-random subjects, which reduces its representativeness, it is one of the few studies conducted in our country. In general, while happiness and life satisfaction have been found to play an important role in predicting the student-teacher relationship, it is clear that educators' perception of workload was much stronger predictors of both relationship dimensions: Closeness and Conflict. Thus, this implies that educators' well-being is indirectly, rather than directly, related to their relationship with children, so further studies should focus on educators' working conditions and other variables related to perceptions of workload. However, because of the highly significant relationship between workload and educator well-being, it is very important to further explore these complex relationships within the student-teacher relationship. Previous studies have clearly shown the importance of educators' well-being effect on the quality of their work with children ([20] [29] [32] [39]), which was also confirmed in this study, and further research should take a holistic approach and examine all related variables. Finally, it is very important to emphasize the interesting relationship between happiness, conflict and closeness, which should definitely be further explored in future research studies, and in greater depth.

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