



Growing Up in Italy

Changes Over Time of Children and Adolescents
Wellbeing: New Findings from the
Longitudinal Study “Crescere” and their Use at
Different Levels

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Fondazione
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and cultural initiatives, to the benefit of society*

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UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

CRESCERE : the study

WHAT?

CRESCERE («growing up» in Italian) is a longitudinal study coordinated by Fondazione Zancan and supported by Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Padova e Rovigo.

WHO?

It involves a sample of children and families in Northern Italy.

HOW?

Children are monitored over time, from 12 y.o. up to 18 y.o.

Boys and girls have been directly addressed and asked about their point of view.



CRESCERE : goals

The study aims to understand how children grow up and develop in their critical transition from childhood to adulthood, and to identify the factors that promote well-being and positive development

It is aimed at supporting parents, teachers, social workers, policy makers and all people that accompany children and adolescents in their developmental tasks.



The milestones of the study

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- ...

IDEA

PLANNING

NETWORK AND COLLABORATIONS

TOOLS

CONTACTS WITH FAMILIES

INVOLVEMENT OF FAMILIES

1° WAVE
DATA COLLECTION

2° WAVE
DATA COLLECTION

3° WAVE
DATA COLLECTION

4° WAVE
DATA COLLECTION

5° WAVE
DATA COLLECTION



ANALYSIS OF DATA

«CRESCERE» IN
THE SCHOOLS

RESULTS
PRESENTATIONS

...



STUDIO «CRESCERE» Il progetto della fondazione Zancan a un anno dal via

Il mondo visto dagli adolescenti

«Non è facile capire cosa succede ai nostri ragazzi oggi, come vivono, come sentono, come affrontano le sfide della vita, come vedono il loro futuro... spiega il direttore della Fondazione Zancan, Tiziana Vecchiato - Il mio generazione per molti versi speciale. Vive in un mondo di mutamenti accelerati dalle innovazioni tecnologiche, con prospettive lavorative incerte e confonde e talvolta poco chiare. Non possiamo lasciarci alle spalle, rinunciando a comprenderne il presente e il futuro che vorrebbero. Non possiamo incontrarci con sicurezza che ci allontanano da loro. Per questo nasce lo studio «Crescere»».

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Lo studio «Crescere» è un lavoro di rete che la Zancan sta realizzando con il contributo e la collaborazione con il Dr. Leo Fendi e la Fondazione Città della Speranza, Bergamo e Opera Insieme - una consorzio di iniziative che ha ottenuto il patrocinio dell'Ente di Padova per il rafforzamento e l'adozione dell'attività del pubblico lavoro dei minori del Tribunale. Allo studio aderiscono inoltre gli enti locali competenti del territorio e, a Padova, l'Università Ca' Foscari per il monitoraggio continuo del partecipanti.

Target of the study

The longitudinal study involves a sample of about **1.000 children** and their families. We are following a sample of 400 from 12 y.o. (born in 2001). Other 600 boys and girls have been added thanks to the collaboration of some high schools. We'll observe them until 18 y.o.

Methodology: structural interviews, self-administered questionnaires, open questions for qualitative analysis.



The research in detail

Research areas

- Sport and leisure time
- Internet and social network
- Life in family: dialogue with parents, attachment, family support
- Attitude toward school, motivation, concentration, learning, performance
- Relationships with friends, schoolmates and teachers
- Bullying
- Health and diet
- Use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs
- Strengths and difficulties
- Self-esteem
- Spirituality
- Life style and values
- Satisfaction for life and well-being
- What is important for happiness

Tools

- IPPA Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment
- U-MICS Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale
- AMOS for skills and motivation at school
- Zimet Scale of Perceived Family Support
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
- Andrews-Withey Faces Scale
- Big Five Questionnaire
- SDQ Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
- IPAQ International Physical Activity Questionnaires.
- HBSC Health Behavior in School-aged Children
- WVS World Values Survey
- Istat - Multipurpose survey on households: aspects of daily life

Some of the changes observed in the target over time ...

Wellbeing

Internet

Self-esteem

Family

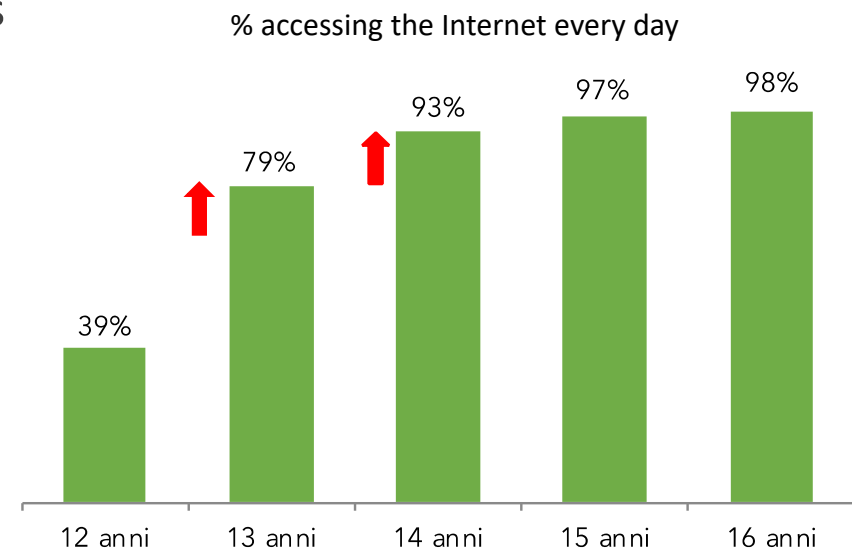
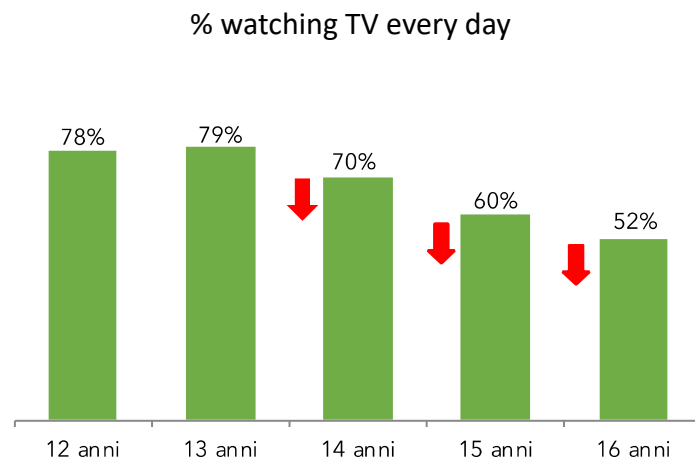
School

TV and the internet



Over a 5-year period:

- Decrease in the percentage of youth watching television every day
- Increase in the percentage of youth using the Internet every day
- Increase in the use of social networks

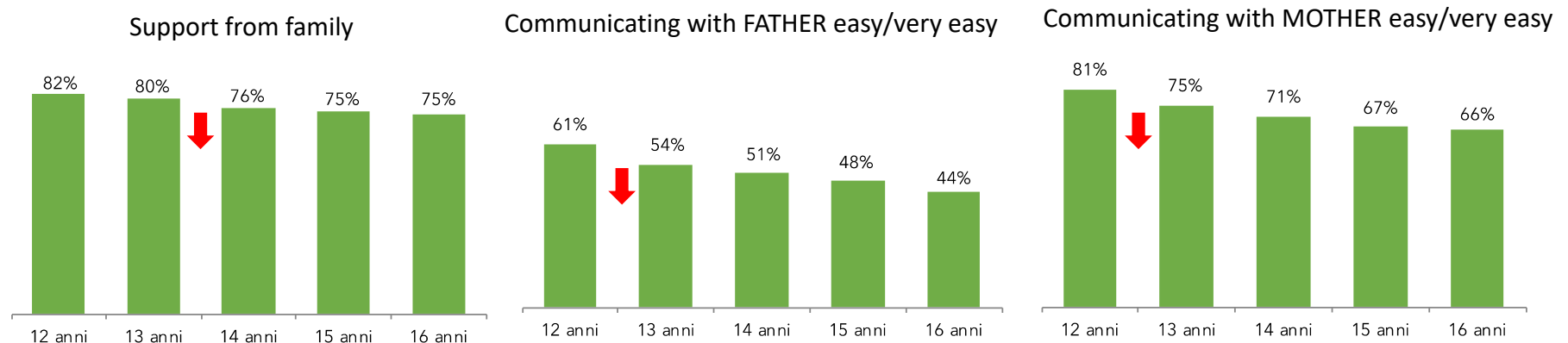


The role of the family



From 12 to 16 years old:

- Decrease in the support children feel from their family, especially from 13 to 14 years, thereafter it remains constant
- Communication with father and mother becomes more difficult, especially from 13 to 14 years



Should we be worried about this? No, it is part of the normal growth path, as shown also by other longitudinal studies (e.g. De Goede I.H.A., Branje S.J.T. and Meeus W.H.J., 2009)

School over time

From 12 to 16 years old:

- Relationships with classmates remain positive
- Confidence in teachers decreases

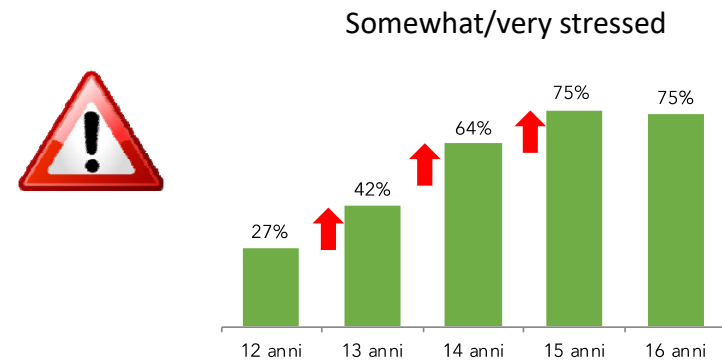
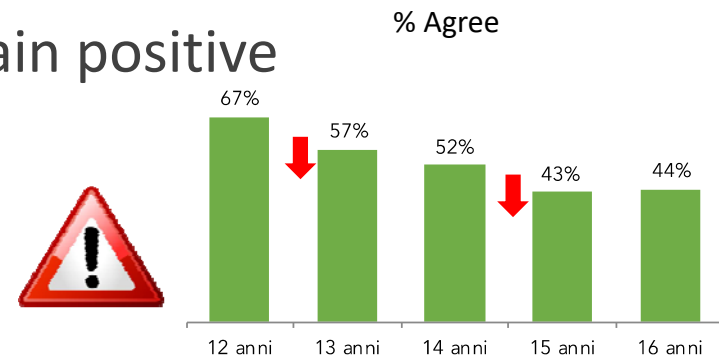
“Teachers treat us in the right way”

from 67% to 44%

- Perceived stress increases

“very stressed”: from 4% to 20%

“somewhat”: from 23% to 55%



Motivation to study, concentration, attitude towards school (QAS, AMOS)

Over time, **motivation** towards studying remains at an average level, but constantly decreasing

- increase in the tendency to putting effort only into **interesting** tasks
- decrease in the effort put into the most **difficult** tasks
- increase in tendency to study the **least necessary** to get minimum sufficient scores

Constant decrease in the ability to remove **sources of distraction** while studying

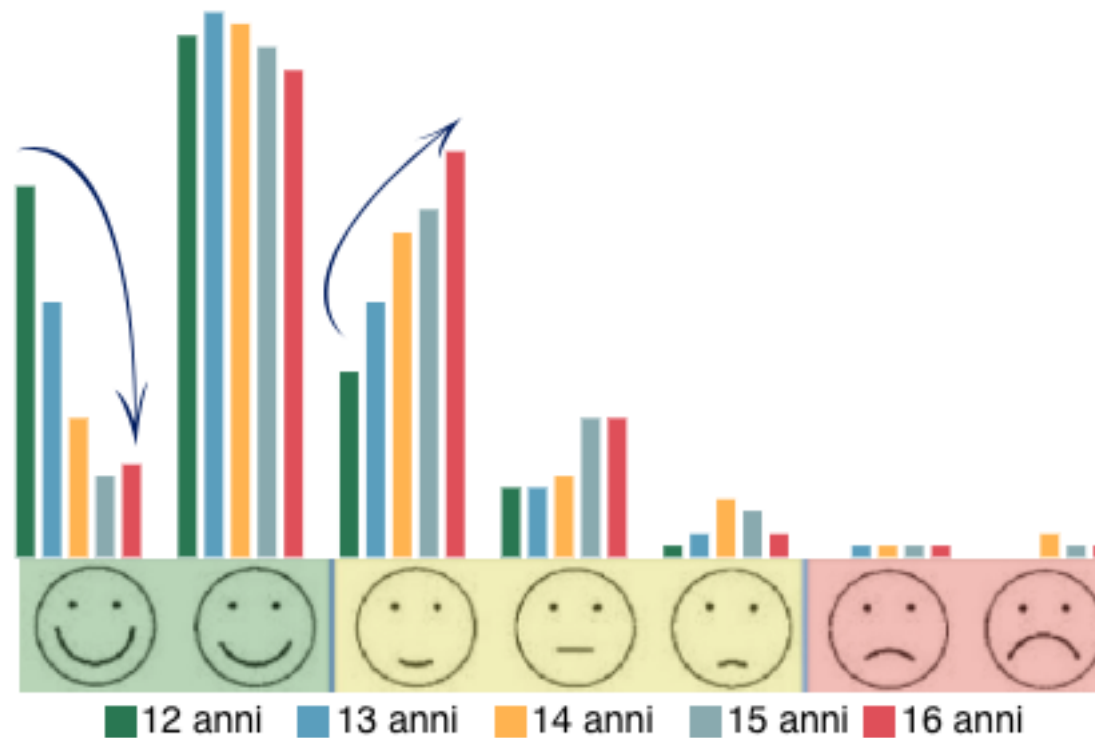
Variables concerning the attitude towards school exhibit a **critical evolution**

- decrease in considering **school** as a **pleasant place**
- decrease in the perceived **usefulness** of **school teachings**
- decrease in the perceived **understanding and help from teachers**

Happiness and wellbeing

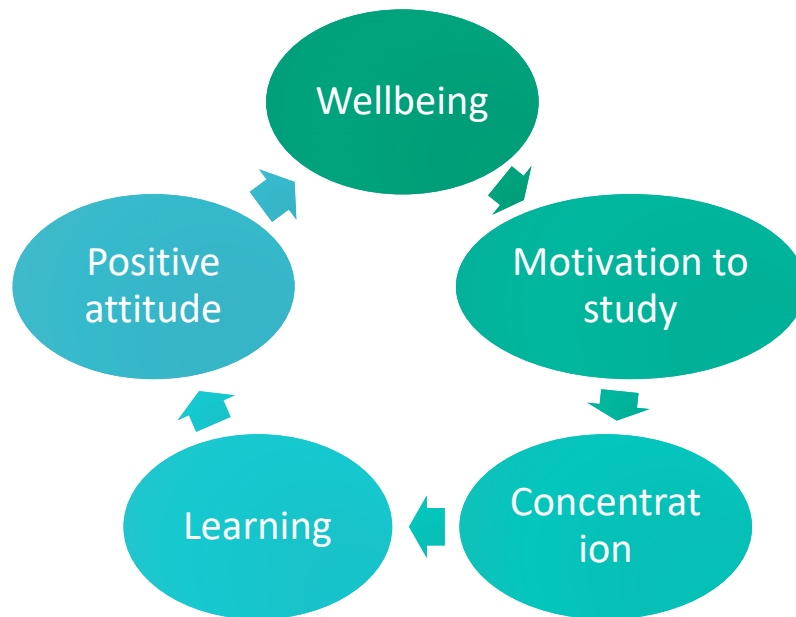
“How do you feel about your life as a whole?” (Faces Scale, Andrew-Whitey, 1976)

Look at the expression of these faces and choose the one that best represents your current level of happiness.



Tips for teachers

A virtuous circle: wellbeing at school and school success feed into each other



- Motivation, concentration and positive attitude towards school are positively correlated with each other (> motivation, > concentration, > wellbeing at school)
- Positive correlation with school success (scores)

In particular, factors correlated with attitude towards school are: relationships with teachers (*“Feeling treated in the right way”*); perceived family support; relationships with friends; gender (girls have higher level of motivation, concentration and positive attitude)

The role of teachers

- To foster **motivation**, the most correlated factor is the relationship with teachers “*feeling treated in the right way*”
- Then, support from family (mother), family stability
- Time spent watching the TV, relationships with friends

Tab. 2 – Parametri del modello di regressione lineare multivariato - motivazione allo studio

	Coefficienti non standardizzati		Coefficienti standardizzati	t	Significatività
	B	Errore std.	Beta		
(Costante)	9,467	0,977		9,690	0,000
Rapporto con insegnanti	2,271	0,414	0,242	5,485	0,000
Supporto familiare	0,381	0,164	0,127	2,326	0,020
Ore tv	-,279	0,112	-,106	-2,499	0,013
Instabilità familiare	-1,264	0,407	-,131	-3,104	0,002
Attaccamento alla madre	0,412	0,197	0,115	2,088	0,037
Attaccamento agli amici	0,279	0,130	0,093	2,141	0,033
Livello istruzione madre	0,296	0,147	0,084	2,004	0,046

Barbero Vignola, G. and Duca, V., 2014, *Stare bene a scuola, apprendere e crescere in modo positivo*, in «Studi Zancan» no. 6/2014

The role of family ...

- We asked children to describe the relationship with parents through the short version of IPPA - Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg 1987): 12 items concerning communication, trust and alienation
- We also used the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in order to assess the support provided, in particular the subscale referring to family (Zimet et al. 1988)

... to promote wellbeing

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between well-being and family support (Pearson Corr. =0.400, Sign<0.001): the children who feel more supported by their families express a higher level of happiness
- Also dialogue and positive relationships with parents support the well-being. The correlation is significant for both IPPA father (Sign <0.001) and IPPA mother (Sign <0.001)

Multiple linear regression model

Dependent variable: Well-being

parameter	B	Std.Error	t	Sign.	95% Confidence interval	
					lower bound	upper bound
(Constant)	3.040	0.409	7.441	0.000	2.238	3.843
Gender	0.128	0.082	1.558	0.120	-0.034	0.290
Citizenship	0.199	0.152	1.313	0.190	-0.099	0.497
Brothers/sisters	-0.087	0.103	-0.841	0.401	-0.289	0.116
Family instability	0.023	0.170	0.138	0.890	-0.311	0.358
Ippa father	0.153	0.062	2.481	0.013	0.032	0.274
Ippa mother	-0.155	0.079	-1.952	0.052	-0.310	0.001
Ippa friends	0.107	0.052	2.037	0.042	0.004	0.210
Family Support	0.228	0.067	3.394	0.001	0.096	0.360
Self-esteem	0.057	0.010	5.904	0.000	0.038	0.076

R- squared = 0.218 (adjusted R-squared = 0.203)

... to support self-esteem

Over the 5-year period of observation we observe a decrease in the average level of self-esteem of the children/adolescents (T-Test, $p < 0,001$) [Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale]. In the 3rd wave (15 y.o.): differences on average became stronger and significant (T-test, $p < 0.01$) by gender: males express higher levels than females

- Adolescents who claim to have a good relationship with their father express a higher level of self-confidence (Pearson Corr. = 0.402, Sign < 0.001)
- Idem for the attachment with the mother: if there is confidence, communication and respect, the self-esteem of the children is higher (Corr. = 0.394, Sign < 0.001)

Dependent variable: Self-Esteem

parameter	B	Std.Error	t	Sign.	95% Confidence interval	
					lower bound	upper bound
intercept	3.159	1.892	1.670	0.096	-0.559	6.877
[Gender=M]	0.851	0.393	2.166	0.031	0.079	1.623
[Citizenship =IT]	-1.331	0.724	-1.838	0.067	-2.755	0.092
[Brothers/Sisters=NO]	-0.186	0.494	-0.376	0.707	-1.157	0.785
[Fam. instability =NO]	-0.484	0.815	-0.594	0.553	-2.085	1.118
lppa father	0.973	0.292	3.337	0.001	0.400	1.546
lppa mother	1.191	0.376	3.170	0.002	0.453	1.929
lppa friends	1.214	0.245	4.964	0.000	0.733	1.694
Family Support	0.793	0.320	2.479	0.014	0.164	1.421

R-squared = 0.257 (adjusted R-squared = 0.244)

Multiple linear regression model

Tips for parents

The data highlight the importance of family relationships:

- having good communication with father and mother
- being accepted as they are
- feel protected and safe

are all factors that help adolescents to strengthen their self-esteem and well-being.

The **role of father** is relevant: dialogue is more difficult with him and more able to influence the emotional state of adolescents.

Tips for adolescents

«Growing up from 12 to 16 years of age, adolescents acquire **greater awareness of themselves**, of their won strengths but also waeknesses.

Moreover, **shifting** from middle school to **high school** implies considerable work on their concept of themselves.

All of these aspects push adolescents to question themselves, losing their previous certainties, and may be the basis of the decline in the levels of wellbeing.»

Barbero Vignola, G. and Crocetti E., 2017, Adolescenti che cambiano tra relazioni familiari e autostima: una lettura positiva, in «Studi Zancan» no. 4/2017

The virtuous cycle of wellbeing

The wellbeing expressed by children/adolescents is positively correlated with:

- their level of self-esteem and confidence,
- support they receive from their family,
- the quality of communication and relationships with their parents,
- positive relationships with friends and classmates,
- wellbeing at school.

A service for the territory

The study addresses diverse audiences.

For parents, the results are a valuable tool for understanding adolescent development pathways, for comparing and supporting their children's growth.

The adolescents involved **appreciate that someone cares about them**, the survey questions make them reflect on important issues, helping them to improve themselves.

The schools involved have access to a valuable data base to share with their students, which they can use to highlight critical aspects, potential, changes over time.

The data help municipalities to understand the needs of young people living in their areas, and are a tool for designing social policies.

Experts' insights are a tool for educators, psychologists, trainers, animators and all those who accompany teenagers in the process of growth.

For further information:



www.crescerebene.org

www.researchgate.net/project/Longitudinal-study-CRESCERE

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