Gender and Happiness in Italy

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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is the analysis of gender differences in the determinants of happiness -"the meaning of which everybody knows but the definition of which nobody can give". The study focuses on how the three roles - partner, parent and worker - affect the level of happiness, board on *European Social Survey* (ESS) 2002/2003 data, in Italy.

Results show the strong effect of civil status, health, interpersonal relationship, religiousness, satisfaction with own country situation, area of residence, and income on individual happiness. Considering men and women separately the outcome pattern of happiness seems to be different: women happiness is affected by the educational level, marital status, and social interaction while men happiness depends mainly on occupational status. The interaction of the three main roles has no effect for men while it has for women. Thus, results show interesting gender differences in the determinants of happiness.

INTRODUCTION

The words happiness, wellbeing, and satisfaction are commonly used and they refer to an objective condition. The word wellbeing can be referred to different aspects of the life: economic wellbeing, body wellbeing and so on. At the same time we can identify situation that are source of satisfaction. While it is not so easy define the meaning of happiness: "the meaning of which everybody knows but the definition of which nobody can give" [H. M. Jones, cited in Lyubomirsky 2001]. It is not referred to specific objective conditions so everyone gives a different definition and has a different idea of happiness.

Different studies have showed how people consider the search of happiness as the main life objective, but many people do not act in a compatible way with happiness. This means that there are individuals which look at the world positively: they appreciate themselves, the others, they are satisfied with what they have instead of be unsatisfied with what they do not have; on the contrary there are individuals which have a realistic vision of the world, who are chronically unhappy [Lyubomorisky, 2001].

According to the Italian philosopher Galimberti "happiness is an aim condition which is accessible to every human being independently from his wealth, social condition, intellectual capabilities, health conditions. Happiness is the main purpose of the human life, the existential conditions desired by all humans but that often cannot be reached […] it mainly depends on the full acceptance of oneself […] and on the realization of desires that many times are formulated without any kind of careful for one' own capabilities and possibilities of realization"; the same concept expressed by Aristotle with the words "right measure". Galimberti's definition of happiness is confirmed by the fact that the improvement in economic and social wellbeing does

not match with the improvement in individual wellbeing [Campbell, 1981; Myers, 2000; Diener and Suh, 1997], showing an apparent independency between context and happiness.

If it is not easy find out the theoretical definition of happiness, practically people coming from different countries and cultures consider similar determinants. A study conduct by Cantril [1965], in 14 countries with different cultural models and different stage of socio-economic development, shows how asking about what people want out of life the 75% answer with material circumstance, the 50% with family concerns, the 30% with one's personal or family health, the 10% with one's work and personal character. Similar results are showed in different studies [Andrews and Withey, 1976; Campbell and alt. 1976; Campbell, 1981; Veroff and alt., 1981; Fordice, 1988], showing how although each individual is free to define happiness, in practice the kinds of things chiefly cited as shaping happiness are for most people much the same. [Easterlin, 2001].

Many studies have analyzed whether respondents report their true feelings and the possible biases resulting from the context in which the question is asked [Diener, 1984; Veenhoven, 1993]. The conclusion of such assessment is that subjective indicators (like the personal evaluation of happiness) do reflect respondents' feelings [Diener, 1984; Easterlin, 2001].

The goals of this work are the analysis of the determinants of happiness, and the study of happiness levels determined by own "self". The self has been conceptualized [Thoits, 1986] as a set of social identities, where identities refer to positional designation assigned by others and individually accepted, at which are attached a set of normative behavioural expectations and roles [Linton 1936; Merton, 1957]. In particular we are interested in the analysis of gender differences since in literature does not exist a wide analysis of happiness factors from a gender point of view.

From the past to the present: the evolution of happiness and its psychological approach

Following the development of the modern world it is evident how people nowadays live in a comfort world. In accordance with the psychologist Buss [2000] the world changes from a life made of difficulties towards a condition of increasing wellbeing. Modern living has brought a bounty of benefits to present day humans (i.e. medical technology); at the same time, modern times have produced a variety of ills (i.e. respiratory illness, environmental problems).

Moreover while ancestral humans lived in extended social network, modern humans live in relative anonymity and isolated nuclear families depriving people of the intimate social support that would have characterized ancestral conditions [Nesse & Willimas, 1994]. Although, while in the past humans fought for survival and the research of food for the numerous members of the family, today humans live in a individualistic society in which the main objective is self-fulfilment [Buss, 2000].

Again, in accordance with Buss [1988, 2000], it is reasonable to speculate that these large discrepancies create unanticipated psychological problems and reduce quality of life.

Many studies try to answer questions such as:

Why do wellbeing and mental health decrease if wealth and comfort increase? [Campbell, 1981; Myers, 2000]?

Why the better economic and health condition is not followed by a happiness increase [Diener and Suh, 1997]?

Why do not the easier access to education, information, and communication produce happier people [Abbe, Tkach, Lyubomirsky, 2003]?

We can make some hypothesis able to explain these apparent contradictions. First of all the improvement in life conditions involve an increase in individual needs so people are not satisfied with what they have. Our second remark is referred to the social system in which individuals are living. Life in the past was a daily bit so that any individual action out of a collective project (and out of accordance with the extent family and intergenerational equilibrium) was a no-sense [Pinnelli, 1997-98]; while, nowadays, life is based on individualistic attitude and own personal realization. Individuals have to compete with others to be satisfied with their own life, making it harder to reaching happiness everyday.

From this point of view, in which we have underlined some interesting aspects of the relation between happiness and kind of society (as well as time) we pass to the individual approach to happiness. In fact in daily life we can enter in contact with two different kinds of individuals: people who are happy, even in adverse circumstances or hard time, and people who are chronically unhappy [Lyubomirsky, 2001]. This is due to the fact that people interpret in an active mode to the circumstance they live [Abbe, Tkach, Lyubomirsky, 2003].

Wrongly we could think that the objective world of unhappy people is different from the objective world of happy people, while the reality is that happy people and unhappy people live similar events but the reaction to these events is different: happy people interpret events and situations stimulating positive feeling [Abbe, Tkach, Lyubomirsky, 2003]. Briefly we can identify two different decisional strategy: to find out the best possible alternative (*maximizing approach*) vs. to find out the acceptable alternative (*satisficing approach*). Different studies show how the maximizing approach is negatively associated with happiness [Schwartz and alt., 2002]. The difference between happy and unhappy people is that once they take a decision, the first ones stop thinking about the possible options they had [Abbe, Tkach, Lyubomirsky, 2003].

This approach considers that happiness depends on individual characteristics (genetic factors count for 50%) [Likken and Tallegen, 1996] more than socio-demographic individual characteristics (counting for 8-15% of happiness variability) [Diener et al., 1999; Lyubomirsky and Ross, 1999].

Happiness and its components: economic, demographic and social aspects

Up to now we have considered the psychological approach to happiness. All the psychological mechanisms are extremely interesting, but if they were absolutely true there should exist any kind of population heterogeneity due to economic, social or demographic characteristics. Many researchers (economists, demographers, sociologists) have analyzed the relation between happiness and economic social and demographic conditions.

There are four relations that are considered fundamental: i) happiness and marriage; ii) happiness and children; iii) happiness and income; iv) happiness and roles.

i) Marriage is considered the main institution that affects individual life and happiness. Nevertheless the relation between happiness and marriage is extremely complex [Williams, 1988]. Different studies underline ho wmarried people are happier and more satisfied than never married people, which are happier than divorced people [Botwin, Buss and Shackelfors, 1997; Glenn and Weaver, 1979; Argyle, 2001; Clark and Oswald, 2002; Diener and alt. 1999; Waite and Gallagher, 2000]. In fact, marriage satisfy human needs; it is source of company, intimacy and reciprocal support; it helps the increase the individual level of self-esteem as well as favouring better health condition and minor level of mortality [Campbell and alt. 1976; Glenn, 1975; Gove 1979; Williams, 1988; Waite and Gallagher, 2000; Lamb, Lee, DeMaris, 2003]. However it is not clear if the advantage of married people towards unmarried people is due to the beneficial effect of marriage or to the effect of selection within the marriage market between the more psychological healthy people [Glenn and Weaver, 1988; Gove et al. 1990; Lamb, Lee, DeMaris, 2003; Waite and Gallagher, 2000]. Nevertheless, if marriage has positive effects on happiness, these effects are weakening [Glenn and Weaver, 1988; Lee, Soccombe and Shehan, 1991]. For what concern gender differences in the relation between marriage and happiness epidemiological researches have showed how women are generally more anxious than men and that, unmarried women (including widowed and divorced) have a higher risk of suffering mental disturbs than married women [Thoits, 1986]. Many studies do that even though marriage has positive effects for both sexes , these effects are higher for men than women [Aneshensel, Frerichs and Clark, 1981; Radloff, 1975; Gove, 1979; Gove and Tudor, 1973; Gove, Hughes and Style, 1983; Pugliesi, 1995], while another approach does not consider so strong gender

differences [Williams, 1988] because the quality of marriage relationship (and not the marriage itself) is considered important for individual wellbeing.

ii)   Another important aspect of individual life is to be or not to be parent. The last decades have been characterized by many changes in the social organization and individual behaviours so that the experience and the meaning to be parent has deeply changed. The decreasing importance of the role of parent as central point in individual life is extremely interesting for the evaluation of the relation between children and happiness. There are two different point of view in the analysis of the relation between happiness and children. The first point of view point out that children represent a cost for adults (nervous strain and psychological wellbeing). People with children report that they are less happy, less satisfied (in particular in friendship relations, marriage and health) than people with no children [Mchanahan and Adams, 1987;]. In particular, the effect of children on happiness and psychological wellbeing is related with the mother work condition. In fact, working women with children are more worried and restless than working women without children (annulling the positive effect of work on psychological wellbeing). The second point of view considers the relation happiness-children positive; in fact, people have children (and get married) because this decision increase their personal wellbeing and their happiness [Kohler, Behrman and Skytthe, 2004]. For women the first birth has a positive effect on happiness (independently from the sex), while subsequent births have no effect on happiness. Men show a different situation: first of all the sex of children has effect on father happiness (higher when boy), second they do not suffer a decrease in the level of happiness with births subsequent to the first [Kohler, Behrman, Skytthe, 2004].

iii)   Economists have deeply analyzed the relation between income and happiness since happiness is considered a good utility function proxy [Easterlin, 1974; Robert Frank, 1997; Yew-Kwang, 1997; Oswald, 1997; Easterlin, 2001; Frey and Stutzer, 2002]. Recent studies show a simple and pointing association between income and happiness [Frey and Stutzer, 2002]. Easteriln [2001] explains that this simple association can be easily deduced if we consider that people with high income have more possibilities to obtain what they want with a better relation of quantity-quality than people with lower income. The same conclusion cannot be reached if we consider the life cycle pattern: on average, to the income improvement up to the retirement ages does not correspond the advance in subjective wellbeing, so the relation between the two variables is not linear: material aspiration change over the life cycle roughly in proportion to income; both aspiration and income rise with roughly offsetting effects on wellbeing. it means that people at any given point in the life cycle typically think that they will be better off in the future than at the present, and that they are better off today than in the past. The individual

income is strictly correlated to occupational status. The paid work is strictly connected to lower level of stress and depression, as well as to higher levels of satisfaction and self esteem but the effect on the two sexes seems to be different [Thoits, 1986; Pugliesi, 1995]. If compared with men, occupied women are characterized by higher level of stress [Roxburgh, 1996]. The opposite condition of employed is the condition of unemployed: self-proclaimed happiness of unemployed person is much lower than of employed person [Di Tella, MacCulloch, and Oswald, 2001; Clark and Oswald, 1994]. Moreover the unemployed condition, on average, weights more heavily on men than on women. Younger and holder employees suffer less when hit by unemployment than employees in the middle of their working life [Clark and Oswald, 1994].

iv) The increasing number of roles assumed by people let us questioned about the effect of roles on individual happiness, in particular let us questioned on gender difference. In fact, the roles assumed by women are not rigidly defined as in the case of men so that women stress factors can be considered "unique" [Birdsall, 1976; Roxburgh, 1996]. In accordance with a first approach the assumption of multiple roles is negatively associated with the level of happiness; higher the number of roles higher the conflict; thus, higher the risk of psyco-phisical disturbs [Merton 1957; Goode 1960, Coser, 1974]. A second approach considers that comparing people characterized by multiple roles with people characterized by only one role the level of stress is higher for the second ones and this is mainly true for women [Kandel, Davies and Ravies, 1985; Lennon, 1994]. So, having or assuming an identity-role should increase the level of wellbeing while the loss of one identity-role should have a negative effect on individual happiness [Thoits, 1986]; the stress synthom are inversly proportional to the number of roles assumed with a U function [Thoits, 1986]. This can be explained by the fact that every role presents a posiitive side and a negative side which compensate each other. According to some researchers there are no gender differences *ceteris paribus* in the number of roles [Thoits, 1986] even if there are some differences due to specific roles [Thoits, 1986; Pugliesi, 1995, Roxburgh, 1996].

Data and methodology

The data used comes from the *European Social Survey* (ESS) 2002/2003. The ESS was conduct in 20 countries. The ESS is a social survey designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. It is funded via the European Commission's 5th and 6th Framework Programmes, the European Science Foundation and national funding bodies in each country. The questionnaire

consist of a 'core' module - which remain relatively constant from round to round - plus two 'rotating' modules, each of which will be devoted to a substantive topic or theme. Thus, while the purpose of the rotating modules is to provide an in-depth focus on a series of particular academic or policy concerns, the core module aims instead to monitor change and continuity in a wide range of socio-economic, socio-political, socio-psychological and socio-demographic variables. This research is based on the core questionnaire.

The Italian sample includes 1207 individuals older than 16 years; the women sample is 55,2% of the whole sample (666 individuals), while men sample is 44,8% (541 men). In the survey there is a specific question on happiness: "taking all things together how happy would you say you are?". Each individual can decide own level of happiness in a scale from 0 (extremely unhappy) to 10 (extremely happy). We have constructed the variable "level of happiness" as a dichotomy variable: very happy (from 8 to 10) vs. quite/not at all happy (from 0 to 7), because our interest is the analysis of characteristics of people who say to be happy with a high level of certainty.

In Table 1 we have listed the variables used in the analysis of happiness. Table 2 reports the cross tables of each variables with the variable happiness. The last column reports the rate of favourable cases on possible cases, showing simple differences in the perception of happiness.

From the analysis of the Table 2 we based our hypothesis:

Gender: the effect of gender should be visible once we control for the variables that affect the level of happiness in particular the pattern of happiness determinants should be different for men and women

Age: the perception of own happiness decrease with age increasing due to the action of different factors: health condition, the lost of the roles assumed during the life cycle.

Education: educational level is a good determinant of happiness. This is due to the fact that the educational level is a good proxy of own social status. People with high level of education have an higher income of people with low level of education, having a more possibility to obtain what they want.

Marital status: It is fundamental in defining the individual level of happiness. People who live dramatic events like the loss of partner or the failure of own union should be affected in own emotional condition.

Children: this variable (also if it is not visible from Table 2) should be positively associated with happiness, considering the strong family ties that characterized the Italian society.

Table 1 – variables used in the analysis

Gender	1.	male
	2.	female
Age	(continuous)	
Educational level	1.	primary school
	2.	secondary school
	3.	university degree
Marital status	1.	married
	2.	separated/divorced
	3.	widowed
	4.	single
Area of residence	1.	North
	2.	Centre
	3.	South / Islands
Sons/daughters living in the household	1.	No
	2.	1+
Occupational condition	1.	occupied
	2.	student
	3.	retired
	4.	housewife
	5.	other
Helath perception	1.	very good/good
	2.	discrete/bad/very bad
Frequency social meeting	1.	once a month or less
	2.	more than once a month/once a week
	3.	more than once a week/daily
Anyone with whom discuss personal matters	1.	yes
	2.	no
Social activity compared with others	1.	less
	2.	equal
	3.	more
Religiousness level	1.	low
	2.	medium
	3.	high
Life satisfaction	1.	unsatisfied
	2.	quite satisfied
	3.	very satisfied
Satisfaction with own country situation	1.	don't know
	2.	unsatisfied
	3.	quite satisfied
	4.	very satisfied not at all
Family income perception	1.	good/discrete
	2.	scarce/ inadequate

Table 2 – distribution of variables by level of happiness (absolute values); odds ratio

			Happy		Total	(2)/(3) %
			not at all/quite (1)	very (2)	(3)	
Gender	Male		351	196	547	**35,83**
	Female		446	212	658	**32,22**
		Total	797	408	1.205	
Age	16-29		141	77	218	**35,32**
	30-44		199	120	319	**37,62**
	45-64		290	143	433	**33,03**
	65+		167	67	234	**28,63**
		Total	797	407	1.204	
Eduaction	primary		472	205	677	**30,28**
	secondary		263	151	414	**36,47**
	university		61	52	113	**46,02**
		Total	796	408	1.204	
Marital status	married		444	272	716	**37,99**
	divorced		42	9	51	**17,65**
	widowed		69	15	84	**17,86**
	single		240	110	350	**31,43**
		Total	795	406	1.201	
Sons/doughters living in the hh	No		435	203	638	**31,82**
	Yes		362	205	567	**36,16**
		Total	797	408	1.205	
Occupational status	paid work		359	227	586	**38,74**
	student		60	36	96	**37,50**
	retired		156	68	224	**30,36**
	housworker		128	51	179	**28,49**
	other		94	26	120	**21,67**
		Total	797	408	1.205	
Health status	very good/good		458	311	769	**40,44**
	discrete/bad/very bad		339	97	436	**22,25**
		Total	797	408	1.205	
Frequency social meeting	once a month		186	54	240	**22,50**
	more than once amonth/once a week		308	158	466	**33,91**
	more than once a week/daily		299	196	495	**39,60**
		Total	793	408	1.201	
Anyone with whom discuss personal problems	Yes		607	345	952	**36,24**
	No		184	62	246	**25,20**
		Total	791	407	1.198	
Social activity compared with others	less		401	191	592	**32,26**
	equal		296	171	467	**36,62**
	more		63	35	98	**35,71**
		Total	760	397	1.157	
religiousness	low		129	53	182	**29,12**
	medium		440	222	662	**33,53**
	high		224	132	356	**37,08**
		Total	793	407	1.200	
Statisfaction with own life	not at all		84	5	89	**5,62**
	quite		527	65	592	**10,98**
	very		173	334	507	**65,88**
		Total	784	404	1.188	
Satisfaction with own country situation	don't know		35	10	45	**22,22**
	not at all		233	88	321	**27,41**
	quite		459	229	688	**33,28**
	very		70	81	151	**53,64**
		Total	797	408	1.205	
income perception	good/discrete		608	382	990	**38,59**
	scarce/inadequate		180	22	202	**10,89**
		Total	788	404	1.192	
Area of residence	North		272	187	459	**40,74**
	Centre		159	108	267	**40,45**
	South/Isands		366	113	479	**23,59**
		Total	797	408	1.205	

Occupational status: the role assumed into the labour market is fundamental in defining the level of social integration and so the level of individual wellbeing. In fact, also if the work could be a source of stress it gives to individuals a well specific social function (this is true for students too); while this social function is lost by people out of the labour market (housewife or retired). The role of housewife not plenty recognized by society could be source of constant individual frustration. The same conclusion could be reached for the retirement position since the individual is undressed by a social role assumed during his/her entire life.

Health: a better perception of health condition increase the probability to be happy

Social activity: social activity (social meeting as well people with whom discuss personal problems) had a positive effect on happiness; in fact, the sociality is an important factor for psychological equilibrium.

Religiousness: religious or more generally spirituality represents a good medicine to overcome hard periods of own life. Thus, since each religion has its own recipe for happiness we think that this variable has a positive effect on happiness.

Satisfaction: satisfaction for private matters (life and income) as well as satisfaction for public matters has a positive effect on happiness.

Area of residence: to be resident in the central-north are of Italy increase the probability to declare to be happy. This is due to the economic differences between north and south.

Logistic models have been applied to evaluate the effect of the variables on individual happiness. A first model has been applied on the whole sample, while a second model has been run on the two samples (men and women) separately. The last model considers just the three variables relative to the three main roles: partner, parent, and worker

Results

The first model includes the all sample (1170 individuals). There are not gender differences in the probability to be happy as well as the level of happiness does not change with age. The highest educational level has a positive effect on happiness: individual with university degree have a 53% higher probability to declare him/herself happy than individual with lower levels of education. This is due to the fact that the university degree is a proxy of a good occupational status or rather an higher economic condition which let the individual to better satisfy own desires. Compared with married people any other marital status is disadvantaged in the wellbeing level. In particular people whom are divorced or widowed declare lower levels of happiness, due to the fact that these persons have experienced bad events. From this first model it is not visible any significative effect of occupational condition and presence of children in the household. The health condition, as

expected, has a strong effect on happiness: who declares to be healthy has a higher probability to be happy. This result confirms how body and aim are strictly connected. Moreover, previous analysis showed that the 50% of housewives declare to be unhealthy (surpassed only by retired people with 63%).

Table 3 – Logistic models: Exp(B)

	men+women	Men	Women
Gender (male)			
Female	0,917		
Age	0,993	1,001	0,991
Education (primary)			
Secondary	0,949	0,841	1,080
University	**1,538** **	1,241	**1,777** *
Marital status (married)			
Divorced	**0,253** ***	**0,208** **	**0,304** **
Widowed	**0,440** **	0,496	**0,378** **
Single	**0,443** ***	0,669	**0,296** ***
Area of residence			
Centre	1,162	1,025	1,365
South/Islands	**0,536** ***	**0,601** **	**0,529** ***
Children living in the hh (No)			
Yes	1,014	1,080	0,915
Occupation (piad work)			
Student	1,198	2,035	0,833
Retired	1,153	1,196	0,951
Houseworker	0,792	1,129	0,702
Other	0,765	**0,415** *	1,059
Helath status (good/very good)			
discrete/bad/very bad	**0,545** ***	**0,435** ***	**0,591** **
Social meetings (max 1 month)			
2+ month/ 1 week	1,295	1,090	1,497
2+ week/daily	**2,213** ***	1,653	**2,836** ***
Discuss private problems (yes)			
No	**0,654** **	0,646	0,702
religiousness level (low)			
Medium	**1,436** **	1,389	1,355
High	**1,986** ***	**1,774** *	**1,996** **
Satisfaction with country situation			
Don't know	0,496	**0,216** *	0,897
Not at all	**0,386** ***	**0,401** **	**0,371** ***
Quite	**0,428** ***	**0,453** **	**0,392** ***
Income perception (good/discrete)			
Scarce/inadequate	**0,261** ***	**0,272** ***	**0,253** ***
Constant	1,716	1,378	1,750
Chi-suqare	202,336	96,336	123,417
-2 log-likelihood	1299,273	597,133	683,597

*p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

In accordance with results the social interaction in its two components has a strong effect on individual happiness, showing the importance of social life in individual life. People meeting friends or family members more than once a week have a 120% higher probability to be happy compared with people with scarce social meetings. These two social variables open an interesting discussion concerning the interaction between sociality and happiness. Is it the social activity that let people be happier or is it the individual happiness that let people be more socially active? Undoubtedly, depression and illness let people take away from social meeting, but it is also true that social interaction, the possibility to talk with others increase levels of self-esteem and wellbeing. As expected, religiousness affects individual happiness, increasing the probability to be happy of 78% for very religious people. This means that the possibility to express own spirituality let people face events with higher peacefulness and high level of optimism. People's happiness is influenced by the kind of political system they live in. Trusting the country condition has significative effect on happiness. People who trust country situation (economically and governmental) are more prone to take decisions feeling him/herself protected and on the same wavelength of the country. The income has a significative effect; in fact, the possibility to satisfy economically owns needs makes people more relaxed. The income could be read as the private counterpart to public safety. Both components protect people in their daily actions so that they feel better, increasing their level of wellbeing and happiness. Previous analysis of this last model have showed that inserting this variable in the model cancel the effect of occupational status since the link between occupational status and income is strictly correlated. Finally, the variable area of residence has a significative effect on happiness. Results show a polarization north- centre vs. south-islands also for what concern happiness. People living in the south part of the country have lower level of happiness than people living in the north area of the country.

The logistic model applied separately to men and women show interesting gender differences. The effect of area of residence, health status, religiousness, satisfaction with own country condition and own family income remains the same for both men and women while the effect of the other variables draw a different pattern of happiness for men and women. Mainly, men happiness is affected by the occupational status, in particular if they are unemployed the probability to be happy decrease drastically. On the contrary, women happiness depends on education (higher the level higher the level of happiness), marital status (all the marital statuses different from married affect negatively the level of happiness), and frequency of social meetings (women socially active have higher probability to be happy than women no socially active). These simple results hide important gender differences due to the different roles and social pressure on men and women. Man self-fulfilment depends on his position in the labour market more than for a woman. The unemployed

condition has a stigma attached on it and it produces depression and anxiety and results in the loss of self-esteem diminishing the level of personal satisfaction and happiness. It is plausible thinking that women suffer the same consequences, but while men are mainly "workers", women assume many other roles that can offset the loss of one. In accordance with the results women happiness seems to be mainly affected by the loss of the sociable side of the life and the loss of their traditional role of wife. In fact, results show that women who are not married have a lower probability to be happy, including single women. The other main difference with the male pattern is the positive effect of the university degree on women happiness. This group of women is probably more conscious of what makes them happy, but even more important is the economic condition and the social status of these women, that let them to better satisfy (in quality and quantity) their needs. Also, women with higher educational level have more possibilities to negotiate between their roles, needs and gender labour division than women with lower educational levels.

The interaction of roles

The last model considers the effect of the interaction of the three main roles – partner, parent, and worker- on happiness (Table 4). We think that the main difference between men and women is the relation between roles and the undertaking demanded by each social role.

Table 4 – Variable social roles

Roles		
	1.	worker+children +union
	2.	worker+no children +union
	3.	worker+no children +no union
	4.	worker +with children +no union
	5.	no worker+children +union
	6.	no worker+no children +union
	7.	no worker+no children +no union
	8.	no worker +with children +no union

The logistic model has been applied again to the whole sample, men sample, and women sample (Table 5).

Table 5 – Logistic model for the analysis of roles interaction; Exp(B)

	Men+Women	Sig.	Men	Sig.	Women	Sig.
Roles (worker+children+union)						
worker+no children+union	1,134		1,253		1,007	
worker+no children+no union	0,704	*	0,755		0,656	
worker+children+no union	0,593		1,032		0,387	
no worker+children+union	0,444	***	0,685		0,306	***
no worker+no children+union	0,352	***	0,664		0,260	***
no worker+no children+no union	0,733		0,852		0,629	*
no worker+children+no union	0,704	*	0,834		0,610	**
Constant	0,710	**	0,646	**	0,795	
Chi-square	25,700		3,837		26,202	
-2 log-likelihood	1.510,942		706,996		797,871	

The absence of the role of parent (sons/daughters living in the household) has a negative effect on individual happiness. For young-adults the absence of children could be a temporary condition that does not let them having children, affecting the achievement of this important life's aspect. In adult age the absence of sons/daughters is linked with lower health status and lower wellbeing. The absence of all the three roles decreases the probability to be happy. The lower probability is achieved by people with children but not in union and out of the labour market. Obviously this group is socially vulnerable; this is true for young-adults as well as for adults.

The model applied separately for men and women show how the roles interaction has no effect on men happiness while it has on women happiness. Women who does not work show a lower probability to be happy than worker women, confirming that multiple roles have a positive effect on women wellbeing.

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