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Evaluation of Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting in the Italian Context: Adaptation of a French Questionnaire

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study investigated the psychometric properties of the Italian version of a French scale to detect attitudes toward same-sex parenting.

Method: The Italian sample was split into two subsamples. On one, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to detect the factor structure of the Italian scale, and on the other, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run to find the data’s best fit model. The scales’ internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha. The questionnaire’s convergent validity was also evaluated.



Results: EFA extracted a four-factor solution, in accordance with the original French scale’s validation study. CFA showed that the translated scale had good consistency, similar to that of the original version, showing satisfactory internal consistency for three of four subscales.

Conclusions: There will be benefits to further validation studies of the translated scale on the Italian population and it may possibly be innovative and useful in both research and social fields.

KEYWORDS

attitudes; same-sex families; same-sex parents; homosexual parenting; scale; Italian adaptation; same-sex parenting; homosexual parents

Social changes in recent decades have produced a wide range of family compositions (Fedewa, Black, & Ahn, 2015; Glazer, 2014), including homosexual-headed families with children (Ducouso-Lacaze, 2008; Lerch, 2013). Even if resistance to and prejudice against the legitimacy of such families remain in some segments of society, what is important is that same-sex parent families exist, and it is better to study and consider them as social agents (Camilleri & Ryan, 2006; Ferrari, 2011; Lingiardi, 2007) than to try to exclude them from consideration. This is important for enhancing juridical arguments (Heather, 2005; Lerch, 2013; Vargas, Miller, & Chamberlain, 2012) that improve the quality of life (Frisch & Hviid, 2006; Perrin & Siegel, 2013; Vargas et al., 2012) of children being raised by homosexual parents (Cadoret, 2007; Gross, 2003; Heather, 2005; Neirinck, 2002).

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Pathways that can lead homosexual couples or individuals to parenting are varied, due to the impossibility of the couple or individual procreating as biologically fertile heterosexual couples can (Meezan & Rauch, 2005). For most homosexual couples, these pathways of access to parenthood are often different from the ones described by heteronormative society (Kitzinger, 2005), and they can lead, essentially, to two primary types of family: same-sex parent families with two parents and same-sex multiparent families (Gross, 2003; Vaccaro, 2010). The former generally comprise sons or daughters raised in a planned same-sex parent family, wherein only one of the parents is biologically linked to the child or children, while the other is a social parent. The legal status of the nonbiological parent is not recognized in all countries (Vecho et al., 2012). Same-sex multiparent families include various kinds of family structures (Glazer, 2014) in which more than two individuals take on the role of parents of the same children. The origins of this second type of homosexual family can be varied. It is also common for homosexual couples to raise the biological child or children of one of the couple's members, born from a previous heterosexual relationship (Claxton-Oldfield & O'Neil, 2007; Schiffrin et al., 2014) or to raise children conceived after assisted insemination for women or surrogacy for men (Bergman, Rubio, Green, & Padron, 2010; Blake et al., 2017; Carone et al., 2017; Carone, Baiocco, & Lingiardi, 2017a, 2017b; Carone, Lingiardi, Chirumbolo, & Baiocco, 2018; Friedman, 2007; King, 2002; Meezan & Rauch, 2005). Another path to parenthood is adoption (Howell, 2005; Schneider & Vecho, 2009; Wells, 2011), but in many countries this practice is not legally available to homosexual couples or individuals (Herek, 2006; Meezan & Rauch, 2005).

Studies on attitudes toward same-gender parenting

Even if, from a certain point of view, attitudes toward homosexuals are improving and moving in the direction of an overall greater acceptance, the same cannot be said for attitudes toward homosexual parenting (Costa, Pereira, & Leal, 2018; Ioverno et al., 2018). In fact, public opinion often raises concerns and prejudices when considering the possibility of homosexual couples or individuals becoming parents (Baiocco, Nardelli, Pezzuti, & Lingiardi, 2013; Camilleri & Ryan, 2006; Clarke, 2001; Taurino, 2012), even if studies in recent decades have clearly demonstrated no significant difference in the development qualities of children raised by heterosexual parents and those raised by homosexual ones (Baiocco, Ioverno, Carone, & Lingiardi, 2017; Costa et al., 2013; Stacey & Biblarz, 2010; Vecho & Schneider, 2015). When the difference is highlighted, studies also generally show an even better adjustment level of children raised by homosexual parents for some dimensions, such as aggressive behavior and tolerance to difference (Fulcher, Sutfin, & Patterson, 2008; Stacey & Biblarz, 2010; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2002).

In 2004, the American Psychological Association, coherently with what previously said, stated that research has shown that children's wellbeing and development are not related to parents' sexual orientation and that children raised by homosexuals have the same odds of developing in a positive way as those raised by heterosexual couples (Baiocco et al., 2015). Further, a parent's sexual orientation is not a central factor in children's development; rather, it is other factors, such as the quality of the child-parent relationship, that serve as predictors of children's positive development and adaptation (Perrin & Siegel, 2013).

As previously noted, prejudices and negative attitudes toward homosexual parenting can be common and rooted in the general population. Some claim a religious belief that homosexual parenting is sinful; some others argue that it is unnatural; others promote the idea that children growing up in a homosexual household will not have adequate gender role models; and still others claim a fear of bullying to which the children of homosexuals may be exposed (Clarke, 2001; Costa et al., 2014). Other prejudices are linked to the idea that to serve the major interests of children, a woman must serve as a "mother" and a man must serve as a "father," insinuating that men and women largely differ in the quality and ability of their parenting skills (Fond, Franc, & Purper-Ouakil, 2012). Many studies have analyzed and disproven these differences (Adams & Light, 2015; Hyde, 2005; Vianello, Schnabel, Sriram, & Nosek, 2013).

Other doubts stem from the "contagion hypothesis," which claims that children raised by homosexuals have a greater probability of developing a homosexual identity than those raised by heterosexuals (Cameron & Cameron, 1996). This controversial point of debate has been widely investigated, and it has been observed that parents' sexual orientation has no effect on the expression of children's sexual orientations (Stacey & Biblarz, 2010), even if children of homosexual parents generally feel freer to explore their sexual orientations, since they are less exposed to heteronormative societal pressures (Istar Lev, 2010).

Further studies have also shown that positive attitudes toward homosexuality are not necessarily related to positive attitudes toward same-sex parenting or to readiness to work with families headed by homosexual individuals or couples (Averett & Hegde, 2012; Banwari, Mistry, Soni, Parikh, & Gandhi, 2015; Fernández Molina & Alarcón, 2015).

In recent decades, studies on homosexual families have been conducted. Various studies have examined teachers' attitudes toward homosexual parenting. Teachers' general attitudes toward homosexuality are positive, but some personal characteristics can negatively influence these attitudes (i.e., being part of an ethnic minority), or positively influence attitudes (i.e., having a good comfort level with homosexuality-related topics; Rollè et al., 2014). A teacher's number of years of service did not seem to correlate with more positive or negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Hegde, Averett, Parker White, & Deese, 2014). What seems

crucial is that teachers' attitude formation includes sensitivity trainings on this topic (Hegde et al., 2014). Even if attitudes toward homosexuality and homosexual parenting tend to be generally positive among teachers, these professionals still recognize the need for deeper training on topics related to sexual diversity and new family forms (Fernández Molina & Alarcón, 2015). In fact, schools are seen as a key point in spreading information on sexual diversity (Peréz-Testor et al., 2010). With this aim, the role of psychologists and school psychologists, specifically, could be crucial for offering needed support to several actors on the scene, such as teachers, students, and their parents. Further, psychologists could activate trainings about homosexual parenting issues and inform colleagues about studies' results on the positive developmental outcomes of children raised in these families (Herbstrith, Tobin, Hesson-McInnis, & Joel Schneider, 2013).

Each of these cited studies seems to go in the direction of an agreement for the increasing necessity of the formation, information, and development of sensitivity projects and trainings aimed to give to professionals working in the education, health care, and social-supportive domains effective tools for accomplishing their work in the most effective ways possible when faced with topics or situations related to homosexual-parented families.

In recent years, studies on homosexual families have been implemented to address prejudices and negative attitudes toward homosexual parenting by at least a part of the population. Costa et al. (2013) examined attitudes of the heterosexual Portuguese population toward homosexual parenthood. Their results showed that even if general attitudes toward homosexual parenthood are not negative, attitudes are more favorably disposed toward heterosexual parents, and they are more negative toward gay couples than to lesbian ones. These stricter attitudes toward gay parental couples could be due to a generally harder attitude toward male homosexuals, linked to gender role prescriptions that are often stronger in Mediterranean populations (Salvati, Ioverno, Giacomantonio, & Baiocco, 2016), such as the Italian population. This idea could suggest the opportunity to stress the importance of differences in gender-role-related beliefs when approaching topics such as attitudes toward same-sex parent families (Ioverno et al., 2018), investigating possible differences between attitudes toward the legitimacy of gay men and lesbian women in parenting.

Not only the general population's attitudes but also health care, social situations, and educational professionals and psychologists' attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting are crucial to consider when discussing same-sex parent families. The homosexual population faces more difficulties in accessing many services, such as those related to health (Rollé, Giardina, Caldarera, Gerino, & Brustia, 2018), and it is easy to underestimate the possible negative effects to which the perception of being discriminated against or treated unequally can lead. In some cases, discrimination and the unpreparedness of professionals could lead to a decrease in the quality of received treatments or, in other cases, to an increased

risk that homosexuals and same-sex parent families might avoid or limit their seeking or using of care services, resulting in possible negative repercussions for their family's health and quality of life. In recent years, several studies have investigated attitudes toward and readiness to work with same-sex parent families and homosexual individuals; the targets were professionals and students training to become experts in the help-giving or educational domains. Examples have included social workers (Camilleri & Ryan, 2006; Chonody & Yu, 2014; Swank & Raiz, 2007), students of health care professions (Banwari et al., 2015), active health care professionals (Sabin, Riskind, & Nosek, 2015), teachers (Hegde et al., 2014; Herbstrith et al., 2013; Pérez-Testor et al., 2010), and psychologists (Vecho & Schneider, 2012). These studies revealed a lack of knowledge and professional skills in this field. Once these lacks have been identified, it will be possible to look for solutions to implement to be supportive to professionals who often find themselves completely unprepared to effectively handle new situations deriving from emerging family configurations, such as families led by same-sex parents (Fernández Molina & Alarcón, 2015).

The above-mentioned studies found that some variables related to positive and negative attitudes toward same-sex parenting were common in all the professional groups considered; these variables included the number of years in the profession, gender, and age. It seems, however, that a knowledge of the topic and a deeper formation on homosexuality and homosexual parents families' related issues during professional training would be key for almost all professionals considered (Banwari et al., 2015; Camilleri & Ryan, 2006; Chonody & Yu, 2014; Hegde et al., 2014; Herbstrith et al., 2013; Pérez-Testor et al., 2010; Sabin et al., 2015; Swank & Raiz, 2007). This would empower them through the development of appropriate tools to understand and question their reactions when faced with same-sex parent families and to help them modify negative reactions, so that they may perform in a more adequate, high-quality, and professional manner (Swank & Raiz, 2007). In fact, most of the cited studies revealed that professionals were not adequately prepared to handle topics related to same-sex parenting during training years (Banwari et al., 2015; Fernández Molina & Alarcón, 2015; Hegde et al., 2014; Herbstrith et al., 2013; Sabin et al., 2015), highlighting the extreme importance of implementing courses on diversity and sexual diversity (Chonody & Yu, 2014) and new family forms (Fernández Molina & Alarcón, 2015). From a study conducted on different groups of health care professionals about their attitudes toward homosexual men and women, using the Implicit Association Test (Sabin et al., 2015), it emerged that more positive implicit attitudes toward heterosexual individuals than homosexual people characterized most heterosexual health providers' thinking; this trend was stronger among heterosexual men than among heterosexual women. In all analyzed groups, explicit preferences were revealed to be lower than implicit ones (Sabin et al., 2015).

The Italian context

In Italy, just over 7,500 homosexual couples self-identify as involved in a relationship comparable to marriage, and over 500 of them are raising children, even if these families are not recognized under Italian law (Istat, 2011). Homosexual parenting is a reality that is becoming more and more common worldwide (Vargas et al., 2012), and it constitutes a topic of which society is becoming gradually aware, thanks to media and to political and cultural debates (Avarett & Hegde, 2012). However, compared to many other European countries, there is a certain delay in Italy with respect to recognizing the civil rights of homosexual couples. In fact, the law for civil unions for same-sex couples was approved in Italy only in 2016. This law extends to homosexual couples many—though not all—civil rights reserved for heterosexual married couples, but adoption and stepchild adoption are still not allowed. The approval of these rights would have made useful progress toward a greater protection of children’s best interests—for example, conserving the relationship with the co-parent. It would have allowed society to proceed toward the best interests of the child, discussed by many authors (Cadoret, 2007; Neirinck, 2002). Indeed, in 2016, 702 legal experts referred to this fact in a call on the then-president of the Italian Republic, claiming that adoption of stepchildren was the minimum guarantee for children who lived with same-sex parents in Italy. In fact, what is sometimes underestimated during the debate about civil rights for homosexual parents is that each right of the parent is reflected in a duty toward the child (Articolo 29, 2016).

Prior to the approval of the law on civil unions for same-sex couples in Italy, a study led by Baiocco, Argalia, and Laghi (2012) investigated the desire to parent and the attitudes toward the legalization of same-sex parent families in Italy, with a sample of 373 Italian homosexuals balanced for gender and age. The variables considered were political affiliation, religious beliefs, level of schooling, longing for marriage, level of connection with the homosexual community, being open as homosexuals, the level of internalized sexual stigma, and the degree of social discomfort perceived about their sexuality (Baiocco et al., 2012). It emerged that internalized sexual stigma was higher in homosexual men, probably due to the particular pressure on Italian men to conform to heteronormative gender roles. On the other hand, homosexual women showed higher levels of perceived social discomfort with their sexual orientation. For both homosexual women and men, high levels of sexual stigma and social discomfort about their sexuality were related to a weaker expression of longing for marriage and a less positive attitude toward legalizing same-sex parenting in Italy. Political progressivism, higher levels of schooling, connections with the queer community, and higher levels of self-disclosure to family but not to friends were confirmed to be predictors of more positive

attitudes toward the legalization of homosexual parent families and a higher level of expression of longing for marriage (Baiocco et al., 2012). In the authors' opinion, the fact that self-disclosure to family and not to friends was a predictor of a stronger desire to marry could be because in Italy, as in other southern European countries, the idea of marriage is largely characterized by moral and religious values, which are hard to separate from complete approval by one's own family. 250

Petrucelli, Baiocco, Ioverno, Pistella, and D'Urso (2015) also investigated attitudes toward same-sex parenting in Italy. The sample was composed of 212 participants aged between 17 and 63, with a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual orientation. The study considered many variables related to opinions about homosexuals' parenting skills and the degree of agreement about the legalization of various means of access to parenthood for the homosexual population. These variables included gender, sexual orientation, contact with members of sexual minorities, political affiliation, religion, and homophobia. It emerged that gender and religious beliefs were not predictors of positive or negative attitudes toward homosexual parenting, while conservatism and homophobia were negative predictors. The study confirmed the hypothesis that contact with members of sexual minorities moderates negative attitudes toward homosexual parenting (Petrucelli et al., 2015). The study also showed that in general, attitudes were more positive toward lesbian mothers than gay fathers, and adoption was preferred to other ways of access to parenthood, such as medically assisted reproduction techniques or surrogacy (Petrucelli et al., 2015). 255 260 265 270

Age is another variable often related to attitudes toward homosexual parenting. Baiocco et al. (2013) focused on attitudes of the elderly Italian population toward homosexual parenting, with a sample comprising 147 Italian men and 133 Italian women aged between 65 and 87. The hypotheses were that advanced age, right-wing conservatism, and male gender could be predictors of negative attitudes toward same-sex parenting. But religious beliefs and gender were not predictors of positive or negative attitudes toward homosexual parenting, while right-wing conservatism and elderly age were predictors of less positive attitudes toward same-sex parenting (Baiocco et al., 2013). 275 280

Recently, Baiocco et al. (2015) investigated the family and how the couple functioned in relation to children's adaptation levels in same-sex parent families in Italy. The sample comprised 20 homosexual fathers, 20 homosexual mothers, and 40 heterosexual parents balanced for gender, age, and level of schooling. The variables considered included parents' dyadic satisfaction, family functioning, children's affective regulation, hyperactivity/inattention level, and prosocial behavior (Baiocco et al., 2015). The results showed that there was no difference with respect to the length of time the couples were together or the stability of the couples and that homosexual couples 285 290

reported a higher dyadic satisfaction. Nor were any differences revealed between children raised by heterosexual and homosexual parents concerning affective regulation or peer relations (Baiocco et al., 2015).

Instruments measuring attitudes toward same-sex parenting

In recent decades, the body of research on same-sex parenting has grown, producing several instruments to detect and measure attitudes toward such parenting from different points of view (Ioverno et al., 2018). 295

Some questionnaires seek to detect attitudes toward homosexual marriage or homosexuality in general and include items on homosexual parenting (Lannutti & Lachlan, 2007), but their queries are not deep enough to constitute a detailed study on attitudes toward homosexual parenting. 300

Some other measures focus attention on children's adjustment in same-sex families (Frias-Navarro & Monterde-i-Bort, 2012; Gato, Freitas, & Fontaine, 2013). With a sample of 212 university students, Frias-Navarro and Monterde-i-Bort (2012) validated a 14-item questionnaire named the Scale on Beliefs About Children Adjustment in Same-Sex Families. This measure investigates beliefs in several important areas regarding the adjustment levels of children raised by homosexual parents, without considering differences between same-sex male or female couples and without considering possible influences on the respondent caused by the interactions between the parents' gender and the children's gender (Frias-Navarro & Monterde-i-Bort, 2012). 305 310

In the Italian context, Ioverno and colleagues (2018) recently validated a scale named Beliefs on Same-Sex Parenting on a sample of 301 participants in a first study and a sample of 346 university students in a second study. The measure investigates attitudes toward same-sex families not only based on homonegativity but also based on objective concerns regarding possible negative effects of the specific challenges these families must deal with on the quality of their children's adjustment in several domains (Ioverno et al., 2018). This scale also contemplates different items for homosexual male parent families and homosexual female parent families (Ioverno et al., 2018). Despite this, the possible influence on respondents' attitudes of the interaction of the parents' and children's gender is not considered by this measure. 315 320

Vecho and Schneider (2012) administered a questionnaire to a French heterosexual group to detect attitudes toward homosexual parenting, considering central factors, such as beliefs about homosexuals' parenting skills, opinions about children's development in homosexual family contexts, and opinions and attitudes about the main methods of access to parenthood at the disposal of homosexual individuals and couples. This measure, detecting attitudes toward children's development, considers the influence that the interactions between the parents' and children's gender may have on the respondents' opinions or attitudes (Vecho & Schneider, 2012), allowing the filling of a gap in our 325 330

knowledge not covered by other measures in the literature that focus on attitudes toward same-sex parenting in the Italian context.

The aim of the present study was to investigate the psychometric properties of the Italian version of Vecho and Schneider's (2012) questionnaire, because of its possible importance and innovativeness in the Italian context when considering the effect of interactions between parents' and children's gender when investigating the general population's attitudes toward same-sex parenting. 335

Specifically, the objectives were (1) to conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the structure of factors for the Italian version of the Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting scale; (2) to identify the model that provides the best fit to the data by using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); (3) to estimate the reliability of the Italian version in terms of scale item homogeneity and internal consistency; and (4) to determine the convergent validity of Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting scores with the ATLG scale (Herek, 1988) 340 345

In the European context, D'Amore and Green (2014) developed a scale to investigate same-sex parenting in the Belgian population, and Ioverno and colleagues (2018) used some items from the questionnaire with the Italian population, while Vecho and Schneider (2012) developed a scale to reveal attitudes toward homosexual parenting in the French population. 350

The current study

Participants

A sample of 1,311 Italian individuals from the ages of 18 to 78 ($M = 32.3$; $SD = 11.7$) participated in this study. The sample included 780 (59.5%) female and 531 (40.5%) male participants. Table 1 reports the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample. 355

A second separate sample ($N = 379$) of Italian individuals ($M_{age} = 30.4$ years, $SD = 11.5$ range = 18–64 years) was used to test the convergent validity of the Italian version of the Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting scale. The second study involved 141 male (64%) and 138 female (36%) participants. 360

All participants were living in Italy. The sample was composed solely of Caucasian Italian participants. No incentives were provided for participation in the study.

Instruments

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Vecho and Schneider's (2012) scale to detect attitudes toward homosexual parenting comprises 19 items that investigate the degree of agreement/disagreement with reported statements, using a five-level Likert scale. Twelve of the 19 items on the scale were reverse-scored.

Table 1. Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of participants.

Variable	(N = 1311) N (%)
<i>Age (years)</i>	
≤30	761 (58%)
31–50	299 (25%)
≥51	148 (11.3%)
Missing data	103 (7.9%)
<i>Gender</i>	
Males	531 (40.5%)
Females	780 (59.5%)
<i>Educational level</i>	
High school	529 (40.4%)
University degree	649 (49.5%)
Specialization degree	50 (3.8%)
Missing data	83 (6.3%)
<i>Marital status</i>	
Unmarried	821 (62.6%)
Married	431 (32.9%)
Divorced	25 (1.9%)
Widowed	6 (.5%)
Missing data	28 (2.1%)
<i>Employment Status</i>	
Employed	658 (50.2%)
Students	467 (35.6%)
Unemployed	141 (10.8%)
Retired	21 (1.6%)
Missing data	24 (1.8%)
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	
Heterosexual	1213 (92.5%)
Bisexual	68 (5.2%)
Missing data	30 (2.3%)

The 19 items from the original version of the scale are divided into four subscales: 370

- H: Attitudes toward homosexuality;
- LAP: Attitudes and opinions about the legalization of the main means of access to parenthood for homosexuals;
- AP: Attitudes and beliefs about homosexuals' parenting skills; and 375
- DE: Beliefs related to children's development in homosexual families.

A high score on each subscale indicates a positive attitude of the participant toward that dimension of homosexual parenting.

Three items belonging to the H subscale (attitudes toward homosexuality) regard personal considerations about homosexuality (e.g., "L'omosessualité est un comportement pathologique"; "L'omosessualità è un comportamento patologico"). 380

The LAP subscale (attitudes and opinions about the main means of access to parenthood at the disposal of homosexual couples) has five items about the

legalization of access to parenting for homosexual people, distinguishing male and female homosexuals, and about the main techniques employed (e.g., “Lorsque les enquêtes préliminaires donnent lieu à un avis favorable, un couple d’hommes gay doit pouvoir adopter”; “Quando le indagini preadottive danno luogo a un parere favorevole, una coppia di uomini gay può adottare”).

The AP subscale (attitudes and opinions about homosexual individuals’ parenting skills) has five items about the respondent’s opinions and attitudes about homosexuals’ parenting skills (e.g., “Les homosexuels ne sont pas des aussi bons parents que les hétérosexuels”; “Gli omosessuali non sono buoni genitori tanto quanto gli eterosessuali”).

The DE subscale (child development) has six items detecting beliefs and attitudes about developmental outcomes expected for children raised by homosexual parents, distinguishing the parents’ gender, the children’s gender, and their interactions (e.g., “Un garçon élevé par un couple de gays a, de ce fait, un développement psychosocial à risque”; “Un bambino cresciuto da una coppia di lesbiche ha, per questo, uno sviluppo psicosociale a rischio”).

The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale

The ATLG scale (Herek, 1988) consists of 20 items, 10 to assess attitudes toward homosexual men and 10 to assess attitudes toward lesbians. The items linked to approval of male homosexuality and lesbianism are assessed along a 5-point, Likert-type scale (from 1 = *strongly agree* to 9 = *strongly disagree*). A higher score means greater rejection (Herek & McLemore, 2011). In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha of reliability for the ATLG was $\alpha = .86$.

Procedures

This study is part of a wider work on homophobia and its correlates among the Italian population. The University Bioethics Committee approved it in 2014. In mid-2016, the project was enlarged to include research into attitudes on homosexual parenting. The integration of the project was presented to and approved by the Bioethics Committee. The 19 items included in the original French version of the questionnaire were translated into Italian, following the guidelines for the translation-back-translation method (Van de Vijver & Poortinga, 1997). First, they were translated from French into Italian, and then again from Italian into French by two independent mother-language translators. The two translated versions were finally compared to avoid mistakes and inconsistencies. Administration of the questionnaire took place in 2016. All participants were enrolled on a voluntary basis, and each was given an informed-consent sheet addressing the research aims and including the researchers’ contact information, if the participants wished to follow up with the study’s results once the scoring was complete. All participants were aged 18 years or older. Participants were given assurances of

anonymity. Two forms of the questionnaire were created: a paper-and-pencil one and an online form. The administration of the questionnaire took no more than 10 to 15 minutes. 425

Data analysis

All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS version 23. The data were preliminarily screened for outliers and errors. Initial analysis showed that no variable had more than 3% of missing data. In total, 55 cases had missing data on one or more items. Given the sample size, we chose not to include such cases in the following analysis. 430

To analyze the latent structure underlying the Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting, the participants were randomly split into two subsamples using a random sampling of 50% of all cases. One subsample (sample A = 628 participants; 260 male, 41.4%; 368 female, 58.6%; M age = 31.6, SD = 11.1) was used for the EFA, and the other (sample B = 628 participants; 256 male, 40.8%; 372 female, 59.2%; M age = 32.3, SD = 12.2) was used for CFA. The subsamples did not differ statistically with regard to age ($t = -1.84$, $p > .05$), gender ($\chi^2 = 0.5$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$), education level ($\chi^2 = .43$, $df = 3$, $p > .05$), marital status ($\chi^2 = 1.2$, $df = 4$, $p > .05$), employment status ($\chi^2 = .08$, $df = 4$, $p > .05$), and sexual orientation ($\chi^2 = .05$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$). 435 440

Prior to executing the EFA, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's sphericity test were conducted to assess the sampling adequacy for the factor analysis and the factorability of the correlation matrix. Several criteria were used to establish the factors. Primarily, the eigenvalue scree plot was investigated. Following this, items were included with factor loadings greater than .40. Finally, conceptual clarity was considered when evaluating the factor structure. For CFA, model parameters were estimated using the maximum likelihood method. The adequacy of the model fit was evaluated by the chi-square statistic plus suggested criteria for a set of fit indices: the chi-square statistic, the comparative fit index (CFI), the incremental index of fit (IFI), the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) along with its 90% confidence interval (CI). The evaluation suggested that good fit indices for CFI and IFI were greater than .90, and for SRMR and RMSEA, less than .08 (Byrne, 2001; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). 445 450

An item-scale partial correlation analysis was performed to analyze subscale item homogeneity, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to examine the internal consistency of the subscales. 455

Comparisons by gender were performed using the t test. Finally, to evaluate the convergent validity of Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting scores, we also administered the ATLG. The relationship between the Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting scores and the ATLG were investigated in the second sample. 460

Results

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Exploratory factor analysis

Preliminarily, an exploratory factor analysis was performed on the 19 scale items in subsample A to evaluate the structure of the Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting scale. Maximum likelihood was used as the estimation method, and varimax was used as the rotation method.

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The Bartlett’s tests of sphericity were significant, showing that the correlation matrixes were appropriate for a factor analysis. The KMO index of sampling adequacy for factor analysis was .90.

The EFA extracted a four-factor solution that explained 69.9% of the total (Table 2).

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Factor 1 (DE: Beliefs related to the children’s development in homosexual families subscale) included six items with factor loadings from .66 to .88; Factor 2 (AP: Attitudes and beliefs about homosexuals’ parenting skills subscale) included five items with factor loadings from .53 to .75; Factor 3 (LAP: Attitudes and opinions about the legalization of the main techniques of access to parenthood for homosexuals subscale) included five items with factor loadings from .50 to .85; and Factor 4 (H: Attitudes toward homosexuality subscale) included three items with factor loadings from .59 to .76. There was no cross-loaded item.

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Table 2. Factor loadings for the Italian attitudes toward same-sex parenting scale.

<i>Items</i>	Factor 1 DE	Factor 2 AP	Factor 3 LAP	Factor 4 H
5. ITEM 5	.88	.24	-.27	.10
4. ITEM 4	.87	.23	-.27	.12
9. ITEM 9	.86	.26	-.23	.17
7. ITEM 7	.86	.27	-.27	.15
6. ITEM 6	.73	.30	-.23	.20
8. ITEM 8	.62	.25	-.22	.32
17. ITEM 17	.28	.75	-.16	.07
16. ITEM 16	-.21	-.70	.27	-.10
19. ITEM 19	-.18	-.69	.24	-.15
15. ITEM 15	.37	.66	-.22	.16
18. ITEM 18	.11	.53	-.00	.13
13. ITEM 13	-.24	-.17	.85	-.17
12. ITEM 12	-.22	-.08	.85	-.14
10. ITEM 10	-.26	-.33	.65	-.09
11. ITEM 11	-.27	-.37	.64	-.08
14. ITEM 14	-.28	-.22	.50	-.15
1 . ITEM 1	.24	.13	-.05	.75
3 . ITEM 3	-.02	-.08	.23	-.64
2 . ITEM 2	.32	.32	-.05	.59
Eigenvalue	9.6	1.3	1.3	1.1
% Variance	50.6	7.1	6.7	5.5

Confirmatory factor analysis

Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed for the four-factor model revealed by the EFA on subsample B. The indices in the estimated model revealed a sufficient fit for the observed data: $\chi^2 = 601.83$, $df = 146$, $p = .001$, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, RMSEA = .07 (90% CI = .06 to .08), SRMR = .05. All factor saturations were significant at $p < .001$ (ranging from .43 to .82). Standardized parameter estimates are reported in Figure 1. 490

Internal consistency and item-scale correlations of the forgiveness scale

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was computed to examine the internal consistency of the scale measured in its four dimensions. Results indicated satisfactory internal consistency for the DEP (.89), for AP (.76), and for LAP (.74). The Cronbach’s alpha for the H subscale was .61, indicating that internal consistency was not well satisfied. 495

An item-scale correlation analysis was conducted to examine the Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting subscale item homogeneity. 500

The item-scale correlations ranged from .86 to .88 for DEP; from .69 to .75 for AP; from .65 to .73 for LAP; and from .45 to .58 for H.

Gender differences

We conducted a t test on the Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting subscales to examine gender differences. Statistically significant gender 505

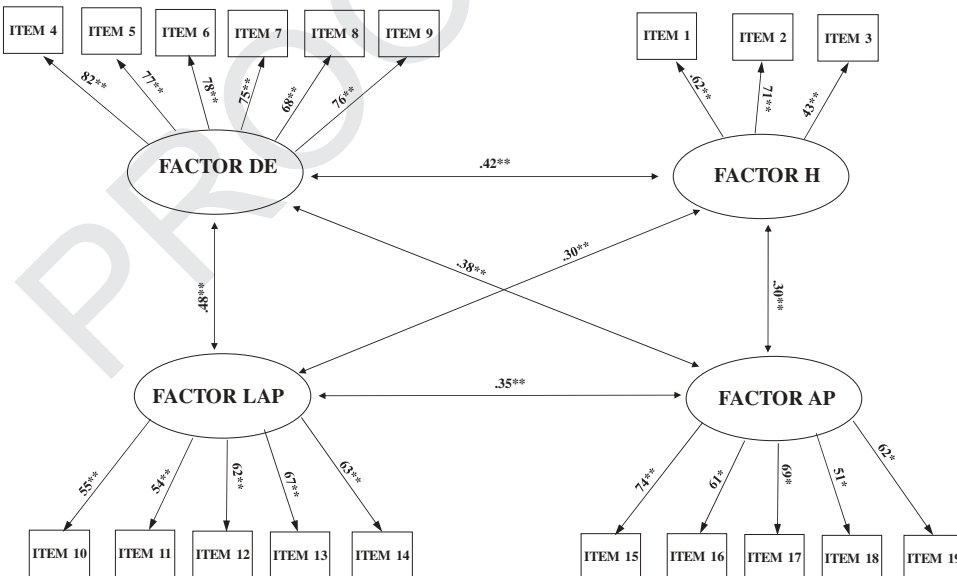


Figure 1. Factor structure of the Italian attitudes toward same-sex parenting scale. Note. ** $p < .001$.

differences were found: $t(626) = 4.6, p < .001$ for DE; $t(626) = 3.8, p < .001$ for AP; $t(626) = -2.2, p < .05$ for LAP; and $t(626) = 4.1, p < .001$ for H.

On average, male participants showed higher levels than did female participants for beliefs related to children's development in homosexual families (DE subscale: males $M = 14.5; SD = 5.7$ vs. females $M = 12.5; SD = 4.7$), more negative attitudes and beliefs about homosexuals' parenting skills (AP subscale: males $M = 9; SD = 3.4$ vs. females $M = 8.1; SD = 2.9$), and more negative attitudes and opinions about the legalization of the main means of access to parenthood for homosexuals (LAP subscale: males $M = 16.4; SD = 4.2$ vs. females $M = 15.6; SD = 4.6$). 510 515

Criterion-related validity

The convergent validity was tested in the second sample of adolescents. All Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting subscale scores were statistically significantly related to the ATLG scale (.63 $p < .001$ for DE; .73 $p < .001$ for AP; .64 $p < .001$ for LAP; and .62 $p < .001$ for H). Concurrent validity was satisfied. 520

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the psychometric properties of the Italian version of Vecho and Schneider's (2012) French questionnaire to detect attitudes toward same-sex parenting. The 19 items comprising the scale were translated following the guidelines for the translation-back-translation procedure (Van de Vijver & Poortinga, 1997); the scale was translated from French into Italian and from Italian into French by two independent mother-language professional translators. Then the two versions were compared to avoid redundancies and fix eventual discordances. 525

The sample was randomly split into two subsamples to analyze the Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting's latent structure. One subsample was used for the EFA and the other for the CFA. 530

The EFA extracted a four-factor solution that explained 69.9% of the total.

The CFA was conducted on the four-factor model revealed by the EFA on subsample B. It emerged that all factor saturations were significant at $p < .001$ (ranging from .43 to .82), suggesting a good consistency of the translated version with the constructs the scale was supposed to detect. 535

The internal consistency of each scale was also examined by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficient. It emerged that the DEP (.89), AP (.76), and LAP (.74) scales had a satisfactory internal consistency, while internal consistency was not well satisfied for the H scale (.61). These data are in line with the original validation of the scale, in which this scale also showed a not very satisfying internal consistency (Vecho & Schneider, 2012). 540

A t test was conducted to analyze gender differences, showing statistically significantly more negative attitudes for each subscale in male participants 545

than female participants, confirming a trend consistent with that described by literature on this topic (Ioverno et al., 2018; Pistella, Tanzilli, Ioverno, Lingiardi, & Baiocco, 2018; Sabin et al., 2015; Vecho, Gross, Gratton, D'Amore, & Green, 2016; Webb, Chonody, & Kavanagh, 2017).

A second sample was used to test the convergent validity between the Italian Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting scale and the ATLG scale. It emerged that each subscale was significantly related to the ATLG scale, showing a satisfying construct validity. 550

The scale shows many benefits. First, it analyzes three of the most important themes related to attitudes about homosexual parenting: attitudes toward child development, attitudes toward the main means of access to parenting for homosexual individuals, and attitudes and beliefs about homosexual individuals' parenting skills. It also detects attitudes toward these topics while considering the effect that the parents' genders, the child's gender, and the interactions of the two could have on the opinions and attitudes of the respondents. 555 560

Further, the simplicity and speed of administration required by the scale, combined with its precision in detecting the construct it is meant to study, suggest that this scale could be useful for the Italian population, both in research and in social domains. 565

Regarding the research field, the scale could help scholars deepen studies on attitudes toward homosexual parenting in the Italian context from new points of view.

Concerning the psychosocial field, the scale could be a useful tool for psychologists in the planning and implementation phases of educational program, information, and sensitivity training and projects, addressing both professionals and the general population to prevent eventual discriminatory or inadequate attitudes and behaviors toward same-sex parenting in Italy (Lloyd et al., 2017). Sensitivity and formation projects and interventions could be useful in better preparing professional figures, such as social workers, medical and health care professionals, and teachers to handle problems and situations related to same-sex parent families in the most effective, professional, and supportive way (Avarett & Hede, 2012; Bliss & Harris, 1999). Professionals declare themselves to be unprepared to face situations linked to sexual diversity and sexual identity (Chonody & Yu, 2014), and the importance of sensitivity and formation interventions, even during the years of training, have been highlighted by several studies (Banwari et al., 2015; Camilleri & Ryan, 2006; Fernández Molina & Alarcón, 2015; Hegde et al., 2014). These interventions tend toward a possibly more complete formation that could help professionals work in a more appropriate and supportive manner when faced with diversity, sexual diversity—both in adulthood and in childhood (Caldarera et al., *in press*)—and new kinds of families, such as those led by same-sex parents (Swank & Raiz, 2007). 570 575 580 585

The Italian version of the questionnaire could be used to detect the attitudes of professionals and help them work with projects of formation; it could also be useful in making psychologists more aware of the primary points of sensitivity that should be treated among the target group of the intervention or project. The questionnaire could also be helpful in projecting and implementing comparative transnational studies to evaluate and detect eventual cultural and social differences on the topic.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are essentially related to the fact that recruitment methods did not allow us to create a representative sample of the Italian population. However, due to the good reliability and consistency levels shown in this preliminary study and to the potential usefulness and innovativeness of the scale for the Italian population, further research could be advantageous for validating the scale on a more representative sample of the Italian population. Future research could also include longitudinal studies with test-retest techniques and could detect discriminant validity.

Conclusion

This study adds to a growing body of research on attitudes toward same-sex parenting and on measures to detect them, focused on the Italian context, where research on these topics is more recent and less developed compared to international literature, perhaps also because of the later emergence of different familial forms, including same-sex parent ones, in the Italian context compared to other contexts. In recent years, more and more studies on same-sex parenting and new instruments to detect attitudes on this topic have also emerged in the Italian scenario. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no other published instrument to detect attitudes toward same-sex parenting in the Italian context that takes into account the possible influence on respondents' opinions of the interaction between the children's and parents' genders when considering same-sex parenting.

The Italian version of Vecho and Schneider's (2012) questionnaire could be used to explore attitudes toward same-sex parenting, and given its good levels of reliability and consistency shown in this study, it could suggest an opportunity to conduct further research to provide a validation of the scale to make it available for the Italian population.

Future perspectives

Increasingly, studying phenomena such as parenting in homosexual couples is an emerging necessity, due to the growing presence of these realities in the

Italian context. This necessity means that instruments to study various aspects related to the topic must be improved, and projects must be implemented that aim to take care of the quality of life of the components of these emerging family forms.

However, the increasing presence of nontraditional family forms, of which same-sex parent families are a part, will require more and more serious consideration of the complexity of these families' situations, including multiple dynamics and peculiarities. These include such subjects as the lifespan and aging of same-sex couples (Gerino, Caldarera, Curti, Brustia, & Rollè, 2018); attitudes toward intimate partner violence in the juvenile population, to develop prevention programs (Lundgren & Amin, 2015; Rollè, Giardina, Caldarera, Gerino, & Brustia, 2018); and intimate partner violence and domestic violence in same-sex couples (Cannon, Hamel, Buttell, & Ferreira, 2016; Rollè et al., 2018).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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