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The effects of parental migration on subjective well-being of children: the case of Romania

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Question

- What are the effects of migration for work of the parents on children's subjective well-being?



“Children left home” phenomenon

- ▶ Documented in sending countries
 - ▶ Latin America (Artico, 2003; Dreby, 2010; Foner, 2009; Glasgow și Gouse-Sheese, 1994; Schmalzbauer, 2004; Smith, 2006)
 - ▶ Southern and Eastern Europe (Lutz, 2008a; Chipea & Bălțătescu, 2010).
 - ▶ Asia (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; McLellan & Steward, 2014; Nguyen, Yeoh, & Toyota, 2006)

“Children left home” phenomenon

► Causes

1. Illegal migration

- One or both parents pass illegally the frontier and don't want to expose their children to legal issues (Ozyegin & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2008)

2. Difficulties in the receiving countries

- The presence of a child may undermine parent's efforts to get a job
- Parents don't want to expose their children to racism in the receiving countries

“Children left home” phenomenon

► Causes

3. Care for children

- Parents don't want to move children from their schools

4. Temporary migration

- Parents go abroad for short/medium time and going with their children doesn't make sense

5. Immigration policies in the receiving countries

- Germany, France: immigration of children is strictly regulated
- Spain: as a reminiscence of the colonial past, the dependent persons from immigrant person have right to reunify with her (Escriva & Skinner, 2008).

Types of effects of migration of parents on children

► Positive

1. Remittances

- Remittances increase economic well-being of the family
- Comparatively, families with an emigrant member are better-off than the rest of families
- This also generates a superior social status (Dreby, 2007)

2. Social capital

- Parents develop social networks in the immigration process
- Social capital pass through their children (Dreby, 2007)

Types of effects of migration of parents on children

► Negative

1. Psychological

- Loneliness, anxiety, depression (Artico, 2003; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1994; Pottinger & Williams Brown, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Kim, 2010)
- Loss of trust in adults (Artico, 2003)
- Trauma, post-traumatic syndrome (Masser, 1992)
- Abuses from the remaining members of families (Pottinger & Williams Brown, 2006)

Types of effects of migration of parents on children

► Negative

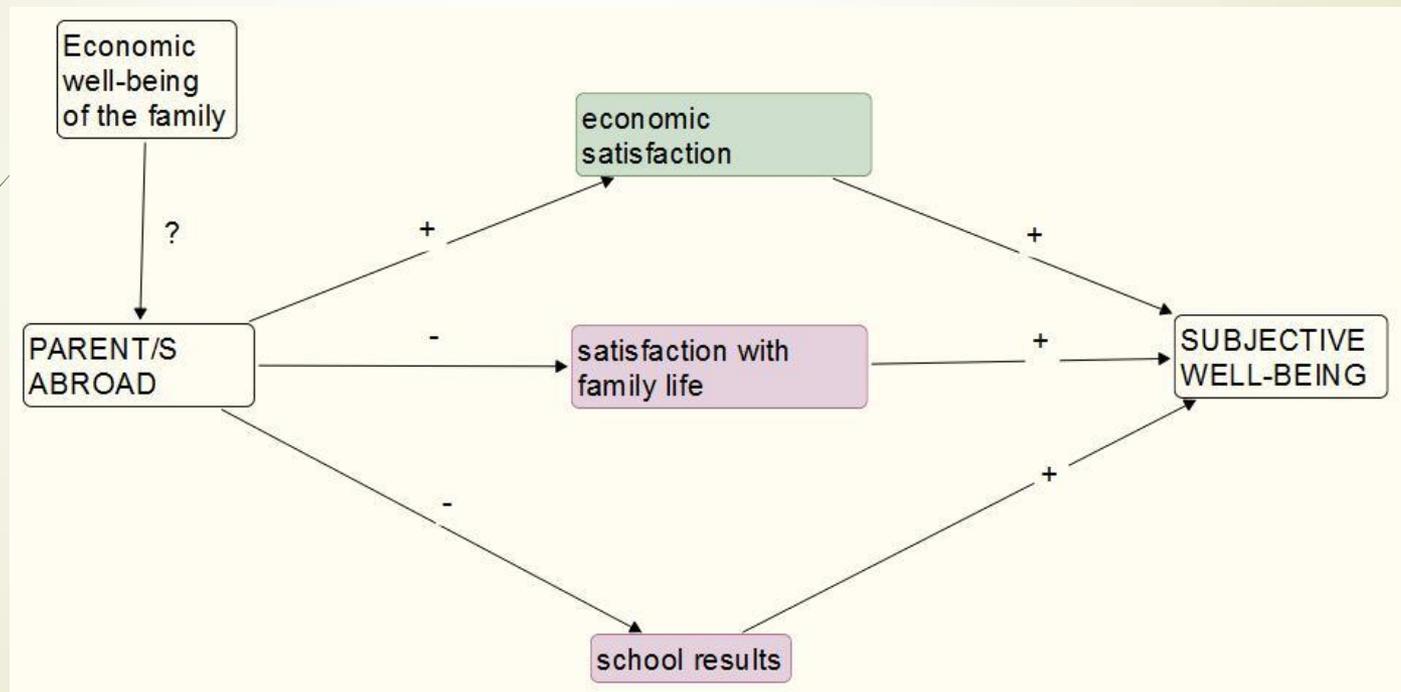
2. Integration

- Violence, aggressiveness (Dreby, 2010; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1994; Smith, 2006)
- Bad school results
 - Sustained (Dreby, 2010; Pottinger & Williams Brown, 2006)
 - Rejected (Kandel & Kao, 2001 and Hatos (2008) for Romania)
- Adjustment in adult age – not long-term studies available

Research questions

- ▶ Giving that most of above-mentioned effects have influence on subjective well-being of children
 1. how migration of parents will be empirically associated with happiness and life satisfaction of children?
 2. Will the negative effects prevail over positive effects?

Theoretical model



Hypotheses

1. Having parents who work/ed abroad influence positively child economic satisfaction, which in turn influence positively her subjective well-being
2. Having parents who work/ed abroad influence negatively satisfaction with family life, which in turn influence negatively her subjective well-being
3. Having parents who work/ed abroad influence negatively school results, which in turn influence negatively her subjective well-being

Metodology

- ▶ International Survey for Children's Wellbeing sample for Romania
 - ▶ 10-11 & 12-13 years questionnaire
 - ▶ Date: 2013-2014
 - ▶ N =1359 &1509

Measures

- ▶ In the last year, did any of your parents lived or worked in other country more than a month?
 - ▶ Mother (Yes-No)
 - ▶ Father (Yes-No)

Measures

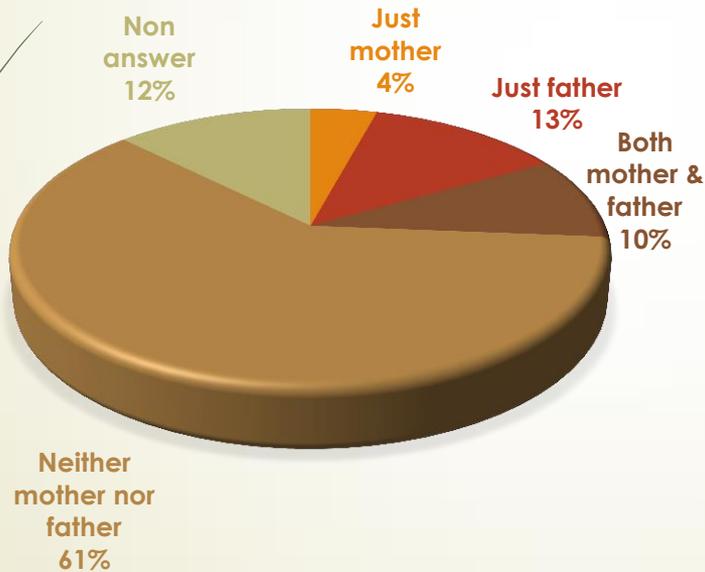
- ▶ Endowment (summative scale of 10 items: Which things you have or not?)
 - ▶ Clothes in good condition to go to school in
 - ▶ Access to computer at home
 - ▶ Access to Internet
 - ▶ Mobile phone
 - ▶ Your own room
 - ▶ Books to read for fun
 - ▶ A family car for transportation
 - ▶ A television at home that you can use
- (Cronbach alpha = 0.65 for 4th grade and 0,665 for 6th grade)

Measures

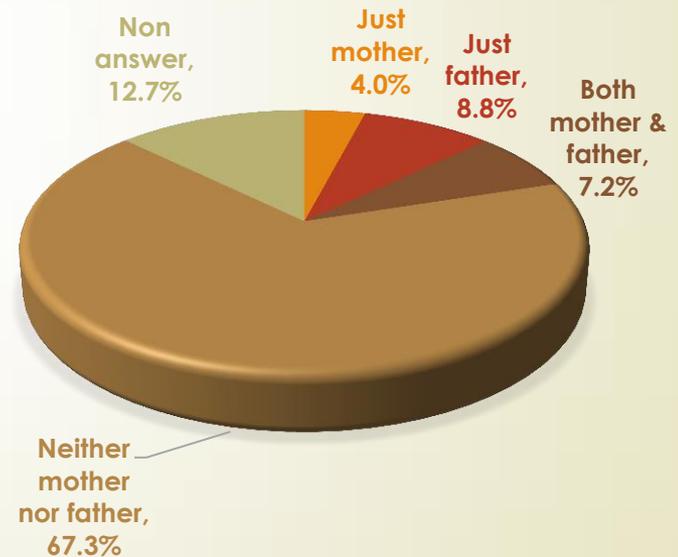
- ▶ Subjective well-being
 - ▶ Satisfaction with life (0-10)
 - ▶ Happiness in last two weeks (0-10)
- ▶ Satisfaction with:
 - ▶ All the things you have (0-10)
 - ▶ Your school marks (0-10)
 - ▶ Your family life (0-10)

Reported migration of parents by children

PARENTS WENT ABROAD AT LEAST A MONTH IN THE LAST YEAR - 4TH GRADE



PARENTS WENT ABROAD AT LEAST A MONTH IN THE LAST YEAR - 6TH GRADE



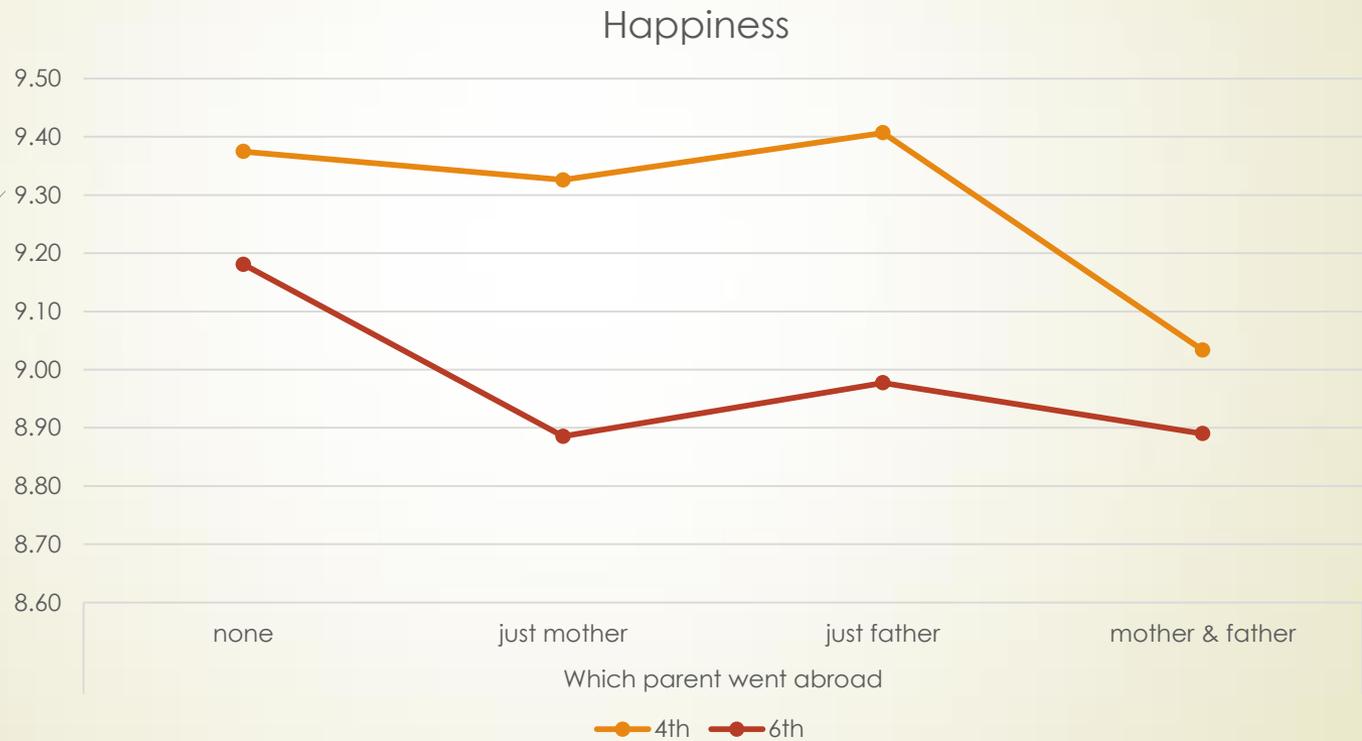
Discussion

- ▶ Analysis by regions and demographic groups are credible
 - ▶ Highest percent of parental migration was reported in the regions with high density of Hungarian population, as well as in the North East – the poorest region.
 - ▶ Supported by previous surveys (Toth, Toth, Voicu, & Ștefănescu, 2007)
 - ▶ Roma children reported higher percent of father's migration
- ▶ Rather high percent, compared with national statistics and other surveys

Life satisfaction & happiness



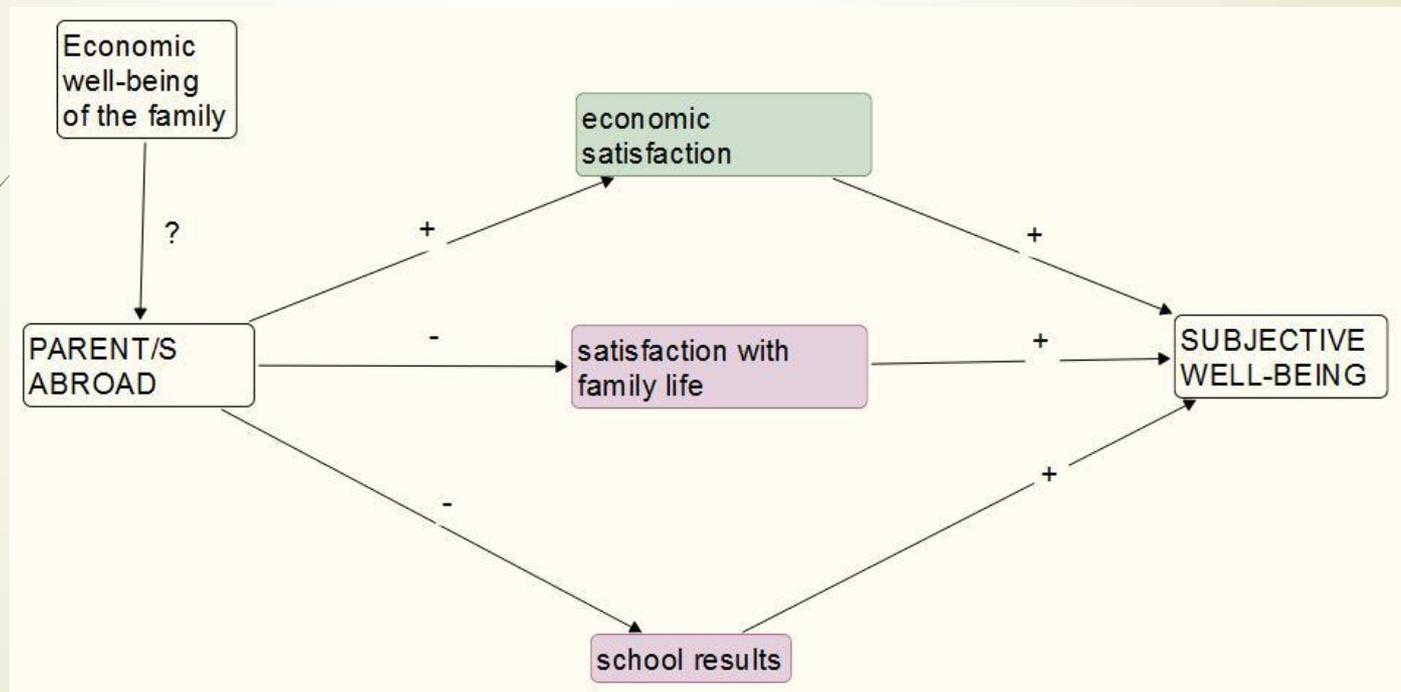
Life satisfaction & happiness



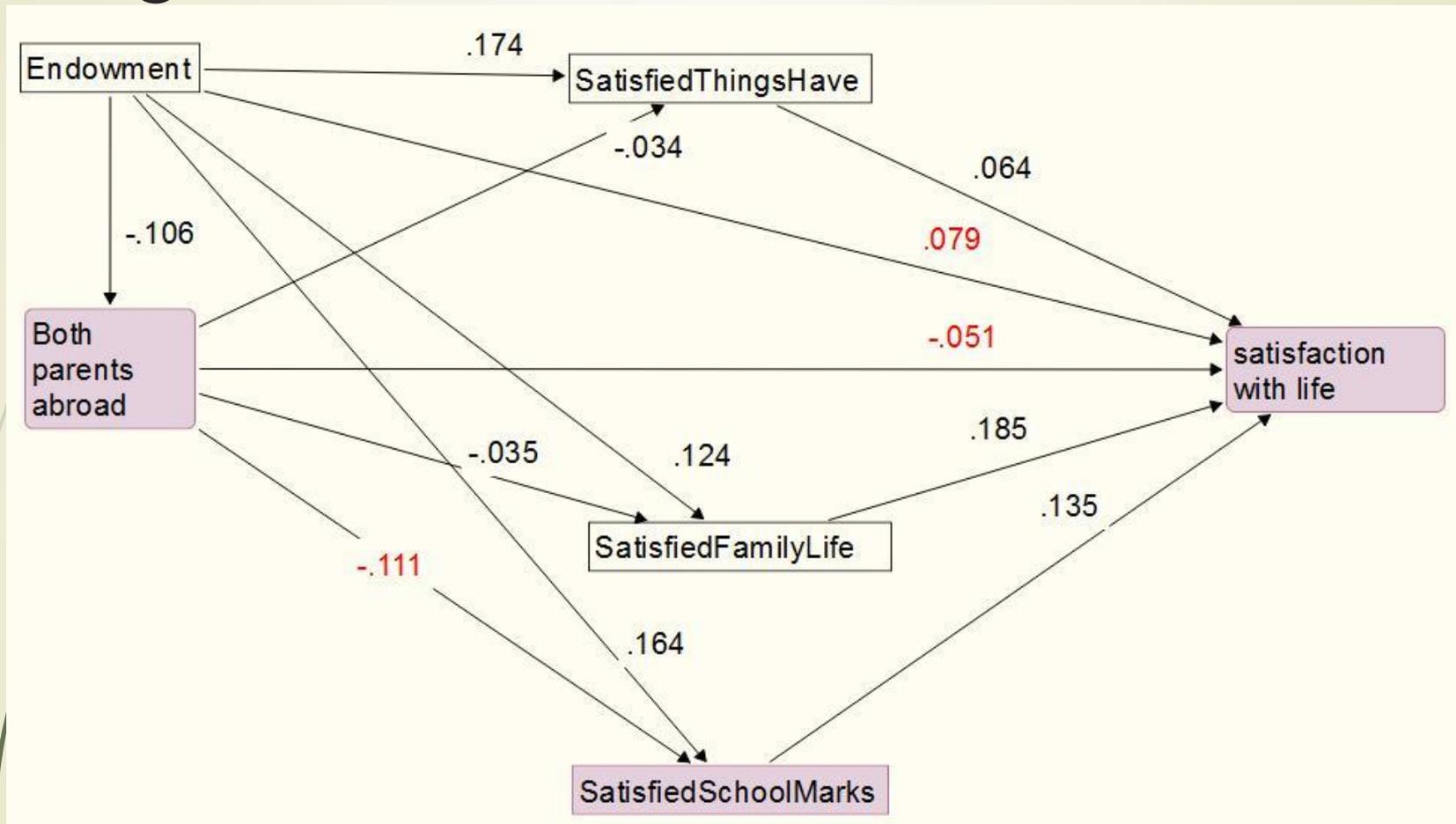
Discussion

- ▶ Overall, children whose parents had not spent time abroad are the happiest
 - ▶ This is in line with previous studies based on same data
 - ▶ Lack of life events keep children happy (Monserrat et al., 2013; Bălătescu et al., 2013)
- ▶ The unhappiest are those for both parents went abroad
- ▶ Effect of mother going abroad is almost as bad as with both parents going abroad
 - ▶ Gender roles: mothers as carers

Testing the theoretical model

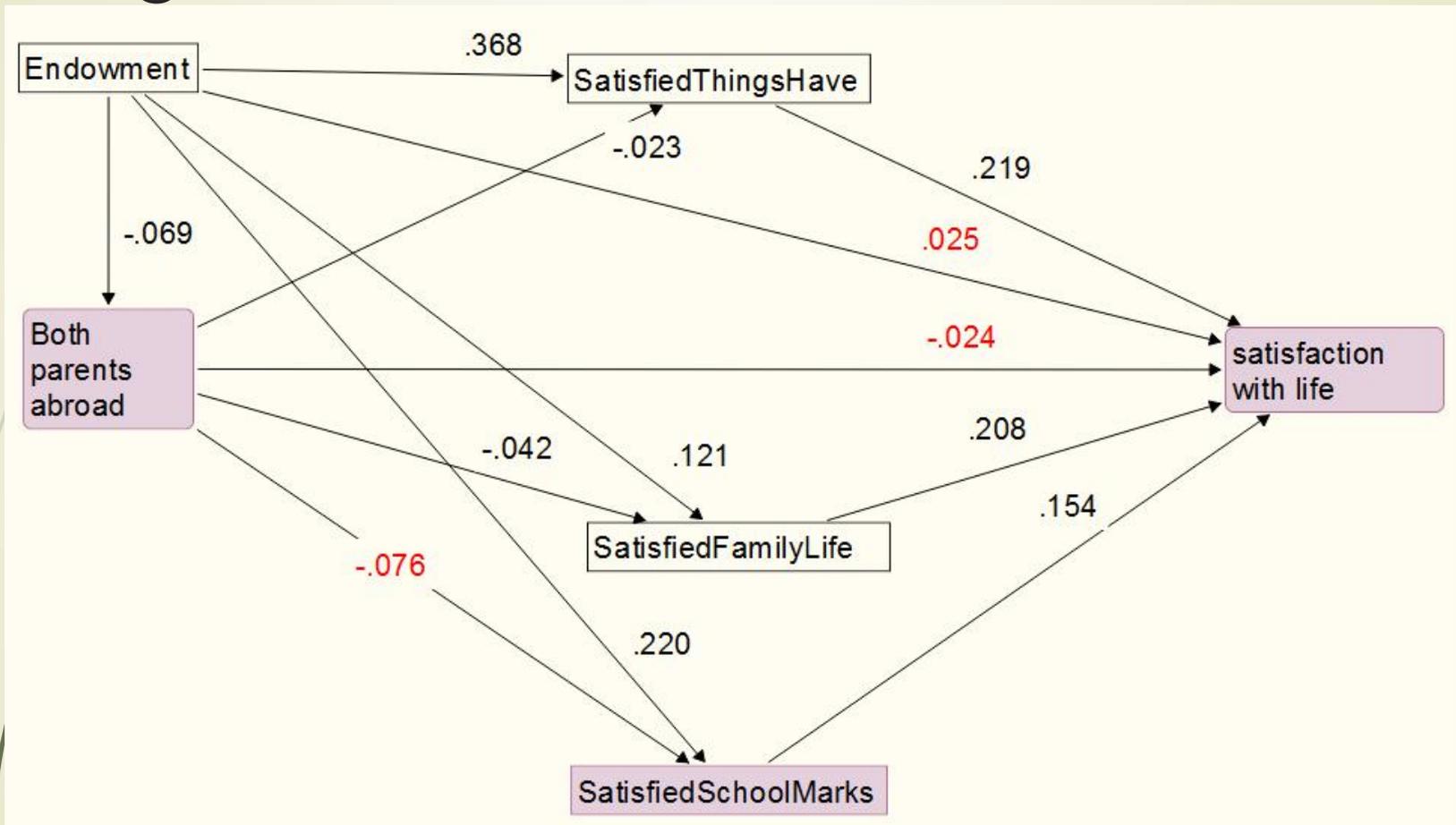


Path model of life satisfaction – 4th grade



$R^2=0.094$

Path model of life satisfaction – 6th grade



$R^2=0.174$

Discussion

- ▶ Relationships between variables for 4th and 6th grade children are compatible
→ pattern for all children
- ▶ Similar, but less stronger results (in some cases non significant) for
 - ▶ only 1 parent going abroad
 - ▶ Happiness as dependent variable

Limitations

- ▶ The question mixes travel for work with other cases (e.g. family visits)
- ▶ We only ask *if* parents went abroad at least a month – no measure of how many months
- ▶ No measures of the relationships with the parents working abroad
- ▶ Correlational study
 - ▶ causal relations disputable
 - ▶ Effects hard to find

Further work

- ▶ Examine the living arrangement in case of transnational families
- ▶ Multilevel approach
 - ▶ We tested some regression and the results were similar
- ▶ Other measures of well-being
- ▶ A large array of predictors
- ▶ SEM
- ▶ Comparative approach (including Estonia & Poland)

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