

## Strengths and Weaknesses of Family Leisure in Adolescents

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### Abstract

The increase in shared family time has reopened the debate on family leisure and its educational potential. However, most studies have focused primarily on quantification, without adequately assessing the quality of these practices. The aim of this descriptive, inferential, quantitative, cross-sectional, and non-experimental study is to identify and delimit the weaknesses and strengths that adolescents attribute to family leisure. A descriptive study was conducted with a sample of 1,054 students from the seventh to tenth grades in seven Spanish high schools, who completed the questionnaire “Evaluation of Family Leisure Practices. Questionnaire for Adolescents.” The results highlight improved communication and family bonding as the main strengths, while repetition and routine family traditions emerge as the primary weaknesses. Moreover, the findings indicate that grade level, age, nationality, mother’s nationality, family structure, and academic performance are significant variables in the perception of strengths, whereas gender, grade level, age, and mother’s educational level are significant for the perception of weaknesses. These results suggest that the implementation of family leisure as an educational resource requires counselling and guidance in order to minimize risks and maximize opportunities. Preventive actions should also be established to counteract family disengagement as adolescents grow older.

Keywords: family leisure, adolescents, family leisure.

### 1. Introduction

Family leisure, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 experience, has emerged as one of the most recent and relevant educational concepts in contemporary society. This construct is grounded in two main theoretical

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sources: family theory and leisure theory. In this study, family refers to parents or legal guardians and their adolescent children living in the same household, recognizing that the age of the children shapes both the form and the quality of family leisure (Layland et al., 2018). The family is conceived as a primary relational and educational space—generally taken for granted—that must be safeguarded (Donati, 2023). In this regard, Hernández-Prados (2022) highlights the educational role of the family across formal, non-formal, and informal spheres, and advocates a shift from a passive-clientelist model to an active-transformative one. This view aligns with the perspective of the present study, which conceives family leisure as shared time with educational meaning, rather than mere coexistence.

Family leisure is described as the time families spend together in free time or recreational activities (McCabe, 2015), which are freely chosen, enjoyable, and shared by all members. It entails interaction, communication, and mutual participation, rather than simply coexisting in the same physical space (Álvarez-Muñoz, 2020). In contrast, routines and obligations are excluded from this concept, as they do not meet its voluntary or educational dimension. From this perspective, one of the main risks lies in reducing family leisure to mere entertainment, overlooking its pedagogical potential as a space where values, habits, and attitudes are transmitted. Indeed, without disregarding the significance of the residential context (urban-rural), adolescents report that family leisure goes beyond the sharing of space and time, functioning instead as preparation for life through the transmission of values, with honesty and sociability standing out above courage, hedonism, transcendence, temperance, and wisdom (Hernández-Prados & Álvarez-Muñoz, 2024).

According to Layland et al. (2018), family leisure constitutes a key element of family dynamics. It is a multifaceted concept that can take multiple forms. To avoid conceptual ambiguities, and following the general principles of leisure theory, García Sanmartín (2017) identifies six defining features of family leisure: free choice and voluntariness, communication and negotiation, a sense of belonging, collectivity, contextualization, and subjectivity.

The literature consistently highlights family leisure as an essential component of family life, contributing to human development, the socialization of children, and family cohesion in general (Schwab & Dustin, 2015). Its incorporation into family life has been associated with a wide range of benefits at both the personal and community levels: increased confidence and self-esteem, enhanced capacity for interaction and communication, and the strengthening of interpersonal relationships (Martín Quintana et al., 2018; Sharaievska & Stodolska, 2017). Family leisure has also been linked to happiness (Liu & Da, 2020). However, Melton and Zabriskie (2016) found that not all forms of family leisure contribute equally to happiness, with time devoted to

family activities within the home yielding the highest levels of well-being. Accordingly, it “has consistently been identified as one of the most significant behavioural characteristics related to positive family outcomes” (Zabriskie & Kay, 2013, p. 81).

Sharing time in leisure activities is not silent time; on the contrary, it becomes an invitation to dialogue among family members. Family leisure provides an opportunity for understanding, fosters communication, and creates a sense of fluidity within the family environment that promotes quality family interaction (O'Neill et al., 2017). Listening, empathy, speaking skills, and assertiveness are essential ingredients for emotional bonding and for several positive determinants of family time, such as conflict resolution, adaptability to new situations, and the assumption of collaborative family roles (Hodge et al., 2018).

Communication within family leisure also plays a key role in the planning and negotiation stages, where the interests and preferences of all members should be considered (Schwab & Dustin, 2015). This encourages participation and helps ensure a consensual agreement on activities, preventing parental imposition from becoming the norm. In doing so, families avoid one of the main risks associated with leisure practices: perceiving diverse interests as irreconcilable. By granting family leisure a voluntary and participatory character, a stronger sense of belonging can be cultivated within each member of the family unit, leading to shared benefits (Alarcón, 2017).

Family leisure also plays an essential role in child socialization. The family constitutes the first social environment in which roles are assumed, communication develops, and values such as cooperation, competition, and coexistence are introduced. Through these experiences, children begin to acquire the foundations of citizenship, guided by parental responsibility in fostering behaviors, values, habits, and attitudes necessary for social integration (Hodge et al., 2017). The family, therefore, functions as a generator of social capital, enabling community coexistence (Roberto et al., 2020). However, this potential is weakened when family time is governed by incomprehension or indifference (Zabriskie et al., 2018).

In this regard, family emotions serve as a key means to support personality development, facilitate cognitive processes, strengthen mental health, and contribute to identity formation (Särkämö, 2018; Walton, 2019). Family leisure, as a participatory system, increases satisfaction and affection, both necessary for personal development (Melton, 2017). It also generates a positive family climate that fosters communication, acceptance, and affection (Shannon, 2017). Such experiences enhance the sense of belonging (Hawi & Samaha, 2017), build confidence, resilience, social competence, and self-esteem, and provide valuable tools for addressing family challenges (Rapoport & Rapoport, 2019).

Another benefit lies in the diversity of activities. A varied leisure profile motivates participation and improves the quality of shared time (Townsend et al., 2017). It promotes relaxation and enjoyment through social interaction and feedback, impacting cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Pluta et al., 2017). Intrinsically motivated and meaningful activities are particularly associated with higher levels of subjective well-being (Kuykendall et al., 2018). Furthermore, physical and sports activities within family leisure—such as walking, cycling, outdoor games, swimming, or practicing sports together—foster healthy lifestyle habits that strengthen both well-being and long-term health (Pereira et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, responsibilities and obligations have reduced the value attached to family leisure. Hartmut Rosa's (2013) theory of social acceleration illustrates how technological and social changes compress time, increasing pressures and reducing opportunities for shared interaction. Similarly, school schedules and extracurricular activities often displace family time, neglecting its potential for enjoyment and satisfaction (Strazdienė et al., 2017). Data show that only about 57% of adolescents regularly spend free time with their families, a relatively low figure (Ferreira et al., 2015).

Although the family is valued as a context of security and support, shared time is often relegated to a secondary place, overshadowed by individual interests. The threat of individualism, egocentrism, and unilateral decision-making diminishes shared leisure practices and weakens family bonds (Chesser, 2015). As Bellardeni (2013) warns, this fosters "self-socialized" individuals shaped in environments of isolation and dissatisfaction. A new family model thus emerges, prioritizing individual time (e.g., reading, computer use) over shared experiences, distancing itself from "familiarized leisure" (Kotlaja, 2020).

Discouragement or disinterest is another challenge, since repetitive or imposed traditions may eventually feel like obligations rather than opportunities for bonding. For example, watching television as a family, while common, often fails to foster communication or interaction (Salazar-Barajas et al., 2020). Similarly, adolescents' excessive involvement in unstructured leisure—such as problematic use of digital technologies, social networks, or video games—can negatively impact family dynamics by limiting communication and weakening shared experiences (Gil García et al., 2022; Hernández-Prados et al., 2021; Ibabe et al., 2024). Yet digital media can also offer opportunities when mediated by parents. Cino et al. (2025) highlights that shared use of technology, when guided responsibly, may foster communication and educational value.

Conflicts also constitute a potential difficulty in family leisure. As natural features of human coexistence, conflicts may erode belonging, reinforce parental dominance, and trigger behavioral issues (Beléndez, 2018; Orozco, 2017). External factors such as economic constraints further limit opportunities

for participation in commercial or private leisure activities (González Jiménez et al., 2012; Pomfret & Varley, 2019). However, generational conflicts may also be understood as constructive, offering opportunities for emancipation and integration into adulthood (Sciolla, 2018).

One of the greatest challenges for families today is managing time effectively, as multiple obligations often generate stress that diminishes the quality of free-time activities, making them feel like duties rather than opportunities (Li et al., 2019). This is particularly evident in middle-income families facing dual employment burdens (Bilodeau et al., 2020). Consequently, families require training in planning and negotiation strategies to ensure satisfactory leisure experiences. Although the supply of leisure activities for families has expanded, consumption-driven models often prevail over creative, home-based alternatives, especially during adolescence (Álvarez-Muñoz, 2020).

Educational guidelines that encourage greater involvement in family leisure include: attending to the interests of all family members; selecting activities appropriate to children's developmental stages; fostering a positive climate; prioritizing negotiation; reinforcing participation; and valuing each activity in order to improve future experiences (García Sanmartín, 2017; Maroñas et al., 2018; Sanz Arazuri et al., 2018).

Given the fragility of parent-child relationships during adolescence (Wisniewski et al., 2017), and in light of the multiple benefits outlined above, it is essential to promote family leisure experiences involving at least one parent and the adolescent. Understanding how adolescents perceive the strengths and weaknesses of family leisure is therefore critical, as it provides insights that can guide families in improving their practices.

### ***1.1 Objectives of the study***

Although it exists a variety of researches focus on the family leisure, a few investigate about the quality of these practices. Thus, the main objective of this research is to describe, analyze and interpret the family leisure practices developed by the adolescent population enrolled in the Compulsory Secondary Education stage in the schools of the Region of Murcia. In order to achieve the general purpose of the study, a series of more specific objectives are stated, making it possible to systematize the research action:

1. To identify and describe the family leisure activities carried out by the adolescent population (From 12 to 18 years) in the Region of Murcia, with regard to the strengths and weaknesses.
2. To observe the differences in the strengths and weaknesses of family leisure by the adolescents according to the personal (gender, age,

nationality), academic (ownership of the centre, academic performance) and family variables (family typology, number of siblings, age, work situation and parents' level of studies).

## **2. Methodology**

### ***2.1 Research design***

This study employs a descriptive, non-experimental design. More specifically, within the non-experimental framework, a cross-sectional design was adopted, as it involves the analysis of specific variables in a defined group. Given the need for an exhaustive and controlled measurement from an objective perspective that seeks to minimize the potential influence of external agents (such as teachers, researchers, or family members), a quantitative approach was chosen. To ensure this condition, the questionnaires were completed individually and anonymously by the adolescents, without the presence or intervention of other actors who might bias their responses. This design thus enables the collection of reliable data, avoids manipulation of variables, and respects the natural perceptions of the participants (Bisquerra Alzina, 2004).

### ***2.2 Sample and data collection***

For the selection of the sample, a probabilistic random sampling method was applied, considering as the study population the 76,555 students enrolled in Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) in the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia during the 2021–2022 academic year. Based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the minimum sample size required to ensure representativeness was calculated at 383 students. The final sample of 1,054 students therefore exceeds this threshold, allowing the findings to be considered representative of the population. The inclusion criterion was being enrolled in any ESO grade in an educational center in the Region of Murcia, regardless of ownership (public, charter, or private).

The final sample consists of 1,054 adolescents in Compulsory Secondary Education (Grades 7 to 10) from nine educational centers in the Region of Murcia, seven privately owned and two charter schools. Of the participants, 51.6% were male and 48.4% female. Nearly 90% of the sample was between 12 and 15 years of age, with a proportional distribution across grade levels, and no

significant differences were observed among students from different grades. Only 3.1% of the participants were of foreign origin.

With respect to family characteristics, the nuclear model predominated, representing 77.2% of the adolescents. Other family structures included blended families (8.5%), extended families (8%), and single-parent families (6.1%). The average number of children per family was 2.32, with the most common family model being two children (57.4% of the sample). Regarding parental sociodemographic data, 12.6% of mothers and 14.6% of fathers were of foreign origin. Employment rates were higher among fathers (90%) than mothers (74.2%). In terms of age, 63.6% of fathers and 66.2% of mothers were between 40 and 50 years old. With respect to educational attainment, mothers most frequently held university degrees (29.2%), while fathers most often reported secondary-level studies (31%).

*Table 1. Family and sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.*

Variable	Categories / Values	% / Mean
Family structure	Nuclear	77.2%
	Assembled	8.5%
	Extended	8.0%
	Single-parent	6.1%
Number of children	Mean	2.32
	Families with 2 children	57.4%
Parents' nationality	Mothers of foreign origin	12.6%
	Fathers of foreign origin	14.6%
Parents' employment status	Fathers employed	90.0%
	Mothers employed	74.2%
Parents' age	Fathers aged 40–50	63.6%
	Mothers aged 40–50	66.2%
Educational level	Mothers with university studies	29.2%
	Fathers with average/secondary studies	31.0%

Once the questionnaire had been developed, a bulletin was distributed via e-mail to all Compulsory Secondary Education centers in the Region of Murcia. The message included the final version of the questionnaire, a descriptive sheet of the study, and a confidentiality agreement. Schools that agreed to participate were subsequently contacted to provide more detailed information and to distribute both the questionnaires and the informed consent forms to the families of the participating adolescents. After one month, the schools were contacted again to collect the completed questionnaires.

### 2.3 Instrument

The results of this study are based on two dimensions of the questionnaire “Evaluation of Family Leisure Practices. Questionnaire for Adolescents”, which consists of a total of 50 items. The development of the instrument followed three phases. First, an analysis of leisure instruments used in Spanish doctoral theses was conducted. Second, a panel of 18 national and international experts contributed to the design of the initial version of the questionnaire. Finally, a validation process was carried out in which the initial questionnaire was distributed together with an evaluation instrument. Each item was assessed according to three descriptors—suitability, coherence, and relevance—while allowing space for suggestions for improvement. This process provided essential feedback for the development of the final version of the questionnaire.

The instrument demonstrated a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of .959, well above the threshold recommended by González Alonso and Santacruz (2015). For the present study, data were drawn from the first 20 items, corresponding to the dimensions of weaknesses (items 1–10) and strengths (items 11–20), as presented in Table 2.

*Table 2. List of items weaknesses of family leisure.*

ITEMS WEAKNESSES
1. We spend little time together as a family
2. We have different tastes or interests regarding leisure practices
3. Our economy does not allow us to carry out some leisure activities with the family
4. All the leisure activities we do come from our close environment
5. My parents decide on the type of activities to be carried out
6. Preference is given to individual leisure time (reading, computer...)
7. Family leisure activities are repetitive
8. Conflicts, tensions and feelings of unease often arise in family leisure activities.
9. There are activities that are traditional in my family because we do them from time to time (meals, meetings, trips...)
10. We do not attach importance to family time
ITEMS STRENGTHS
11. Improving relations with my parents
12. Getting to know my family better
13. Communication between us
14. Conflict resolution
15. The union as a family unit
16. A healthy lifestyle
17. The diversity of activities of different types of leisure
18. A time of fun and relaxation
19. The opportunity to express my emotions
20. The motivation and desire to spend more time with the family



## 2.4 Analyzing the data

The data were coded and analyzed using SPSS (version 19). Reliability and factor analyses were first conducted to verify the internal consistency of the instrument. A Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated a non-normal distribution of the variables, which led to the use of non-parametric statistics. Subsequently, descriptive and inferential analyses were performed, applying Mann–Whitney and Kruskal–Wallis tests depending on the type of variable, with a significance level set at  $p < .05$ . Finally, Cohen’s  $d$  effect size was calculated for the significant results in order to determine the magnitude of the relationships, with the conventional mean value of  $d = 0.50$  considered as the reference threshold (Cohen, 1988).

## 3. Results

To identify the positive outcomes derived from family leisure, Table 3 presents the descriptive data of the 10 items formulated as strengths, based on the input provided by the panel of experts. Overall, 50% of secondary education students reported several strengths associated with family leisure practices, with all items obtaining mean scores at or above three—corresponding to the “sufficient” level on the response scale. Accordingly, both the mode and the median were consistently located at values of three or four across all items. The overall mean score for this dimension was 2.99.

Among the individual items, communication among family members ( $\bar{x} = 3.23$ ;  $\sigma = .862$ ) emerged as the most highly valued strength. In contrast, the expression of emotions was identified as the least reinforced aspect of family leisure. Particularly noteworthy are items 15 and 18, which describe family leisure as an excellent context for fostering family bonding ( $\bar{x} = 3.17$ ;  $\sigma = .918$ ) and for promoting relaxation and recreation ( $\bar{x} = 3.12$ ;  $\sigma = .906$ ).

When evaluating family leisure, it is essential to identify the weak points of these practices, as they provide a basis for designing interventions aimed at mitigating such issues. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, median, and mode) related to the weaknesses of family leisure, corresponding to items 1–10 of the questionnaire.

Although no particularly high scores were observed, several weaknesses merit attention, as they received comparatively higher mean values. First, secondary education students identified item 9 ( $\bar{x} = 2.96$ ;  $\sigma = 1.045$ ) as the most evident weakness of family leisure, reflecting the perception of tradition as a form of interaction lacking support or meaningful purpose. Similarly, albeit with

slightly lower values, item 4 ( $\bar{x} = 2.64$ ;  $\sigma = .967$ ) and item 1 ( $\bar{x} = 2.58$ ;  $\sigma = .998$ ) highlight the tendency of family leisure to remain confined to immediate contexts, with the scarcity of time for family gatherings emerging as one of the main problems.

*Table 3. Descriptive statistics regarding the strengths of leisure.*

Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Medium
11. Improving relations with my parents	3	0.956	3	3
12. Getting to know my family better	2.98	0.976	3	3
13. Communication between us	3.23	0.862	4	3
14. Conflict resolution	2.84	0.996	3	3
15. The union as a family unit	3.17	0.918	4	3
16. A healthy lifestyle	2.98	0.943	3	3
17. The diversity of activities of different types of leisure	2.85	0.94	3	3
18. A time of fun and relaxation	3.12	0.906	4	3
19. The opportunity to express my emotions	2.72	1.058	4	3
20. The motivation and desire to spend more time with the family	3.06	0.985	4	3
<b>GLOBAL STRENGTHS</b>	2.99	0.916	4	3

*Table 4. Descriptive statistics regarding leisure weaknesses.*

Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Medium
1. We spend little time together as a family	2.58	0.998	3	3
2. We have different tastes or interests regarding leisure practices	2.57	0.956	2	2
3. Our economy does not allow us to carry out some leisure activities with the family	2.16	1.118	1	2
4. All the leisure activities we do come from our close environment	2.64	0.967	3	3
5. My parents decide on the type of activities to be carried out	2.33	0.975	2	2
6. Preference is given to individual leisure time (reading, computer...)	2.55	1.031	2	3
7. Family leisure activities are repetitive	2.16	0.988	2	2
8. Conflicts, tensions and feelings of unease often arise in family leisure activities.	1.77	0.983	1	1
9. There are activities that are traditional in my family because we do them from time to time (meals, meetings, trips...)	2.96	1.045	4	3
10. We do not attach importance to family time	2.21	1.205	1	2
<b>GLOBAL WEAKNESSES</b>	2.391	1.026	2	2

In contrast, the majority of adolescents did not perceive the remaining weaknesses as particularly significant, as most items obtained mean values close to two ("little"). Conflicts or discomfort (item 6) represented the least concerning weakness ( $\bar{x} = 1.77$ ;  $\sigma = .983$ ). Similarly, item 3 ( $\bar{x} = 2.16$ ;  $\sigma = 1.188$ ) and item 7 ( $\bar{x} = 2.16$ ;  $\sigma = .988$ ) also received low average scores, indicating that economic constraints and boredom due to repetition are not generally viewed as major challenges within the family environment.

Table 5 reports the results of the Mann–Whitney and Kruskal–Wallis tests conducted to examine whether personal and family variables are significantly associated with the perception of strengths in family leisure.

Regarding personal variables, gender ( $p = .586$ ) and school ownership ( $p = .252$ ) did not show significant differences. By contrast, educational level yielded significant effects ( $p = .002$ ), with younger students reporting more strengths than older ones. For example, Grade 7 students ( $\bar{x} = 3.09$ ;  $\sigma = .648$ ) scored higher than Grade 10 students ( $\bar{x} = 2.84$ ;  $\sigma = .687$ ), and Grade 8 students ( $\bar{x} = 3.09$ ;  $\sigma = .708$ ) also outperformed their Grade 10 counterparts ( $\bar{x} = 2.84$ ;  $\sigma = .687$ ). Nationality was also significant ( $p = .012$ ), with foreign students perceiving slightly more strengths ( $\bar{x} = 2.37$ ;  $\sigma = .407$ ) than Spanish students ( $\bar{x} = 2.35$ ;  $\sigma = .500$ ). Academic performance was another relevant factor ( $p = .017$ ), as students with higher grades reported more strengths (e.g., insufficient:  $\bar{x} = 2.88$ ;  $\sigma = .670$  vs. excellent:  $\bar{x} = 3.14$ ;  $\sigma = .608$ ). Similarly, younger adolescents (ages 11–13;  $\bar{x} = 3.26$ ;  $\sigma = .712$ ) perceived more strengths in family leisure than older adolescents (ages 16 and above;  $\bar{x} = 2.66$ ;  $\sigma = .575$ ), a highly significant effect ( $p = .000$ ).

As for family variables, family type was significant ( $p = .035$ ): students from blended families perceived fewer strengths ( $\bar{x} = 2.83$ ;  $\sigma = .680$ ) compared to those from nuclear ( $\bar{x} = 3.01$ ;  $\sigma = .665$ ) or extended families ( $\bar{x} = 3.03$ ;  $\sigma = .766$ ). Parents' nationality also revealed differences ( $p = .050$ ), with students of Spanish parents ( $\bar{x} = 3.00$ ;  $\sigma = .687$ ) perceiving more strengths than those of foreign parents ( $\bar{x} = 2.89$ ;  $\sigma = .679$ ). The mother's nationality was particularly significant ( $p = .002$ ). In addition, parental employment status showed significant differences ( $p = .021$ ), as students whose parents were employed full time ( $\bar{x} = 3.02$ ;  $\sigma = .677$ ) identified more strengths than those with unemployed parents ( $\bar{x} = 2.82$ ;  $\sigma = .616$ ). Finally, parental education level was significant ( $p = .045$ ): students whose parents had lower education levels (Elementary:  $\bar{x} = 2.84$ ;  $\sigma = .777$ ; Secondary:  $\bar{x} = 2.96$ ;  $\sigma = .672$ ) reported fewer strengths than those whose parents had higher education (Undergraduate/Graduate:  $\bar{x} = 3.13$ ;  $\sigma = .613$ ; Bachelor's/Master's/Doctorate:  $\bar{x} = 3.08$ ;  $\sigma = .641$ ).

*Table 5. Differences in family leisure meaning (strengths dimension) according to personal, academic, and family variables.*

STRENGTHS				
Variables	Categories	Mean	Standard deviation	p.
Gender	-	-	-	0.586
Ownership of the centre	-	-	-	0.252
Course	Grade 7	3.09	0.648	0.002
	Grade 8	3.09	0.708	
	Grade 9	2.95	0.679	
	Grade 10	2.84	0.687	
Nationality	Spanish	2.35	0.5	0.012
	Foreign	2.37	0.407	
Academic performance	Insufficient (F)	2.88	0.67	0.017
	Sufficient (C)	2.81	0.73	
	Good (C+)	2.97	0.653	
	Remarkable (B)	3.01	0.715	
	Outstanding (A)	3.14	0.608	
Age	11-13 years old	3.26	0.712	0
	14-16 years old	2.9	0.687	
	More than 16	2.66	0.575	
Number of siblings	-	-	-	0.445
Type of family	Single parent	2.84	0.803	0.035
	assembled	3.01	0.665	
	Nuclear	3.01	0.665	
	Extensive	3.03	0.766	
Father's nationality	Spanish	3	0.687	0.05
	Foreign	2.89	0.679	
Mother's nationality	Spanish	3.02	0.682	0.002
	Foreign	2.83	0.69	
Father's age	-	-	-	0.055
Mother's age	-	-	-	0.241
Father's work situation	Full time	3.02	0.677	0.021
	Part-time	2.96	0.662	
	Retired or pensioner	2.75	0.915	
	Unemployed	2.82	0.616	
Mother's work situation	-	-	-	0.137
Father's level of education	No studies			0.045
	Primary Education	2.84	0.777	
	High School	2.96	0.672	
	Bachelor/Middle Grade	3.01	0.667	
	Higher grade or diplomature	3.13	0.664	
	degree or master degree	3.08	0.641	
	PhD	2.99	6.49	
Mother's level of education	-	-	-	0.389

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After examining the relationship between socio-demographic variables and the strengths of family leisure, Table 6 presents the significance of these variables in relation to weaknesses.

*Table 6. Differences in family leisure meaning (weaknesses dimension) according to personal, academic, and family variables.*

WEAKNESSES				
Variables	Categories	Mean	Standard deviation	p.
Gender	Male	2.39	0.517	0.048
	Female	2.31	0.473	
Ownership of the centre	State school	2.36	0.488	0.037
	Private school	2.31	0.526	
Course	Grade 7	2.33	0.477	0.002
	Grade 8	2.41	0.504	
	Grade 9	2.39	0.522	
	Grade 10	2.28	0.479	
Nationality	-	-	-	0.457
Academic Performance	-	-	-	0.717
Age	11-13 years old	2.37	0.476	0.032
	14-16 years old	2.34	0.519	
	More than 16	2.31	0.418	
Number of siblings	-	-	-	0.641
Type of family	Single parent	2.48	0.637	0.046
	assembled	2.32	0.518	
	Nuclear	2.34	0.479	
	Extensive	2.36	0.495	
Father's nationality	-	-	-	0.431
Mother's nationality	-	-	-	0.73
Father's age	-	-	-	0.699
Mother's age	-	-	-	0.141
Father's work situation	-	-	-	0.446
Mother's work situation	-	-	-	0.281
Father's level of education	-	-	-	0.121
Mother's level of education	No studies	2.41	0.503	0.004
	Primary Education	2.45	0.525	
	High School	2.38	0.504	
	Bachelor/Middle Grade	2.29	0.486	
	Higher grade or diplomature	2.31	0.48	
	degree or master degree	2.3	0.452	
	PhD	2.31	0.337	

Regarding personal variables, gender showed a significant effect ( $p = .048$ ), with boys ( $\bar{x} = 2.39$ ;  $\sigma = .517$ ) reporting slightly more weaknesses than girls ( $\bar{x}$

= 2.31;  $\sigma = .473$ ). School ownership was also significant ( $p = .037$ ), as students from public schools perceived more weaknesses ( $\bar{x} = 2.36$ ;  $\sigma = .488$ ) compared to those from charter/private schools ( $\bar{x} = 2.31$ ;  $\sigma = .526$ ). Grade level revealed significant differences ( $p = .002$ ), with students in lower grades perceiving more weaknesses than those in higher grades. For instance, Grade 7 students ( $\bar{x} = 2.33$ ;  $\sigma = .477$ ) scored higher than Grade 10 students ( $\bar{x} = 2.28$ ;  $\sigma = .479$ ), and Grade 8 students ( $\bar{x} = 2.41$ ;  $\sigma = .504$ ) reported more weaknesses than those in Grade 10 ( $\bar{x} = 2.28$ ;  $\sigma = .479$ ). This trend reflects a decrease in the perception of weaknesses as students advance through school. Age was also significant ( $p = .032$ ), with younger adolescents (11–13 years;  $\bar{x} = 2.37$ ;  $\sigma = .476$ ) perceiving more weaknesses than those aged 14–16 ( $\bar{x} = 2.34$ ;  $\sigma = .519$ ). No significant differences were found for nationality ( $p = .457$ ) or academic performance ( $p = .717$ ).

In terms of family variables, family type was significant ( $p = .046$ ). Students from single-parent families ( $\bar{x} = 2.48$ ;  $\sigma = .637$ ) reported more weaknesses than those from blended families ( $\bar{x} = 2.32$ ;  $\sigma = .518$ ). Mother's educational level also showed significant differences ( $p = .004$ ): adolescents whose mothers had only primary education perceived more weaknesses ( $\bar{x} = 2.38$ ;  $\sigma = .504$ ) compared to those whose mothers had completed secondary education ( $\bar{x} = 2.29$ ;  $\sigma = .486$ ), vocational training or middle school ( $\bar{x} = 2.31$ ;  $\sigma = .480$ ), or higher education such as bachelor's, master's, or doctoral studies ( $\bar{x} = 2.30$ ;  $\sigma = .452$ ), although the differences were minimal.

No significant differences were observed for number of siblings, parents' nationality, parents' age, parents' employment status, or father's educational level.

*Table 7. Size of the effect of differences on family leisure strengths.*

Dimen.	Variable	Category	Mean	Standard deviation	Meaning	Value d Cohen
Strength.	Academic Achievement	Sufficient (C)	2.81	0.73	0	0.592
		Outstanding (A)	3.14	0.608		
Strength.	Age	11-13 years old	3.26	0.712	0	0.927
		More than 16	2.66	0.575		

Finally, as shown in Table 7, Cohen's  $d$  was calculated to determine the effect size for those relationships in which the level of significance was below .05, reporting only those values exceeding the conventional threshold of  $d = 0.50$ . Effect sizes above this threshold were observed in two cases: (a) the relationship between strengths and academic performance, specifically in the

comparison between students with sufficient and outstanding grades ( $d = .592$ ); and (b) the relationship between strengths and age, in the comparison between students aged 11–13 and those over 16 years ( $d = .927$ ). Both results indicate a large effect size.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

Within the scientific literature on family leisure, weaknesses are often highlighted, with numerous studies emphasizing the challenges and imbalances associated with these practices, reporting more drawbacks than benefits (Jeanes & Magee, 2012). Unlike previous research that frequently portrays family leisure as a practice in crisis (Durant, 2019), the present study reveals that Spanish adolescents perceive more strengths than weaknesses, with communication, enjoyment, and cohesion being the most highly valued dimensions. In contrast, the main weakness identified relates to family traditions, often perceived as unattractive or overly routine.

Regarding strengths, adolescents rated all dimensions positively, viewing family leisure as a source of positive atmosphere (Offer, 2013), well-being (Maynard & Harding, 2010), and health (Pinxten & Lievens, 2014). Communication emerged as the most valued dimension, a finding consistent with Schwab and Dustin (2015), who argue that family leisure fosters dialogue, resilience, empathy, and negotiation, while also strengthening family identity, cooperation, and unity. Similarly, Alarcón (2017) underscores the importance of negotiation and consensus-building in planning leisure activities, as these processes enhance family belonging. In fact, communication in family leisure has been identified as one of the most significant behavioral traits linked to positive family outcomes (Zabriskie & Kay, 2013). Shaw (2008) also notes that joint planning favors communication and complicity, though the degree of benefit depends on the involvement of all family members. Family leisure thus serves as a safe and restorative space in the face of daily challenges, although, the line between fun and wasted time can be thin, requiring creativity to ensure its educational and affective potential. The strengthening of family bonds through leisure—and the associated increases in trust and cohesion—are strongly supported in prior research (Iryna & Yuriy, 2017; Melton, 2017; Williamson et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the transmission of values and the fostering of emotional expression received lower evaluations, suggesting that these dimensions are less visible to adolescents.

In contrast, the least valued strengths were motivation and value transmission. This suggests that, while family leisure promotes communication and cohesion, adolescents do not always perceive it as sufficiently stimulating

or meaningful. Previous studies indicate that when activities are repetitive or imposed, adolescents may disengage or participate reluctantly (Hernández-Prados & Álvarez-Muñoz, 2024). Although family leisure has been conceptualized as a privileged context for transmitting values and supporting children's holistic development (Álvarez-Muñoz, 2020; Donati, 2023; Hernández-Prados & Álvarez-Muñoz, 2024; Zabriskie & Kay, 2013), the present findings suggest that adolescents prioritize other dimensions such as communication, fun, and cohesion.

With regard to weaknesses, adolescents most frequently pointed to the repetitiveness of family traditions, the limited diversity of contexts for leisure activities, and the lack of shared time due to difficulties in balancing responsibilities. Family traditions, while capable of fostering identity and continuity, were often viewed as repetitive or unattractive, leading to reduced motivation to participate (Hernández-Prados & Álvarez-Muñoz, 2024). Similarly, the lack of variety in leisure contexts may limit engagement, highlighting the need to diversify both content and environments and to move beyond passive roles where adolescents act as spectators (Pomfret & Varley, 2019; Melton & Zabriskie, 2016). Another weakness identified was the scarcity of time, resulting from the challenges of reconciling work, school, and family responsibilities, a difficulty also reported in previous research (Martínez-Pampliega et al., 2019). In contrast, conflicts and economic constraints were perceived by adolescents in the Region of Murcia as less problematic.

The analysis of socio-demographic variables revealed that weaknesses were not strongly differentiated by Cohen's effect size. Nonetheless, prior research suggests gendered patterns, with girls tending to spend more time with parents (Previtali, 2010), while boys—due to more proactive and independent tendencies—often seek detachment from family (Jiménez Martínez, 2017). Strengths, however, were more clearly associated with academic performance: adolescents with higher grades reported more strengths, in line with previous findings (Melton & Zabriskie, 2016; Wang & Cai, 2017). Age also influenced perceptions, as younger adolescents identified more strengths, whereas older adolescents—exposed to inter-parental conflict and increasingly oriented toward peer groups—placed less emphasis on family time (Cañero Pérez et al., 2019).

In summary, Spanish adolescents perceive family leisure as yielding more strengths than weaknesses. Communication, involvement, and cohesion form three interrelated dimensions that, within contexts of enjoyment and relaxation, reinforce family bonds and make family leisure a valuable resource for balance and stability. Nevertheless, weaknesses—such as difficulties with conciliation, the burden of schoolwork, and the perceived monotony of family traditions—highlight the need for reconfiguration. Traditions, in particular, should be



reconceptualized as positive cultural practices that can be transmitted across generations while also adapting to new leisure forms. The characteristics of mothers emerged as especially relevant in shaping adolescents' perceptions, underscoring their key role in the planning and management of family leisure. Moreover, academic performance influenced the evaluation of strengths, with high-achieving students valuing shared leisure more positively, while low-achieving students tended to prioritize individual leisure.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of family leisure, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the use of closed Likert-type questionnaires facilitated efficient data collection but limited the depth of responses that qualitative approaches could capture. Second, the sample was restricted to the Region of Murcia and was predominantly composed of students from private schools (seven out of nine institutions), which may constrain the generalizability of findings to other regions and socioeconomic contexts. Finally, the study focused exclusively on adolescents' perceptions, without incorporating the perspectives of parents or other family members, thus offering only a partial view of family leisure dynamics. Future research should broaden the geographical scope, include more heterogeneous samples, and integrate multiple family perspectives, ideally through complementary qualitative methodologies.

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