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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### Ten years of the Inventory of Family Integration (IFI)

#### *Diez años del Inventario de Integración Familiar (IIF)*

Walter L Arias Gallegos<sup>1\*</sup>, Renzo Rivera<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universidad Católica San Pablo, Arequipa, Peru.

\* Correspondence: [warias@ucsp.edu.pe](mailto:warias@ucsp.edu.pe)

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** In Peru, various instruments have been validated to evaluate variables associated with the family, but until recently there was no psychological test aimed at evaluating the family that had been created in the country. This study presents the psychometric development and applications of the Inventory of Family Integration (IFI) after ten years of construction, and this being the first and only instrument created in Peru that evaluates the family. **Method:** This research is a theoretical study. **Results:** It starts first from the review of the theoretical assumptions on which the instrument rests based on the construct of family integration that is inspired by the systemic family approach. Then, the studies carried out on the psychometric properties of the IFI are presented in chronological order, from its construction in 2013 to the recently published dyadic analysis in fathers and mothers. Finally, the planning of future psychometric research with this instrument is explained in a new stage of applied explorations in the field of psychometrics and the family, both nationally and internationally. **Conclusions:** The IFI has proven to be a robust and consistent instrument for assessing family integration, but its psychometric properties still need to be evaluated at national and international levels.

**Keywords:** Family integration, family systemic approach, family, psychometrics.

#### RESUMEN

**Antecedentes:** En Perú se han validado diversos instrumentos para evaluar variables asociadas a la familia, pero hasta hace poco no existía ninguna prueba psicológica orientada a la evaluación de la familia que haya sido creada en el país. En el presente estudio se presenta el desarrollo psicométrico y las aplicaciones del Inventario de Integración Familiar (IIF) a sus diez años de construido, y siendo éste, el primer y único instrumento creado en el Perú que evalúa la familia. **Método:** Está investigación es un estudio teórico. **Resultados:** Se parte primero de la revisión de los supuestos teóricos en los que reposa el instrumento en base al constructo de integración familiar que se inspira en el enfoque familiar sistémico. Luego se presentan en orden cronológico los estudios realizados sobre las propiedades psicométricas del IIF, desde su construcción en el 2013 hasta el análisis diádico en padres y madres recientemente publicado. Finalmente, se explica la planificación de futuras investigaciones psicométricas con este instrumento en una nueva etapa de exploraciones aplicadas en el campo de la psicometría y la familia, tanto a nivel nacional como internacional. **Conclusiones:** El IIF ha demostrado ser un instrumento robusto y consistente para evaluar la integración familiar; pero aún así se deben de evaluar sus propiedades psicométricas a nivel nacional e internacional.

**Palabras claves:** Integración familiar, enfoque sistémico familiar, familia, psicometría.

In Peru, the topic of the family has been constantly investigated from various disciplines, from different approaches and through various methods. The Political Constitution of Peru of 1993 as well as the Peruvian Civil Code protect the family in various articles, not only promoting its protection and development, but also recognizing the right of parents in making decisions regarding education, care and upbringing of children, among other aspects (Torres et al., 2023). Hence, different Peruvian universities, mainly, but not only, have created research institutes specialized in the family.

Thus, for example, the *Institute for Marriage and Family* of the Universidad Católica San Pablo, in Arequipa, was created in 1998, beginning the work of psychological guidance and legal advice to the population on family issues, until the year 2014 had a more academic orientation with an emphasis on research, so that in 2016 the journal *Perspectiva de Familia* began to be published as a dissemination organ of said institute (Arias et al., 2019). Another family research center is the *Family Institute* of the Universidad Femenina del Sagrado Corazón (UNIFÉ), which has a markedly legal orientation, and which has existed since 2001, prior to the creation of the first Master's Degree in Civil Law with a Mention in Family that was dictated in the country. Likewise, since 2012 it has edited the journal *Persona y Familia*, one issue per year (Vidal, 2014). Thirdly, in 2005, the *Institute for Family Sciences* was created at the Universidad de Piura, which promotes the publication of books and studies on the family, and also offers the Master's Degree in Marriage and Family (Corcuera, 2013). Fourthly, in 2008 the Universidad Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo founded the *Institute of Sciences for Marriage and Family*, which also promotes research on the family and various associated variables (Arias et al., 2022). All of these institutions are part of the *Network of Latin American Family Institutes* (Red de Institutos Latinoamericanos de Familia, REDIFAM), which was created in 2008, and which follows the guidelines of the Catholic Church (Klaiber, 2016). Likewise, they organize scientific research conferences on the family from the year 2010 (Castro, & Arias, 2013).

In that sense, it has been, preferably, Catholic universities that have promoted research on the family in the country, because Peru has a strong religious identity and the Catholic Church has issued various ecclesiastical documents that focus on the family. from a traditional vision (Juan Pablo II, 1981). However, it is worth mentioning that other non-Catholic institutions have made substantial contributions to family research in Peru. For example, since 1994 the Peruvian Institute of Psychological Guidance ( Instituto Peruano de Orientación Psicológica, IP-OPS) was created, which provides psychological guidance to the population, carries out training courses in psychological guidance and counseling, as well as in family psychotherapy from a systemic approach, since it maintains links inter-institutional meetings with the European and Latin American Network of Systemic Schools (Red Europea y Latinoamericana de Escuelas Sistémicas, RELATES). They have also published several books on systemic family therapy (Villarreal-Huertas, & Villarreal-Zegarra, 2016) and have edited since 2015 the journal *Interacciones: Revista de Familia, Psicología Clínica y de la Salud*, with a periodicity of three issues per year in the continuous publi-

cation modality, which is indexed in various databases such as PsycINFO, Scielo, Redalyc, Dialnet, Doaj, Latindex, etc.

It can also be said that the universities that have investigated the family the most in Peru, from their respective Professional Schools of Psychology, have been Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Universidad de Lima, Universidad Nacional Federico Villarreal, Universidad Católica de Santa María, Universidad Católica San Pablo and Universidad Autónoma del Perú, among others. In this sense, the most researched topics on the family in the country have addressed family functionality (Galagarza, & Arias, 2017; Laurie et al., 2018; Reusche, 1995; Villarreal-Zegarra, 2015); the impact of family in education (Arias et al., 2016; Beltrán, 2013; Sotil, 2002); domestic violence (Arias et al., 2017; Delgado, 2016; Castro, & Rivera, 2015; Castro et al., 2017; Miljánovich et al., 2010; Miljánovich et al., 2013); family and mental health in children with respect to mood disorders, anxiety disorders, suicidal ideation, antisocial behavior and psychoactive substance abuse (Araujo, 2005; Capa et al., 2010; Costa et al., 2020; Mallma, 2016; Mayorga, & Ñiquen, 2010; Pérez, 2016; Rivera et al., 2018; Rivera, & Cahuana, 2016; Rosas, 2014; Tirado et al., 2008; Yucra, 2016); family and well-being (Alarcón, 2014; Arias et al., 2014; Cárdenas, 2016; Caycho et al., 2016; Pliego, & Castro, 2015); relationships between family, work and economy (Arias et al., 2018; Castro et al., 2013; Castro et al., 2016; Castro, Rivera, & Seperak, 2017; Muñoz, 2004; Prado, & Del Águila, 2010; Riesco, & Arela, 2015); family structure (Chuquimajo, 2017; García, & Diez Canseco, 2019; Laguna, & Rodríguez, 2008; Oporto, & Zanabria, 2006; Prado, & Del Águila, 2004; Silva, & Argote, 2007; Villarreal-Zegarra, & Paz-Jesús, 2017), parenting styles and communication between parents and children (Araujo, 2007, 2008; Muñoz, 2016; Reusche, 1999; Sobrino, 2008); marital satisfaction (Dianderas, 2017; Núñez, 2018; Rebaza, & Julca, 2009); social climate or family environment (Cruz, 2013; Matalinares et al., 2010; Oruna, 2016) and various psychological variables in families with children with physical or mental disabilities (Cahuana et al., 2019; Cahuana et al., 2022; Delgado, & Arias, 2022).

However, despite this academic interest in family research in Peru, there are no psychological tests created in the country; although various measurement instruments that evaluate various variables associated with the family have been validated. In this sense, in Peru various psychometric studies have been carried out on various psychological tests that measure some family variables such as the *Family Satisfaction Scale* (Arias, Rivera, & Ceballos, 2018; Arias et al., 2019; Villarreal-Zegarra et al., 2017), the *Family Functionality Scale* (Bazo-Álvarez et al., 2016), the *Steinberg Parenting Styles Scale* (Merino, & Arndt, 2004), the *Parental Behavior Perception Inventory* (Merino et al., 2003; Merino et al., 2004), the *Parenting Styles Scale* (Matalinares et al., 2014; Manrique et al., 2014), the *Family Interaction Quality Scale* (Dominguez, & Alarcón, 2017; Dominguez et al., 2013), the *APGAR-Family Scale* (Castilla et al., 2014), the *Marital Satisfaction Scale* (Arias, & Rivera, 2018), the *Satisfaction with Family Life Scale* (Caycho-Rodríguez et al., 2018) and the *Work-Family Interaction Questionnaire* (SWING) (Chuquilin et al., 2021).

Considering this absence of psychological tests created in the country that evaluate the family, in 2012, two researchers from the city of Arequipa created the Inventory of Family Integration (IFI from now on). Walter Arias, at that time a psychologist by profession, Master in Educational Sciences with a mention in Cognitive Psychopedagogy and specialist in Psychological Counseling and Family Psychotherapy; and Rodolfo Castro, at that time a Bachelor of Administration and a Master of Marriage and Family Sciences from the Universidad Lateranense de Roma. Both created the IFI from a theoretical vision that combines the systemic approach and the Catholic perspective of the family. From 2013 to 2024, various investigations have been published that have tested the psychometric properties of this instrument, so this article briefly reviews the construction and development process of the IFI and the results of the research published in the span of approximately ten years. It is important to mention this theoretical review shows how the IFI was created and validated along the last ten years.

### IFI THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The IFI has been designed based on the theoretical principles of systemic family therapy, considering the evolutionary cycles of the family, the family structure, the different subsystems or family holons and the family dynamics with respect to family limits and roles (Haley, 2002; Minuchin, & Fishman, 1996). Hence, the authors of this test defined family integration as “the degree of health, balance and harmony of the relationships that arise from the marital bond and that are naturally oriented to satisfy the needs of personal transcendence based on respect, dialogue and the communion between its members considering their responsibilities, and according to the life cycle of the family” (Arias et al., 2013, p. 196, translated by the authors).

We will briefly explain the principles of family therapy and the concepts on which the IFI rests. Firstly, systemic family therapy began in the 1950s, especially with the founding of the *Mental Research Institute* in Palo Alto (California), in which various authors such as Nathan Ackerman, Gregory Bateson, Donald Jackson and Paul Watzlawick, among others; they apply the concepts of Bertalanffy's (1976) general systems theory and Wiener's (1985) cybernetics postulates to work with families, explaining how family interaction and communication processes constitute the causal or triggering factors of mental pathology. Soon these ideas and their corresponding practices were adapted by other therapists, as happened with the Milan group led by Mara Selvini, or the approaches of Maurizio Andolfi, who develops an interactional approach (Andolfi, 1991) mediated by cultural factors (Andolfi, 2009), or the narrative approach developed by White and Epston (1990), among others. In this way, several systemic schools are usually distinguished, such as communication, relational, structural, strategic, etc.

With respect to the principles from which the systemic family approach emanates, the family, when considered as a system, must be seen as a totality in which the actions of each of its members can influence the others or the entire system, hence, as its members are connected, circular communication is established, and this communication is also open, that is, it is influenced by the external environment (Bertalanffy, 1976).

Likewise, Watzlawick (2014) explains that the axioms of communication applicable to the study of the family are: first, that it is not possible not to communicate; second, the relational and content levels of communication must be distinguished; third, the family experience is lived individually; fourth, take into account both verbal (digital) and non-verbal (analog) communication; and fifth, the coexistence of symmetry and complementarity between its members.

On the other hand, the family systemic conception suggests that families can be considered as living systems that evolve and go through various periods or stages over time. Although authors such as Habermas (1983, 1996) have opposed “transplanting” concepts that emerged in the natural sciences to the social sciences, or equating biological organisms with social systems, because they operate with a different logic and their nature is epistemologically different; from a systemic family approach, four evolutionary periods are usually recognized in the family. These stages are determined by each culture, which defines the roles and tasks of each stage (Arias, 2012). In our culture, marked by a clear Western influence, four basic stages are distinguished:

**Couple formation.** Every family system emerges as a vital marital unit, in which the contribution of each of the members of the couple is combined with the pressures and influences that will be exerted by both the respective families of origin and the sociocultural environment in which they will develop (Ríos, 2005). In this first stage, the couple must learn to relate, negotiate and communicate equitably and in a concrete way, seeking at all times equality for both the man and the woman (García-Méndez et al., 2010).

**Family with young children.** A second moment is given by the birth of the first child. The presence of a new member in the family can destabilize the family order, however, if the first stage has been overcome through the fulfillment of roles and functions defined for each of the spouses; it is easier to adjust to the changes inherent in this stage by following the guidelines for negotiating responsibilities with the newborn. As children grow, parents face new and varied problems arising from parenting in relation to the particularities of the child, at each stage of development (Deater-Deckard, 2004). As for children, it is infancy and childhood, the period in which children internalize the patterns of socialization and coexistence that are experienced within the family and the spaces of school life (Zevallos, & Chong, 2004).

**Family with teenage children.** Adolescence does not inherently represent a period of rebellion without cause or reason, since a well-oriented adolescent who has begun a process of emotional growth since childhood will continue to develop orderly and calmly during adolescence (Bowen, 1998). It is necessary, however, that roles in the family be redistributed, granting greater freedom to adolescent children to the same extent that their responsibilities increase. It is a priority of upbringing and parental action to consolidate the adolescent's identity, promote their autonomy, respect their individuation, and support their independence; allowing their emotional expression in balance

with their responsible behavior. All of this depends on the effective negotiation of roles in the family.

**Family with adult children.** When children grow up they inevitably leave home. Parents accustomed to their presence do not always know how to deal with this new situation, because frequently one of the children has been “triangulized,” acting as a link between the parents (Minuchin, & Fishman, 1996). To describe the absence of children, the metaphor of the “empty nest” is used (Ríos, 2005), and although it is painful for parents to separate from their children, according to the customs and values of each culture, it can also be an opportunity for fulfillment of parents in their professional and marital lives. Without having to worry about taking care of the children, the parents have more time and have the experience and maturity necessary to embark on projects that they left forgotten or that they postponed due to dedicating themselves to their children.

In this scheme of the life cycle, it must be kept in mind that the transition from one stage to the other represents a period of crisis, but it contains within itself an opportunity for the growth of the family (Ríos, 2005). It is also necessary to highlight that in addition to the crisis that causes the transition from one stage to another (evolutionary accidents of the family), multiple tragic events can be identified in family history that are classified, following the terminology of Thomas Holmes, as life events stressors (Holmes, & Rahe, 1967). The wide variety of stressful life events includes divorce, migration, death or loss of a family member, accidents, incurable illnesses, financial crises or any other situation that shakes the stability of the structure and functioning of the family; apart from the difficulties inherent to the family life cycle. In this sense, Carter and McGoldrick (1989) usually differentiate between four types of crises that families go through: developmental crises correspond to the crises of evolutionary periods, circumstantial crises would be analogous to the life events that arise from external causes to the family, structural crises are associated with patterns of dysfunctional relationships and communication between family members, and crises of helplessness occur when a member of the family requires permanent support because he or she depends on the other members for various reasons.

With respect to family structure, this concept refers to the “link of social relationships that determines the organization of family life. (...) In this framework, the elements that define the family structure are the following: dynamics of authority, normativity as a right, and degree of stability or transition” (Castro et al., 2016, p. 89, translated by the authors). Likewise, based on the family structure, four types of family are usually distinguished: the nuclear or traditional family, which is made up of parents and children; single parenthood is made up of only one parent and one or more children; the extended or composite family, made up of two or more families, generally with ties of blood, who cohabit in the same home; and the reconstructed family, in which, for various reasons, a parent with or without his or her children forms a new family with another person, who may also have children (Villarreal-Zegarra, & Paz-Jesús, 2015). Although some authors suggest that we should not talk about

types of families (Guerra, 2004), or that on the contrary, nuclear families should not be prioritized and other types of families should not be pathologized (Chettiar, 2015); evidence suggests that nuclear family structure is associated with greater physical health (Langton, & Berger, 2014; World Family Map, 2014) and emotional well-being of children (Becker, 1987; Brown, 2004; Brown et al., 2015; Demo, & Acock, 1996; Merçe, 2015; Pearce et al., 2014), greater well-being and mental health of parents (Burgos et al., 2014; Castro et al., 2016; Pliego, & Castro, 2015), as well as with higher income and greater economic stability (Huarcaya, 2011; Muñoz, 2004; Riesco, & Arela, 2015) compared to single-parent families.

Now, the family structure can also be considered as the “relational framework of functional hierarchies determined by the roles played by the members of a particular family” (Arias, 2012, p. 35). Thus, within each family system, subsystems or holons can be distinguished made up of levels of functioning that entail an inherent hierarchy in the order in which they occur temporally and relationally (Minuchin, & Fishman, 1996). These family subsystems or holons are:

**The individual holon** is given by the individual contents that each member of the family contributes. It includes the concept of self in the family context and contains the personal and historical determinants of each individual, which are poured into the relational fabric of the family; while, at the same time, specific interactions with others shape and/or reinforce aspects of the individual personality of its members.

**The marital holon**, specifically encompasses male-female relationships between husband and wife. These are the exclusive responsibility of the couple and children should not interfere in their parents’ affairs. According to Bert Hellinger (2002, 2005), the principle that determines harmony in the marital holon is balance. Man and woman must be on the same level: both must give and receive in the same measure for their relationship to prosper and last. Here, marital satisfaction comes into play as a key construct that has allowed the measurement of the marital subsystem (Arias, & Rivera, 2018).

**The parental holon** is defined as the relational context that includes interactions between parents and children. These have directly to do with the upbringing and socialization of children (Manrique et al., 2014). This subsystem changes as children grow, as their needs change, and their possibilities for independence develop; so parents must grant them more freedom while demanding more responsibility (Zevallos, & Chong, 2004). Unlike the marital holon, in the parental holon there is imbalance due to the nature of the relationship between parents and children, since the parents are the ones who give and the children always receive. Nothing a child does can repay what his parents have done or do for him (Hellinger, 2005).

**The fraternal holon** is determined by the relationships between siblings and constitutes the most important subsystem for the socialization of the child (Aldeas Infantiles, 2022). Children support each other, attack each other, have fun, share their expe-

riences, their moments and thus learn from each other. The brothers are ordered in a temporal hierarchy that goes from oldest to youngest, but despite this, all brothers as children are at the same level. In the fraternal holon, trust between brothers is fundamental. Just as the affairs of the parents are not the concern of the children, there are things about the children that should not leave the fraternal holon.

Between each holon there are limits, determined by the rules and roles of the members that compose them, whose function is to protect the differentiation of the subsystem. For the harmonious integration of the family and the internalization of functional forms of socialization, it is essential that each member takes his place, locating himself in the subsystem and in the order that corresponds to him to play his role as father, mother, older sister, or younger brother (Minuchin, & Fishman, 1996). This will depend, however, on whether the hierarchical ordering of its members is respected in the family, that relationship rules are established and that the limits between family subsystems are well differentiated. According to Minuchin (2003), if these principles are ignored, intra-family relationships are altered, which results in a distortion of social behavior patterns.

Another important principle within the structure of the system is that of belonging to the family. As has been proven by various authors such as Maslow (1968) and his hierarchy of needs, or studies on conformism (Asch, 1964), people have the need to feel that they belong to certain social groups, which can have some impact on their behavior. Since the family is the most essential human group for the development of the person, it is to be expected that similar rules come into play as a web of conscious and unconscious motivations that move and are installed in the core of the family structure.

All these aspects are evaluated by the IFI from a systemic approach; hence the test has a structure of five factors corresponding to each holon or family subsystem, and within each one, aspects related to the roles and functions of each member of the family are considered. The family according to its location within the limits demarcated by each holon. With respect to the family perspective that is based on Christian anthropology, it is neither contrary nor opposed to the systemic approach, but first of all, it highlights the formation of the family as a divine design, according to which, man is a being created by God for the encounter with his fellow human beings and to live in communion (Caffarra, 2011), one of these spaces being the family, and the marital union; whose purpose according to natural law is the procreation and education of children. Hence, the family has a deeply theological meaning (Kasper, 1980), which is safeguarded by the acatholic Church through various ecclesiastical documents, papal encyclicals, and primarily, by the holy scriptures (Diez Canseco, 2020). Secondly, the Catholic Church promotes a traditional family structure, that is, nuclear, but is not opposed to other forms of family organization, but instead suggest members of the Church to strive to establish a nuclear family model, in as far as possible, where each member also assumes their biologically and culturally determined roles and functions (Melina, 2010). Likewise, thirdly, from the family perspective, various family subsystems are also recognized, at the

individual level (Tamés, 2011), at the marital level (Rodríguez, 2008, 2015; Scola, 2001), at the parental level (Connolly, 2015; Palet, 2007) and at the fraternal level (Rodríguez, 2006); that remain open to their relationships with other systems in different contexts in which the family interacts, such as work (Kampowski, & Gallazzi, 2015) and social contexts (Perriaux, 2011), to mention a few. Hence, both approaches have similarities, facilitating their complementarity, although they also present certain differences, since, for example, from a Catholic perspective the excessive emphasis that systemic therapy places on relationships rather than on content has been questioned (Lego, 2010).

### STUDIES CARRIED OUT WITH THE IFI

It is on the theoretical bases previously stated that the IFI was constructed, whose psychometric processes and analysis of the results are presented below. First, a chart of 64 items was generated that were distributed in five dimensions corresponding to each of the holons or family subsystems: individual, marital, parental, fraternal and family. The items were evaluated by three family expert judges who gave them a score from 1 to 4 on a Likert scale, where the highest score represents a favorable opinion. These values were analyzed using Aiken's V test, obtaining scores above 0.7, therefore, all items were considered valid since none were eliminated. Next, the items were arranged in a response protocol to be filled out by the subjects who made up the sample on a five-level Likert-type response scale from "Always" to "Never." In this way, the IFI was applied to 334 people who live in the city of Arequipa, considering as inclusion criteria that they are heads of nuclear families (men or women), over 18 years of age, who wish to participate voluntarily and who sign the informed consent.

The psychometric analysis followed the criteria of classical test theory, and item-test correlations with values greater than 0.2 in most cases were reported, but nine items were eliminated due to obtaining correlation coefficients with lower scores. On the other hand, although the KMO score was high (.922) and Bartlett's sphericity test was significant ( $p < .001$ ), the factor analysis performed showed four factors that explained 64.18% of the total variance of the test, Likewise, three items that had factor loadings less than 0.3 were eliminated. In the end, 52 items and only one dimension were considered, since the first factor explained 29.48% of the variance (Burga, 2006). The reliability index was calculated using Cronbach's alpha test, obtaining a score of .739.

Scales were also obtained for their qualification with three levels: the low level is between values of 94 to 200 and is located in a range of 204 to 235, the high level of family integration takes scores from 237 to 260 (Arias et al., 2013). These results were published in 2013 in the journal *Avances en Psicología* of the Universidad Femenina del Sagrado Corazón. But based on these psychometric results, some studies were carried out with different samples in the city of Arequipa. Firstly, the IFI was applied to 844 people with different marital statuses, from 13 districts, and it was found that 62.6% had a low level of family integration. Moreover, the level of higher education, married marital status, and evangelical religion were the sociodemographic

variables that had greater predictive power on family integration. This study was published in the *Revista de Investigación* of the Universidad Católica San Pablo (Castro et al., 2013).

That same year, a paper was also presented at the *III Congress of Scientific Research in Family* reporting the descriptive results of the previous study, emphasizing that married people obtained slightly higher scores than cohabitants in family integration and that economic income, as well as the degree of instruction are associated with family integration (Castro, & Arias, 2013). In another study with a sample of 395 people from Arequipa, it was reported that family integration is positively and significantly correlated with happiness, understood as subjective well-being. Furthermore, the number of children and satisfaction with life had predictive power on family integration. This research was published in 2014 in the *Revista de Psicología de Arequipa* published by the Colegio de Psicólogos del Perú Consejo Regional Directivo III (Arias et al., 2014).

In 2016, in an organizational context, another study was carried out with a sample of workers from a department store in Arequipa, in which married workers with children were evaluated, finding that they had severe levels of burnout syndrome and a medium level of family integration, in addition, family integration had a cushioning effect on burnout syndrome, which allowed raising the levels of job satisfaction of the evaluated workers. This research was published in the journal *Illustro* of the Universidad Católica San Pablo (Arias, & Ceballos, 2016). Also, in an organizational context, another predictive type of research was carried out in which a battery with various instruments that evaluated family and work variables was applied, within the framework of the family-work conflict topic. The results indicated that after the application of the IFI, the Family Satisfaction Scale of Olson and Wilson, the Marital Satisfaction Scale of Pick and Andrade, the Job Satisfaction Scale of Warr, Cook and Wall and the Maslach Burnout Inventory in 213 workers from a private university; marital satisfaction, family satisfaction and family integration are not only related to each other, but also had a positive impact on job satisfaction, moderating the effects of burnout syndrome in workers (Arias et al., 2018). These results provided evidence of the convergent validity of the IFI by positively correlating with marital satisfaction and family satisfaction, and were published in the journal *Perspectiva de Familia* of the Universidad Católica San Pablo.

For the year 2019, new psychometric studies were carried out with the IFI, with the purpose of determining its internal structure and reliability, in increasingly numerous samples, and with the participation of psychologist Renzo Rivera, who is a specialist in psychometrics and he works as a teacher at the Universidad Católica San Pablo. In this sense, 420 married or cohabiting people from Arequipa with at least two children were evaluated, and a new exploratory factor analysis was carried out with the optimal implementation method of parallel analysis, with which a four-factor structure was found that explained 55.2% of the total variance of the test, and internal consistency indices calculated using McDonald's Omega test were obtained, which fluctuated between  $\omega = .867$  and  $\omega = .932$ . Likewise, the interfactor correlations were all greater than .455 and less than .683. Likewise, item 24, which says "We respect the decisions our

children make," was eliminated (Arias et al., 2019). In this way, the four-factor structure was closer to our initial theoretical approaches of five holons or family subsystems. The results of this research were published in the journal *Ciencias Psicológicas* of the Universidad de la República de Uruguay.

Next, considering that the family structure has changed a lot in recent years, it was decided to do a new psychometric study with the IFI, to determine its psychometric properties in nuclear families with children and without children. For this, 502 people were evaluated, 48.2% men and 58.1% women with an average age of 40 years, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied. Firstly, a unidimensional structure was determined for the 17 items (corresponding to the marital holon and the personal holon) that were used to measure family integration in couples without children, and secondly, the internal structure of four factors was corroborated in the nuclear families evaluated, with high reliability indices that were calculated with the ordinal alpha test, whose values fluctuated between .869 and .932; while the unidimensional version for couples without children obtained a reliability index of .993. In both cases, the goodness of fit indices were adequate, so it can be said that the IFI can be used to evaluate nuclear families with and without children. These results were published in 2022 in the *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios en Familia* published by the Universidad de Caldas in Colombia (Arias et al., 2022).

This year, 2024, three new activities have been carried out, which close a stage of evaluation of the psychometric properties of the IFI, and begin another. Firstly, with data collected in a probabilistic sample from the city of Arequipa of approximately 1,500 people with diverse family structures, various instruments have been applied in order to analyze the convergent and divergent validity of the IFI. Among the tests used, the Family Cohesion Scale (FACES III), the Marital Communication Inventory, the Parenting Styles Questionnaire and the Marital Instability Scale have been applied. Surely, in the coming months the results of this study will be obtained (Figure 1).

Secondly, a new study was published in which a dyadic analysis of the test was carried out, depending on whether those tested are the father or the mother. This analysis was carried out to determine if significant changes were recorded in the responses of some or others, depending on gender differences (García, & Nader, 2009) since various studies have reported that differences could appear in the responses of the members of the couple in aspects such as the assumption of their individual roles that is evaluated by the personal holon (Bowen, 1998; Tamés, 2003), the perception of the couple's relationship that is evaluated by the marital holon (Eguiluz et al., 2012; Villegas, & Mallor, 2012), parenting that is evaluated by the parental holon (García, 2021; Pérez et al., 2021; Rodríguez et al., 2009; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020; Santander et al., 2020), the attitudes towards the relationships between siblings that are evaluated by the fraternal holon (Aldeas Infantiles, 2022) and about their conceptions about the family, its arrangements and dynamics inherent to it that are evaluated through of the family holon (General Directorate of Childhood, 2022; Valdez et al., 2014).

The results of this research were published in 2024 in the journal *Terapia Psicológica de Chile*. In this study, 264 married cou-

ples with nuclear families who were purposively selected were assessed with the IFI. First, moderate correlations were reported between the values of fathers and mothers in each family holon: personal, marital, parental, fraternal and family. Secondly, the dimensionality adjustment of each holon in fathers and mothers was adequate with acceptable magnitudes through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Thirdly, the reliability indices calculated with Cronbach’s alpha and McDonald’s omega tests were between .784 and .942 in the first case, and .829 and .954 in the second. Fourthly, an invariance analysis and a comparative analysis were carried out between fathers and mothers, corroborating that the differences in their responses were not significant (Arias et al., 2024).

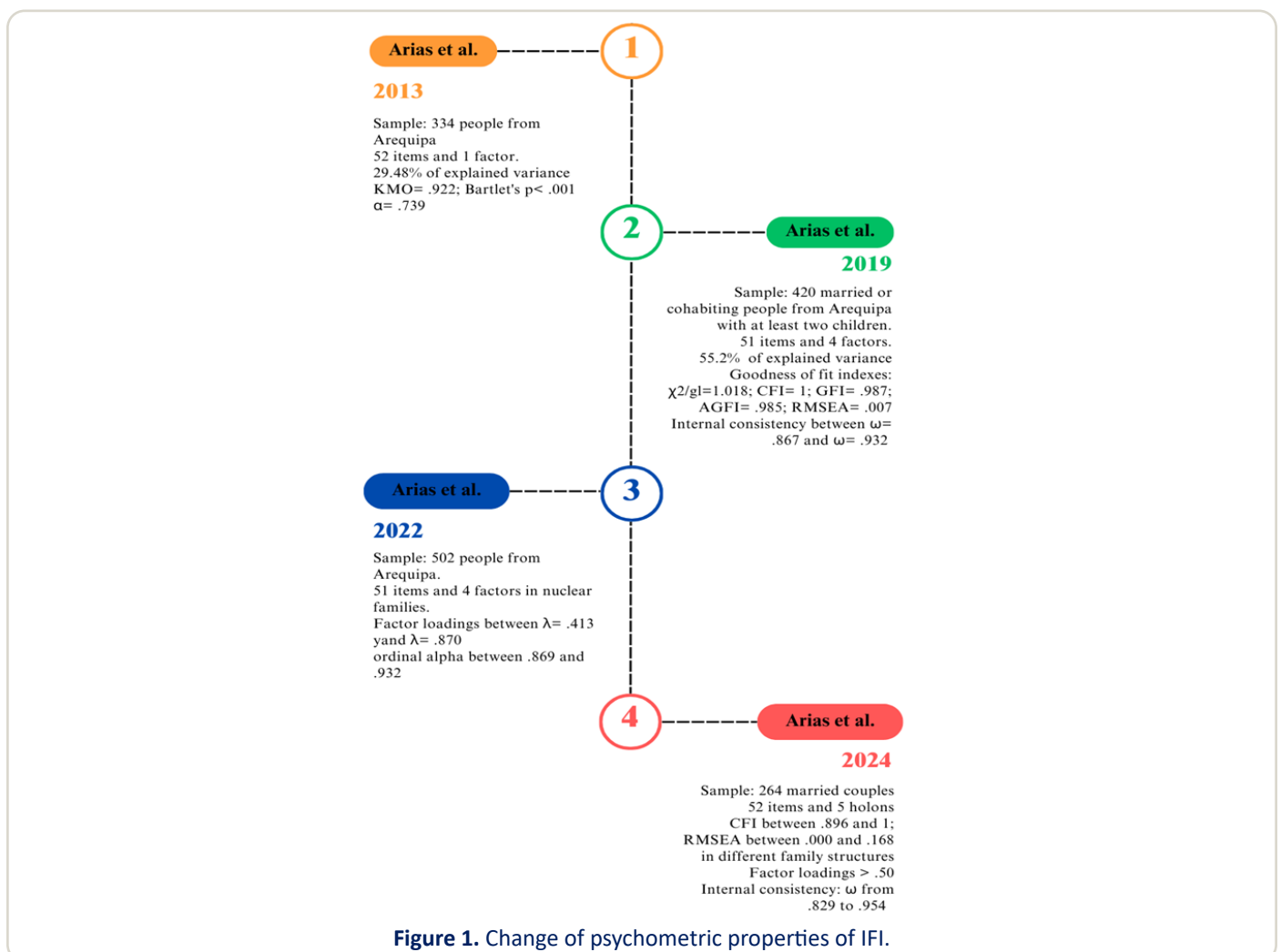
Thirdly, the process has begun to adapt the IFI at the national level, specifically in the cities of Arequipa, Cajamarca, Cusco, Huancayo, Ica, Lambayeque, Trujillo, Lima, Puno, Ucayali, Tarpoto, and Tumbes; which include the coast, mountain and jungle regions of the country, as well as the north, center and south. In this way, through its application, it is intended to establish at the national level, a standardized version, which allows us to know its psychometric properties, such as validity, reliability and their respective rating scales, in addition to others such as criterion validity and factorial invariance. Likewise, one aspect

that will be considered is determining the internal structure of the test based on family composition, that is, in nuclear families with children, nuclear families without children, single-parent families and extended families at the national level. Finally, it is also intended to analyze the scores obtained and analyze them based on certain sociodemographic variables such as level of education, marital status, number of children, etc.

**DISCUSSION**

In Peru, as in many other Latin American countries, the topic of the family has been extensively researched from various disciplines, approaches and theoretical approaches (Arias, 2020; Jiménez-Torres et al., 2020; Rivera et al., 2023). As previously stated, there are various lines of family research that have been carried out, one of them being the evaluation of family variables or variables associated with the family such as family satisfaction, family functionality, work-family conflict, parenting styles, parenting styles, etc. However, to date there are no tests created in Peru that evaluate family variables, since most of them have been designed abroad and have only been validated in our country.

In that sense, the IFI is a test designed and validated in Arequipa, a city located in the south of Peru, which over ten years has



**Figure 1.** Change of psychometric properties of IFI.

been used in various local or regional investigations, in which its psychometric properties have been demonstrated. This article has presented its theoretical foundations and the results of the research carried out to date with this instrument. Firstly, the test is based on the systemic family approach, which, although it is known in Peru, has been very little studied, since there is very little research based on systemic family therapy models. Although there are some theoretical works that have disseminated the scope and principles of this therapeutic approach (Arias, 2012; Sobrino, 1999; Villarreal-Zegarra, & Paz-Jesús, 2015), and others of an empirical nature, which have been based in Olson's circumplex model, which is, together with McMaster's family functioning model and Beavers' systemic model, the most used in family research from systemic approaches (Ortiz, 2008).

Likewise, the empirical work on systemic approaches that has been carried out in Peru, although it has generated important information regarding family functionality and various psychosocial variables (Alarcón, 2014; Bazo-Álvarez et al., 2016; Capa et al., 2010; Ferreira, 2003; Mayorga, & Ñiquén, 2010), have only taken the circumplex model, with the purpose of making psychometric adaptations of the Olson Family Satisfaction Scale, or to assess family satisfaction with this scale, but without necessarily sharing the theoretical assumptions of systemic family therapy. Thus, the IFI can contribute to promoting and internalizing the systemic model in the approach and evaluation of various family variables, which constitutes another of its benefits.

On the other hand, the results obtained in the latest psychometric studies of the IFI have allowed us to corroborate its internal structure of five factors with adequate reliability indices (Arias et al., 2022), even though the dyadic analysis of the instrument, which allows us to assess whether the responses of fathers in relation to those of mothers who belong to the same family nucleus can explain possible differences with respect to the psychometric properties of the IFI. The results obtained from said study lead us to affirm that, regardless of whether the instrument is answered by fathers or mothers, it can offer us valid and reliable measures in each of its dimensions or factors that evaluate family holons, since the comparative analysis and factorial invariance showed scores that suggest that there are no significant differences between the respondents and therefore the IFI is not a biased instrument based on the sex of the parents or their role in the family (Arias et al., 2024).

All the results presented together suggest that the IFI is a test that has evidence of validity and reliability, and therefore can be applied at the national level. Precisely for this reason, a new stage of analysis of the psychometric properties of this instrument has been undertaken, but considering samples from all of Peru, in order to have a standardized version of the IFI that can be used at the national level, and then also obtain evidence of validity and reliability in other Latin American countries. However, despite the theoretical, practical and psychometric benefits of the IFI, a limitation is that it has been designed to evaluate nuclear families with children, although in a previous study, its psychometric properties have also been reported in married couples without children (Arias et al., 2022). However, considering that in recent decades the structure of families has

changed, so that many couples no longer usually marry (Pearce et al., 2014; Sigle-Rushton, & McLanahan, 2002) and have fewer and fewer children than in the past (Espinoza, & Colil, 2015; Huarcaya, 2011; Merçe, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2015; Pugliese, 2009), divorce rates have increased and nuclear families have registered a decrease (Pinzón, & Vanegas, 2018; Tay-Karapas et al., 2020; Ullman et al., 2010), while single-parent families have increased (Jociles, 2008; Domínguez et al., 2019; Puello et al., 2014; Rodríguez, & Luengo, 2003; Salvo, & González, 2015); it is necessary to apply the instrument in samples with different family structures.

Therefore, in the second stage of research into the properties of the IFI, it will not only be applied to samples from several cities in Peru, but its psychometric properties will also be assessed based on various family structures, that is, single-parent families, extended and restructured families; analyzing whether the marital, parental and fraternal holons replicate their internal structure regardless of the type of family in question, or if they are related to associated variables such as marital satisfaction (Arias, & Rivera, 2018; García-Méndez et al., 2010; Eguiluz et al., 2012), parenting styles (Raimundi et al., 2017; Tur-Porcar et al., 2015), etc. In addition, IFI results will be compared with instruments created in other countries such as the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES III), the Marital Communication Inventory, the Parenting Styles Questionnaire and the Marital Instability Scale. In conclusion, the IFI is the first test created in Peru to evaluate the family, and it is also one of the few tests created in Peru that has psychometric evidence sustained over time for just over ten years. We hope that the next planned stages of research could concrete as soon as possible.

#### ORCID

Walter L Arias Gallegos <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4183-5093>

Renzo Rivera <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5897-9931>

#### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Walter L Arias Gallegos: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Visualization.

Renzo Rivera: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Visualization.

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Not applicable.



**DISCLAIMER**

The authors are responsible for all statements made in this article.

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