

What Children Think About Their Rights and Their Well-Being: A Cross-National Comparison

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Recent years have brought a growing social and public commitment to the promotion of *children's rights* and *children's well-being* around the world, and these have become important goals of all those striving to improve children's lives. In spite of the intimate ideological connection between the concepts of children's rights and children's well-being, they have evolved separately both theoretically and empirically. In the current article, we present a study exploring the empirical association between these 2 concepts based on data from the International Survey on Children's Well-Being. This unique survey explores children's own perspectives on their well-being (subjective well-being), their perceptions and knowledge of their rights, and their reports on their right to participation. It includes data from more than 54,000 children aged 8–12 from 16 countries around the world. Our results showed clear cross-national differences between children's knowledge and perceptions of their rights and their reports on participation. Also, children's participation in different contexts in their lives showed an association with their subjective well-being; a weaker association was found between children's knowledge and perceptions of their rights. These results indicate that children's right to participation and, to some degree, their knowledge and thinking about their rights is an indicator of their well-being.

Literature Overview

Recent years have shown a growing social and public commitment to promote *children's well-being* and *children's rights*. These two different concepts are intimately connected and promoting both is an important goal both for society and for those striving to improve children's lives. The inevitable connection between the two concepts and the commitment to both is best seen in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; Ruck, Peterson-Badali, & Helwig, 2014). Well-being is considered a guiding principle of the CRC (Earls & Carlson, 2002), and the CRC rights are implicitly understood as creating opportunities for well-being (Ben-Arieh & Frønes, 2011).

The commitment to children's well-being and children's rights and the intercorrelation between them is also evident in empirical research. Some argue that the study of children's well-being and children's rights differ methodologically. The study of children's well-being has a strong academic heritage with quantitative meth-

ods predominating. In contrast, the study of children's rights does not have this heritage of quantitative measurement, but rather one of philosophical and legal histories (Tisdall, 2015). Nevertheless, recent years have shown that these two fields share the same trend in measurements. In the last decades, substantial efforts to measure children's own perspective on their rights and their well-being has emerged. Over the years, the idea of children's rights has greatly influenced the field of children's well-being. Traditionally, much research on children's well-being relied on adult perspectives (Ben-Arieh, 2008; Casas, 2011). Influenced by the idea that children's has a right to express their voice, this has changed in the last few decades and growing recognition has been given to the subjective view point of children about their lives and well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2012).

This study explores the relations between children's subjective perspectives on their well-being and their rights. It is based on data from the International Survey on Children's Well-Being (ISCWeB), which includes data from more than 54,000 children aged 8 to 12 from 16 countries around the world. ISCWeB fills a substantial gap in our knowledge on children's own views of their lives and well-being. It also includes measures on what children think and feel about their rights. This unique survey allows us to compare children's subjective well-being (SWB) and children's rights in nations and cultural contexts.

Children's Rights

The notion of children as individuals possessing specific rights is relatively recent. Up to the 19th century children were viewed as

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the personal property of parents, who were given unlimited power and control over them (Ruck & Horn, 2008). By the end of the 19th century children had gradually obtained some basic rights because of the technological and socioeconomic changes at the time, which caused children's well-being to become the focus of social reforms. However, these rights were concentrated at first on protection and provision (nurturance rights). Only recently have children's rights been extended to rights of participation and self-determination, based on the assertion that children are legal persons entitled to many of the same rights as adults (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008). Today, both rights to nurturance and self-determination are considered important for establishing children's psychological health and well-being (Cherney, 2010; Helwig & McNeil, 2011; Ruck, Tenenbaum, & Willenberg, 2011).

The increased international awareness of children's rights is reflected in the CRC, which outlines children's political, civil, social, and economic rights. It recognizes children as individuals worthy of citizenship and attempts to increase the commitment of all nations to children's rights (Ruck et al., 2014). The CRC has been ratified by almost every member country of the United Nations (Ruck & Horn, 2008). Since its publication, consideration of children's rights has become essential for any discussion of children's well-being and notions of child well-being have become almost synonymous with children's rights. Today, the CRC is a common, acceptable framework for understanding and discussing children's status and well-being in various formulations and institutions (Bradshaw, Hoelscher, & Richardson, 2006; Khadka, 2013).

Children's Right to Participation

One of the innovative principles of the CRC and children's rights discourse is children's rights to self-determination and participation. These rights refer to types of personal attributes and freedoms that give children some measure of control or choice over areas of their own lives (Ruck & Horn, 2008). Children's right to participation is best expressed in Article 12 in the CRC, which asserts a child's "right to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child, in accordance with his or her age and maturity". This includes children's right to be listened to by adults, children's right to express their views and their right that those views will be taken into account in decisions that affect them. Influenced by this right, children are now seen as having the right to participate and to be actively involved in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Alderson, 2008; Ruck & Horn, 2008; Soffer & Ben-Arieh, 2014).

Children's participation is important not just because of normative and moral reasons, but it also enhances children's well-being. Recognizing the right of the child to express views and to participate in various activities, according to her or his evolving capacities is beneficial for the child, for the family, for the community, the school, the state and for democracy (Lansdown, 2011; Lansdown, Jimerson, & Shahroozi, 2014; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). There is a growing body of evidence that routinely taking children's views and experiences into account within the family, at school and in other settings helps develop their self-esteem, sense of personal efficacy or self-worth, cognitive abilities, social skills,

and respect for others (Kirby & Bryson, 2002; Kränzl-Nagl & Zartler, 2010; Lansdown et al., 2014; Thomas, 2007).

What Do Children Know and Think About Their Rights?

The global acceptance of children's rights, particularly the right to participation, calls for a thorough investigation of what children themselves think about the concept of rights (Helwig & Turiel, 2002; Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009). If children's rights are to serve their intended function—to protect children from harm and promote their development and well-being—it is essential to examine how children and adolescents understand and think about their rights (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2011). This is also needed to determine how young people feel they are treated or should be treated by society (Ruck et al., 2014). Children knowing about their rights increases the likelihood that children will assert and advocate for rights in various contexts (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008). Ruck et al. (2014) further explain that children's conceptions of their rights may speak to pertinent aspects of their subjective and psychological well-being. They argue that when children's views are made central and children are asked for their opinions on rights, they may also implicitly be providing useful information on their perspectives on well-being.

Nevertheless, only recently have researchers begun to examine this issue (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008), as up till only a few decades ago only adult thinking about the concept of children's rights was evaluated. Today there is a wide recognition of the importance of examining children's own beliefs or knowledge and how they view rights in their own lives.

Initial work on children's conceptions of their rights from the 1980s was based on the *global stage model*, according to which maturity and development are the important factors in children's understanding and thinking about their rights. The global stage model maintains that how children think about their rights is the same across all contexts and in different types of situations (Melton, 1980, 1983; Ruck & Horn, 2008). Critiques of the global model led to a *domain-specific model*, which asserts that children's attitudes and how they think about their rights are influenced by the context in which the rights are exercised (see Day, Peterson-Badali, & Ruck, 2006; Helwig, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2006; Neff & Helwig, 2002; Peterson-Badali, Morine, Ruck, & Slonim, 2004; Ruck, Abramovitch, & Keating, 1998; Ruck, Keating, Abramovitch, & Koegl, 1998; Ruck, Peterson-Badali, & Day, 2002; Ruck et al., 2011; Smetana, 2006;). Hence, this model claims that how children think about rights reflects how they experience and understand rights in their own lives (Ruck, Abramovitch, et al., 1998; Ruck, Keating, et al., 1998).

Researchers have recently begun to consider the influence of cultural values, traditions, and norms on children's conceptions of rights and thus created the *cultural model*. This model assumes that children's knowledge and understanding of their rights may be constrained by their experience of, or exposure to, rights in the particular social, economic, political, and cultural context in which they live (Ruck et al., 2014). Several comparative studies have suggested that the prevailing culture affects attitudes toward children's rights (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008) and reported the existence of nationality, ethnic, or religious differences in children's attitudes toward children's rights (Cherney & Perry,

1996; Cherney & Shing, 2008; Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008; Melton & Limber, 1992; Limber, Kask, Heidmets, Kaufman, & Melton, 1999). A comparison of the views of American and Norwegian children, for example, found that Norwegian children were more likely to support children's nurturance rights, while American children placed greater emphasis on self-determination rights (Melton & Limber, 1992). Or for example, U.S. and Swiss children showed greater support for self-determination rights than Chinese-Malaysian children (Cherney & Shing, 2008). Similar trends were reported in studies among Jewish and Arab children in Israel, with Jewish adolescents being more supportive of children's rights than their Arab peers (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008; Khoury-Kassabri, Haj-Yahia, & Ben-Arieh, 2006).

Such findings fit the assumption that traditional societies are slower to recognize and support children's rights (Ben-Arieh & Khoury-Kassabri, 2008; Ben-Arieh, Khoury-Kassabri, & Haj-Yahia, 2006; Bohrnstedt, Freedman, & Smith, 1981; Helwig, 2006; Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008, 2009; Peterson-Badali, Ruck, & Ridley, 2003). Children's rights are generally considered a Western concept, especially concepts like children's right to self-determination (e.g., autonomy, personal freedom). These individualistic concepts are likely to be more important in Western, individualistic cultures (Ruck & Horn, 2008). Studies have found that even young children in Western societies possess concepts of rights and civil liberties and prefer democratic social organization in a variety of social contexts. According to those studies, these concepts develop only later in life among children in non-Western settings (Helwig & Turiel, 2002).

Although there is a growing body of knowledge on children's approaches to and perceptions of their rights, there is a clear need to further study the effect of culture, religion, and ethnicity on children's understanding of their rights. Studies among non-Western and non-Christian cultures and among less-mainstream Christian congregations are especially important (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008).

Children's Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

The flowering of the children's rights movement in the 1990s, evident in the publication of the CRC, has influenced how the international research community addresses the concept of children's well-being. Traditionally much research on children's lives relied on adult perspectives. Only in the last few decades has there been growing recognition of the importance of subjective indicators when exploring children's lives (Ben-Arieh, 2012; Casas, 2011), as well as a growing interest in studying SWB of children around the globe (Lee & Yoo, 2015). The notion of children's rights, especially children's right to a voice, emphasized the need for collecting children's subjective views for measuring their well-being and experiences (Ben-Arieh & Frønes, 2011).

SWB refers to how people evaluate their lives and includes people's emotional reactions to events, their moods, and the judgments they form about their life satisfaction (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). There are two types of SWB measures: comprehensive unidimensional measures of the person's global life satisfaction (context-free) and multidimensional measures involving specific life domains (domain-specific; Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003). With regard to children SWB this means to study how

children evaluate their life as a whole and with regard to particular domains of life.

SWB is commonly divided into three components: *Cognitive SWB*, which is concerned with people's evaluations of their lives generally or of particular domains (life satisfaction); *affective SWB*, which relates to people's moods and feelings (positive and negative affect); and *psychological SWB*, which focuses on the extent to which people feel their basic psychological needs are met, their sense of flourishing, and how positive they feel about the future.

In the last two decades, the study of children's SWB has greatly developed (Ben-Arieh, Casas, Frønes, & Korbin, 2014; Ben-Arieh & Frønes, 2007). A number of studies in the last 20 years have collected data on multiple domains of children's SWB, mostly using samples at the national level (Ben-Arieh & Shimoni, 2014; Casas, Bello, González, & Aliqué, 2013; Lee et al., 2013). These showed that children's SWB does not exhibit a normal Gaussian distribution; rather, most children and adolescents view their overall lives positively (Casas et al., 2012; Gilman & Huebner, 2003). Furthermore, it was consistently found that general levels of SWB in children are stable across time and place (Casas, Figuer, González, & Malo, 2007; Cummins, 2014), this tendency being explained by the theory of homeostasis (Cummins, 2003, 2005). Nonetheless, considerable variance in children's SWB is also evident, occurring across different social, cultural and personal aspects.

Two groups of variables are correlated with children's SWB. The first are microlevel variables, factors that influence the individual child, like demographic or personal variables or the child's close environment, like the family and school. The second group, macrolevel factors are cultural factors such as cultural context, ethnic background, religion, and so forth.

Macrolevel: Cultural Factors

Only a few studies have examined children's SWB across countries and cultural contexts. The relatively scant discussion about cultural differences in children's SWB (Casas & Rees, 2015) is partly because of the lack of largescale surveys involving children. Most studies of children's SWB have been carried out within certain countries and/or in a single country (Dex & Hollingworth, 2012; Rees & Dinisman, 2015). Yet, Ben-Arieh et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of employing a cross-cultural perspective when evaluating children's SWB because (a) childcare practices vary widely around the world; (b) there is limited empirical evidence on the outcomes of most cultural practices, hindering understanding of their impact on children's well-being in particular cultural contexts; (c) the available evidence relevant to the causes and consequences of children's well-being is largely limited to Western cultures (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), which contain only 10% of the world's child population; and (d) differences in children's experiences are evident in different cultural contexts.

In one of the few cross-national comparisons of children's SWB (of which the current study is the second wave), Rees and Dinisman (2015) found considerable variations between countries in children satisfaction and evaluations of specific aspects of their lives. Children in Romania, Israel, Spain, and Brazil had the highest mean satisfaction scores with life as a whole, while chil-

dren in South Korea and Uganda had the lowest (for the full reports of the survey, see Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016; Rees & Main, 2015). Bradshaw and Richardson (2009) compared SWB of children in 27 countries of the European Union, Norway, and Iceland. The Netherlands, Austria, Greece, and Spain showed the highest SWB, while Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, and Malta showed the lowest. In the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children study in 42 countries in Europe and North America, cross-national variations in the proportion of children with high life satisfaction from below 70% to well over 90% among children aged 11, 13, and 15 years old. For example, Albania, Greece, and the Netherlands showed among the highest levels of life satisfaction for 11 years old, while children in this age group from Belgium and the Czech Republic reported the lowest levels of life satisfaction (Inchley et al., 2016).

Despite this growth in studies of children's SWB, there is still a significant shortage of cross-national survey data and the existing data are mainly limited to Western cultures (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). The outstanding exception is the newly published ISCWeB study, on which this article is based and which is the first international comparative data-set on children's SWB across the full range of relevant aspects of their lives.

Microlevel Factors

A series of studies have highlighted the importance of family, school, and community for children's SWB. Data from the first wave of ISCWeB showed that family, school, and community lives all significantly affect children's SWB, even after controlling for country-specific cultural and contextual factors (Lee & Yoo, 2015). It was found that the nature of children's relationships with their immediate surroundings, such as frequency of family activities, frequency of peer activities, and neighborhood safety are most consistently related to the levels of children's SWB across nations (see also Ash & Huebner, 2001; Coulton & Korbin, 2007; Dew & Huebner, 1994; Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Huebner, Suldo, Smith, & McKnight, 2004; Lee & Yoo, 2015; McDonnell, 2007).

Here, we address a "new" factor at the individual level that may affect children's SWB—participation and autonomy. Ryff and Keyes (1995) argue that one central component of psychological well-being is a sense of self-determination or autonomy (along with self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and environmental mastery). Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2001) suggest that self-determination theory may give one account of psychological well-being. According to this approach psychological well-being results largely from satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Ruck et al., 2014).

Another useful theory for the well-being of children is the capability approach of Amartya Kumar Sen (1999), in which freedom to act and choose becomes a central issue. Alkire (2002, 2005) suggested that greater social participation brings more empowerment, and empowerment increases the capacity of agency, resulting in greater SWB. Freedom of choice is, by this definition, an essential element of well-being (Ben-Arieh & Frønes, 2011).

Although the theoretical connection between children's participation and children's SWB is grounded, only few studies have considered the relationship between them (González et al., 2015).

Studies mainly on adult samples revealed that daily experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness each contributed unique variance to the prediction of happiness and vitality (Reis et al., 2000; Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996). This pattern has been supported by cross-cultural research, suggesting that one's relative autonomy overcomes social differences such as collectivism or individualism or gender differences (e.g., Chirkov & Ryan, 2001; Hayamizu, 1997; Vallerand, 1997). Nonetheless, almost no studies have examined the connection between children's autonomy and participation and their SWB.

One of the few studies examining the connection between children's autonomy and participation and their SWB found children's SWB is correlated to participation in family decision-making and having a voice in school (Rees, Bradshaw, Goswami, & Keung, 2010). Lee and Yoo (2015) also found that children from South Korea have the lowest level of SWB because they have a lower level of "self" and "freedom to choose."

Summary

The above review illustrates the ideological, theoretical and empirical connection between the notion of children's rights and children's SWB. We argue for the importance of examining children's own thinking and perceptions of their rights, as these can be used as an indicator for how children perceive their SWB. We also highlighted the significance of the right to participation and its contribution to children's SWB.

The Study Goals

This study explores whether children's perceptions of their rights and their reports on participation in different contexts in their lives are associated with their SWB. The study has two main goals: first, to examine the differences in children's perceptions of their rights and their reports on their participation in their lives across different nations, age groups and gender; second, to examine the relationship between children's perceptions of their rights, their reports on participation and their SWB.

Method

Data Source and Sample

The current study is based on the second wave of the ISCWeB, a worldwide survey of children's SWB. The study gathered data from over 54,000 children aged 8, 10, and 12 years from 16 countries (Colombia, England, Germany, Estonia, Malta, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Ethiopia, Romania, Algeria, Israel, Turkey, Israel, and Nepal; for more information, see www.iscweb.org).

The representative samples of children in the relevant age groups were surveyed through schools, with each country using its own sampling strategy. To ensure the quality of the sample, initially each national research team proposed a sampling strategy based on their knowledge of the country and of the practical issues involved in the survey. These were then reviewed by a panel of researchers with expertise in sampling. A range of stratification variables were used in different countries, depending on the spe-

cific context, including economic prosperity, type of school (e.g., private/public), and population density (e.g., urban/rural; Rees & Main, 2015). More details on the sampling strategy in each country are given in the national reports available on the project website (iscweb.org). For practical reasons in seven countries—Algeria, Colombia, Germany, South Africa, Spain, Poland and Turkey—the sample included only part of the country, a province or a specific county. The distribution by country of the 54,691 children in the sample is shown in Table 1. The sample consisted of approximately half boys (49.7%) and half girls (50.3%). Of the children, 35.1% were in sixth grade, 32.9% were in fourth grade, and 32.0% were in second grade. The mean age was 10.1 years (range 6–14 years).

Weighting

The final sample was weighted, taking into account the sampling strategy employed in each country. Final weightings were discussed and agreed between the central data coordinator and each national research team. The weighting coefficients were calculated so that the final weighted sample size was identical to the unweighted sample size. All findings in this report use weighted data. Each country was weighted equally when pooled findings were presented for the whole sample (to control for differences in achieved sample size among countries).

Research Tools

ISCWeB was based on asking children directly for an assessment of their own well-being. That is, the survey is based solely on children's own evaluations, perceptions and aspirations. The survey questionnaire contained around 100 items (there were some small differences in content in different countries) covering a wide range of aspects of children's lives organized under the following broad headings: basic characteristics (age, gender, country of birth), living situation, home and family relationships, money and economic circumstances, friends and other relationships, local area, school, time use, self, overall SWB, and children's rights. In

each country, the questionnaires were in the children's language (in some countries, more than one language was used).

Measures

Four main groups of measures were used here for the purpose of the current article: (a) children's knowledge and perceptions of the notion of children's rights, (b) children's participation in different contexts, (c) overall life satisfaction, and (d) satisfaction with different life domains.

Children's Knowledge and Perceptions of Their Rights

Children were asked to relate to three statements about children's rights: "I know what rights children have," "I know about the Children's Rights Convention," "I think in my country, adults generally respect children's rights." They were asked to mark each item on a 3-point scale: *no*, *not sure*, and *yes*.

Children's Participation

Five items in the questionnaire referred to different aspects of children's participation. Two referred to participation in the family: "My parents listen to me and take what I say into account" and "My parents (or the people who look after me) treat me fairly." Two items were about school: "My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account" and "My teachers treat me fairly." One item referred to participation in the community: "The town council asks children and young people their opinions about things that are important to them" (this item was only presented to the 12-year-olds). Children were asked to mark how much they agreed with the various items on a 5-point scale from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*very much agree*).

Overall Life Satisfaction

The questionnaires contained versions of previously tested psychometric scales of overall SWB. Here we used three such scales.

Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS). The OLS measure asks children how satisfied they are with their life as a whole using a single-item measure. An 11-point scale was used with the 10- and 12-year-olds, from 0 (*not at all satisfied*) to 10 (*totally satisfied*). Children aged 8 years were asked how happy they were with their life as a whole and were presented with a 5-point emoticon scale, ranging from a very unhappy face to a very happy face. The OLS is the most widely used measure of SWB (Rees et al., 2013; Tomin & Cummins, 2011).

Huebner's Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS). The SLSS was developed by Scott Huebner in the United States (Huebner, 1991). The scale used here consisted of five items designed to refer to overall (not domain-specific) life satisfaction to which respondents were asked to mark their level of satisfaction on an 11-point scale from 0 (*not at all satisfied*) to 10 (*totally satisfied*) for the 10- and 12-year-olds and a 5-point scale for the

Table 1. Number of Children by Country ($N = 54,691$)

Country	Number of children
Algeria	3,676
Colombia	2,816
England	3,298
Estonia	3,118
Ethiopia	2,877
Germany	3,009
Israel	2,800
Malta	2,584
Nepal	2,953
Norway	2,864
Poland	3,157
Romania	4,104
South Africa	3,188
South Korea	7,467
Spain	3,756
Turkey	3,024

8-year-olds. Children in this age group were asked how happy they were with the different items and were presented with a 5-point emoticon scale ranging from a very unhappy face to a very happy face. The items were “My life is going well,” “My life is just right,” “I have a good life,” “I have what I want in life,” “The things in my life are excellent.” The scale has been shown to have good reliability and validity in general samples of youth in the United States (see Huebner & Hills, 2013, for a recent summary) and has also been used in a number of other countries (Marques, Lopez, & Pais-Ribeiro, 2011; Park & Huebner, 2005). Cronbach’s alpha in the current sample for the 10- and 12-year-olds was 0.90 and 0.87 for the 8-year-olds.

The Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (BMLSS). The BMLSS, developed by Seligson et al. (2003), contains single-item measures of five key domains in children’s lives—family, friends, school, self, and living environment. The scale has been tested and validated in the United States with children and young people aged 8 to 18 (Huebner et al., 2006) as well as in some other countries. The items used here were satisfaction with “your family life,” “your friends,” “your school experience,” “your own body,” and “the area you live in, in general.” Respondents aged 10 to 12 were asked to mark their level of satisfaction on an 11-point scale from 0 (*not at all satisfied*) to 10 (*totally satisfied*). The 8-year-olds were asked how happy they were with the various items and were presented with a 5-point emoticon scale ranging from a very unhappy face to a very happy face. Cronbach’s alpha in the current sample for the 10- and 12-year-olds was 0.69 and 0.67 for the 8-year-olds.

To produce one rank for each of these scales, the scales of the 8-year-olds were converted into 10-point scales. All ranks were then transformed to 0–100 scales.

Satisfaction With Life Domains

In the current article, we used children satisfaction and happiness with four life domains—family, school, the area they live, and their satisfaction with their level of participation. Children aged 10 and 12 were asked to mark their level of satisfaction on 11-point scales, from *not at all satisfied* (0) to *totally satisfied* (10). The 8-year-olds were asked to mark how happy they felt with the same statements on a 5-point emoticon scale with faces ranging from very unhappy to very happy. To allow comparison among the different age groups the 5-point scales of the 8-year-olds were converted into 10-point scales. The items in each domain were all summed up to give a total mark, which was transformed into 0–100 scales.

Satisfaction with family. Children were asked to how satisfied (10- and 12-year-olds) or happy (8-year-olds) with four statements about their family life: “the house or flat where you live,” “the people who live with you,” “all the other people in your family,” “your family life.”

Satisfaction with school. Children were asked how satisfied (10- and 12-year-olds) or happy (8-year-olds) using four items about their lives at school: “your school marks,” “your school experience,” “your life as a student,” and “things you have learned.”

Satisfaction with the area you live in. Children were asked how satisfied (10- and 12-year-olds) or happy (8-year-olds) with “the area where they live, in general.”

Satisfaction with participation. Children were asked how satisfied they were with the freedom they have in their lives and with being listened to (the 8-year-olds were asked how happy they were with these statements).

Analysis

Analyses were conducted on three levels. The first was a statistical description of the rights and participation variables. Variation of the different variables was examined with regard to country of origin, age and gender. Various statistical tests determined if the variations were significant. Second, correlations using Pearson tests examined the relationship between children’s knowledge and perceptions of their rights, their reports on their participation and their satisfactions with their lives. Third, linear regressions examined the contribution of the independent variables - country, children’s participation and children’s concepts of their rights - to children’s SWB. Finally, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was used. HLM is a complex form of ordinary least squares regression used to analyze variance in the outcome variables when the predictor variables are at varying hierarchical levels (Woltman et al., 2012). Here groups of children were clustered together in an organized fashion by country.

Results

Knowledge and Perceptions of Children’s Rights

More than half the children (52%) reported knowing about children’s rights. Also, more than half the children (52%) thought that adults in their country respect children’s rights. A third of the children (37%) knew about the CRC.

There was clear variation by country (Figures 1–3), the highest percentages of positive answers to the item “I know what rights children have” coming from Colombia, Poland, and Norway, while the lowest came from England. Norway and Colombia showed the highest percentages of children answering positively to “I know about the Children’s Rights Convention,” while Germany showed the lowest percentage. Norway presented the highest percentages (83%) of children answering positively to “I think in my country adults in general respect children’s rights,” the lowest were evident in South Korea, in which only 34.9% of the children answered yes to this item.

Age Differences

Children’s answers to these items are presented by age groups in Table 2. Lower percentages of the 8-year-olds reported knowing what rights children have and about the Children’s Rights Convention than for the 10- and 12-year-olds. The opposite direction was found for the statement “I think in my country adults respect children’s rights”—the younger the children, the more they agreed with this item. These differences were statistically significant

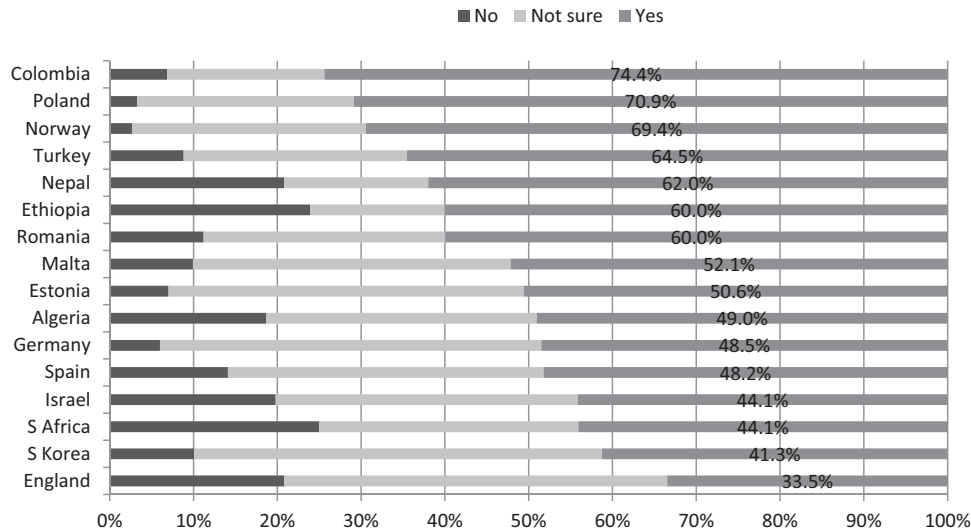


Figure 1. Children's answers to the question, "I know what rights children have" by country.

using the Gamma test, although the effect size was small: "I know what rights children have" ($\gamma = -0.95, p < .0001$), "I know about the children's rights convention" ($\gamma = -0.169, p < .0001$), "I think in my country adults respect children's rights" ($\gamma = 0.108, p < .0001$).

Gender

No meaningful differences were found between boys' and girls' answers to the children's rights items. Although gamma tests did show significant differences, the effects sizes were extremely small.

Children's Participation

Table 3 presents the means and means ranks of children's answers to the five items about the extent they are listened to by

adults and treated fairly in the family, school, and in the community. These are presented by country, with the countries divided into three groups: top third (dark gray), middle third (light gray), and bottom third (very light gray). Norway ranked in the top five countries in all five items, Algeria ranked in the top five countries in four of the five items, and Colombia and Malta ranked in the top five countries in three of the five items. Colombia ranked the highest in the two items of participation in the family, Algeria ranked first in both items of participation in school, and Malta ranked the highest for participation in the local area. The countries that ranked the lowest in participation in the family were Ethiopia, South Korea, Nepal, and South Africa. The countries ranking lowest in regard to participation in school were Estonia, South Africa, Germany, and England.

Calculating an overall score for the two items for participation in the family and for participation at school gave two new scores. These and the item on participation in the community were then

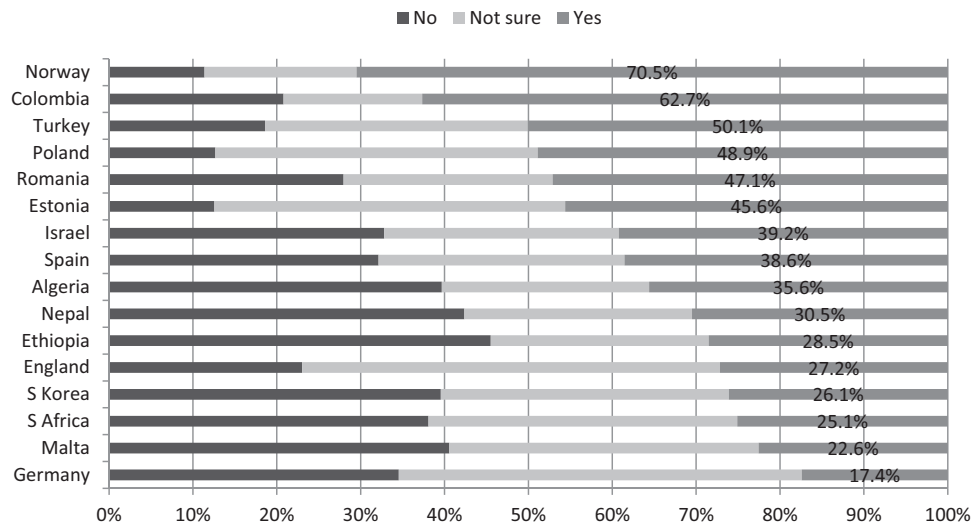


Figure 2. Children's answers to the question "I know about the Children's Rights Convention" by country.

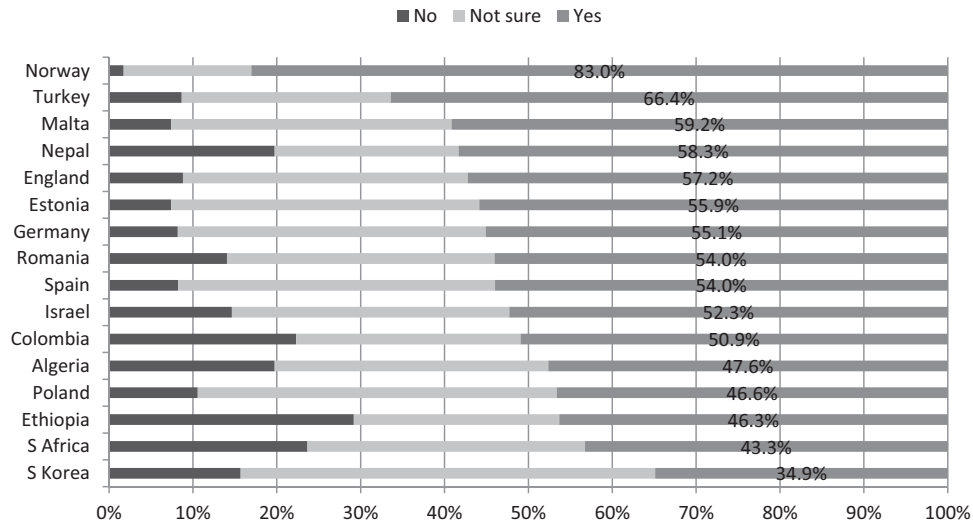


Figure 3. Children's answers to the question "I think in my country adults in general respect children's rights" by country.

transformed into 0–100 scales. Figures 4–6 present their *z* scores (the original *z* scores were multiplied by 100; 0 is the average score).

Differences by Age and Gender

Age. A Pearson test examined the correlation between age and children's reports on how much they are listened to and treated fairly. Very low to no correlation (from 0.016 to 0.136) was found for all items of participation in the family and in the school, indicating that there are no differences among different age groups.

Gender. Independent-samples *t* tests compared the five items of children's participation between boys and girls. A significant differences in the scores for the five items was found, but the effect size was very small (between -0.002 and -0.1), indicating no meaningful differences between boys' and girls' reports on participation in family, school and the community.

Satisfaction, Participation, and Knowledge of Children's Rights

Children's satisfaction from their participation. Children were asked how satisfied they were with their freedom in their lives and with being listened to (8-year-olds were asked how

happy they were with these statements). Each item was transformed into a 0–100 scale. The answers were categorized into three values from low to high satisfaction (score 100 out of 100). More children from Colombia, Romania, and Turkey scored the highest level of satisfaction in both items (see Figure 7).

Participation and satisfaction. The associations between the five items of children's participation and children's satisfaction with the family, school, the local area, their freedom, and with being listened to were examined with Pearson correlation tests. Two scales of children's overall life satisfaction were examined. The results are presented in Table 4.

Significant positive correlations were found among all the items. The more the children reported that their parents listened to them and treated them fairly, the more they were satisfied with their family life ($r = .306$ and $r = .315$) and with their life generally. The more the children reported that their teachers listened to them and treated them fairly, the more they were satisfied with their school life ($r = .401$ and $r = .404$) and with life generally. A very small correlation was found between children's being heard in the community context and their satisfaction with the area they live in ($r = .159$) and with their life satisfaction.

Children's rights and satisfaction. Figures 8–10 present the mean scores of children's satisfaction on the OLS, SLSS, and BMSLSS scales as reflected by their answers to the

Table 2. Knowledge and Perceptions of Children's Rights by Age Group

Age	"I know what rights children have"			"I know about the Children's Rights Convention"			"I think in my country adults respect children's rights"		
	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes
12	8.4%	33.1%	58.5%	24.1%	33.7%	42.2%	14.9%	36.6%	48.4%
10	10.2%	32.6%	57.3%	26.6%	33.7%	39.6%	11.7%	32.5%	55.8%
8	22.5%	31.8%	45.7%	40.2%	27.9%	31.9%	14.7%	26.1%	59.2%

Table 3. *Children's Participation in the Family, School, and Local Areas, Means and Mean Ranks, by Country*

Country	"My parents listen to me"		"My parents treat me fairly"		"My teachers listen to me"		"My teachers treat me fairly"		"The town council asks children their opinion" ^a	
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i> _{rank}	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i> _{rank}	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i> _{rank}	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i> _{rank}	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i> _{rank}
Algeria	3.36	4	3.53	5	3.43	1	3.45	1	1.04	13
Colombia	3.46	1	3.66	1	3.03	9	3.40	2	1.78	8
England	3.23	9	3.45	8	3.05	14	3.06	15	—	—
Estonia	3.09	11	3.43	9	2.91	16	3.14	12	1.65	9
Ethiopia	2.69	16	3.22	12	3.27	4	3.26	8	1.36	12
Germany	3.29	6	3.31	11	3.04	15	2.94	16	1.41	11
Israel	3.38	3	3.45	7	3.06	12	3.12	11	1.76	7
Malta	3.23	7	3.38	10	3.34	3	3.36	4	2.46	1
Nepal	2.96	15	3.16	14	3.14	11	3.35	7	1.84	4
Norway	3.41	2	3.53	4	3.27	5	3.32	5	2.44	2
Poland	3.39	5	3.55	3	3.11	10	3.22	9	—	—
Romania	3.19	10	3.61	2	3.06	8	3.40	3	1.86	6
South Africa	2.97	14	3.00	15	3.10	7	2.96	14	1.91	5
South Korea	3.11	12	3.15	16	3.14	13	3.16	13	1.51	10
Spain	3.27	8	3.51	6	3.21	6	3.28	6	2.23	3
Turkey	2.95	13	2.94	13	3.31	2	3.05	10	—	—

Note. Items rank between 0 to 4. — indicates that the item was not used in these countries.

^a Was asked only among 12-year-olds.

three items on children's rights. For all three items the mean scores in all satisfaction scales were higher in the category "yes" than in "not sure" and "no." This indicates that the greater children's knowledge on the concept of children's rights and the more they agree that adults in their countries respect children's rights, the more they are satisfied with their lives.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance tested the differences between the three levels of knowledge of children's rights (no, not sure, yes) with respect to children's satisfaction scores. One test was conducted for each of the three rights items: (a) "I know what rights children have"—there was a significant multi-

variate main effect for the level of knowledge, $F(6, 103,428) = 338.493, p < .0001$; Wilk's $\lambda = 0.962$, but with low partial eta $\eta_p^2 = .019$, implying that only 2% of the variance in the children's SWB was accounted for by the level of knowledge. Given the smallness of the effect size, no univariate main effects were examined. (b) "I know about the CRC"—there was a significant multivariate main effect for the level of knowledge, $F(6, 102,798) = 208.831, p < .0001$; Wilk's $\lambda = 0.976$, but with low $\eta_p^2 = .012$, implying that only 1% of the variance in the children's SWB was accounted for by the level of knowledge. Because of the small size of the effect, no univar-

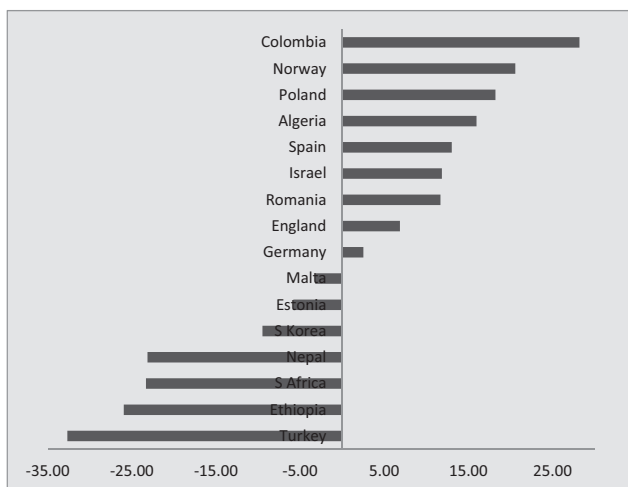


Figure 4. Children's participation in the family by country (z scores multiplied by 100).

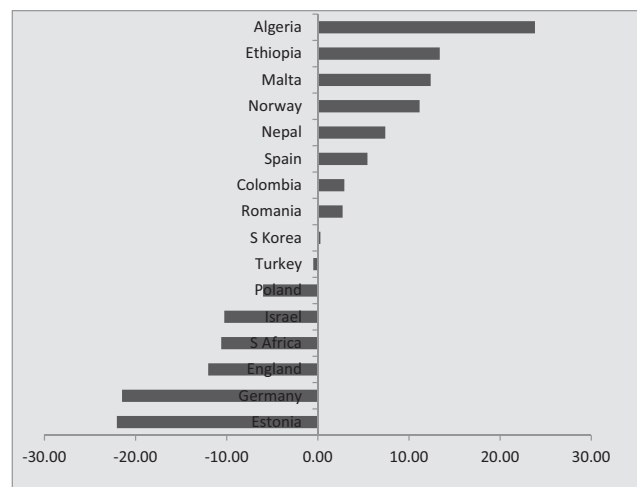


Figure 5. Children's participation in school by country (z scores multiplied by 100).

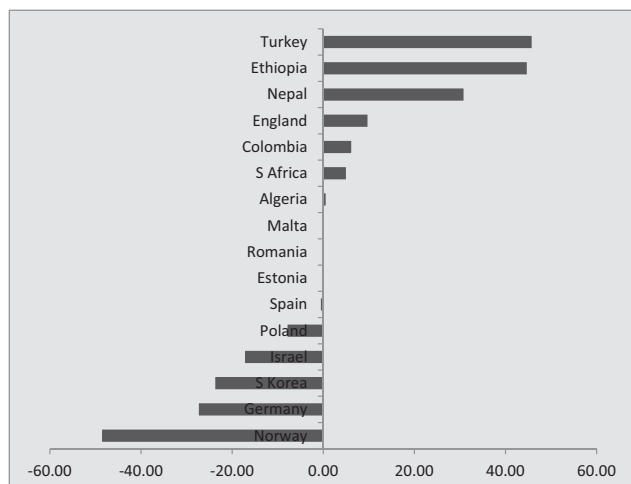


Figure 6. Children's participation in the community by country (z scores multiplied by 100).

iate main effects were examined. (c) "I think in my country adults in general respect children's rights"—there was a significant multivariate main effect for the level of agreement on this item, $F(6, 102,110) = 734.745, p < .0001$; Wilk's $\lambda = 0.919$, but with low $\eta_p^2 = .041$, implying that only 4% of the variance in the children's SWB was accounted for by the level of agreement with the item. As the effect size was small, no univariate main effects were examined.

Regressions

Multivariable linear regression and HLM regression examined how well children's participation and knowledge of their rights predicted their life satisfaction. Because results from both regressions were similar for OLS, SLSS, and BMSLSS scales of chil-

dren's overall SWB, only the SLSS scale was used in further calculations.

A multiple linear regression. A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict children's satisfaction with their lives based on the four items on children's participation in the family and in school (entered in Step 1) and based on the three items on their knowledge and perceptions of children's rights (entered in Step 2). The seven predictors explained 24% of the variance in children's satisfaction (see Table 5). The participation items accounted for about 20% of the variance in children's satisfaction, and the rights items added approximately 4% variance above and beyond the variance accounted for by the participation items.

In the second step the same multiple linear regressions were run separately for each country (see Table 6). The predictors explained different proportions of the variance in children's satisfaction in the different countries. While in South Korea and Poland the predictors explained 34% of the variance in children's satisfaction, in South Africa, Nepal, and Romania they predicted only 10% to 12% of the variance.

Hierarchical linear modeling regression. Based on the assumption that children are nested within each country, we used HLM regression. Multilevel models provided a means for accounting for variation across countries and the HLMs enabled us to examine the level of country influence versus the individual level influence, children's perceptions of their rights and children's participation versus the nation level.

Model 1 was the unconditional model, modeling only the means of children's SWB by country. Models 2 and 3 included individual level variables (see Table 7). Variance within country was much larger than variance between countries. The intraclass correlation coefficient (0.03) represented the proportion of the variance in outcomes between countries. The low intraclass correlation coefficient indicated that only 3% of the variance of children's SWB can be

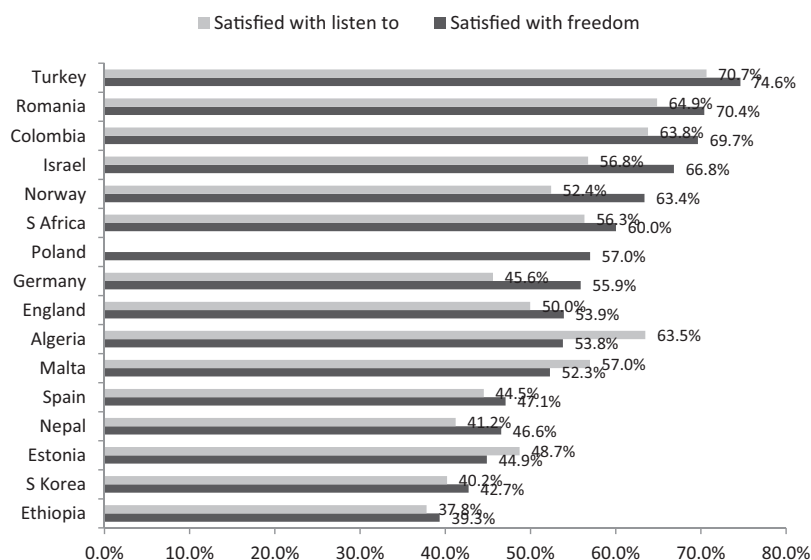


Figure 7. Percentages of children scoring the highest level of satisfaction (100 out of 100) by country.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix of Children's Participation and Children's Satisfaction

Participation and satisfaction variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Parents listen to	1											
2. Parents treated fairly	.501**	1										
3. Teachers listen to	.269**	.211**	1									
4. Teachers treat fairly	.236**	.290**	.573**	1								
5. Town council ^a	.118**	.100**	.159**	.145**	1							
6. School satisfaction	.247**	.242**	.401**	.404**	.164**	1						
7. Family satisfaction	.306**	.315**	.206**	.208**	.124**	.366**	1					
8. Area satisfaction	.203**	.199**	.205**	.209**	.159**	.379**	.335**	1				
9. Satisfaction with freedom	.252**	.242**	.217**	.211**	.149**	.402**	.336**	.316**	1			
10. Satisfaction with being listen to	.330**	.287**	.290**	.279**	.134**	.432**	.386**	.325**	.441**	1		
11. Overall life satisfaction	.244**	.258**	.326**	.239**	.126**	.446**	.362**	.349**	.429**	.475**	1	
12. Student Life Satisfaction Scale	.323**	.329**	.293**	.297**	.163**	.448**	.426**	.386**	.472**	.478**	.567**	1

^a Only 12-year-olds were asked.

** Correlations are significant at level .01.

attributed to differences among countries and is at the country level, the remaining 97% derives from the individual level.

All individual-level variables were similarly found to be significantly related to children's SWB. The participation variables explained 11% of the variance in children's SWB and the rights variables 5%. The models show that the more children reported that they are listened to and treated fairly by their parents and teachers, the more their SWB grew. The strongest variable among the children's rights items was that referring to the children's perceptions of how much adults in their countries respect children's rights.

Discussion

Children's own views and reports were used to determine the correlation of their knowledge and perceptions of their rights and their perceptions of their participation in different contexts with their SWB. These two essential concepts in children's lives have a strong ideological connection but they have been treated as separate ideas in the theoretical and empirical field. This is the first study to analyze the linkage between these two concepts. Also, for

the first time, our study's broad cross-national perspective included children from less Western and non-Christian cultures from 16 countries.

Our study yields three main findings: First, there were clear cross-national differences among children's knowledge and perceptions of their rights and among their reports on participation in their lives. Second, there were age differences in children's thinking on their rights but not with regard to their participation. No gender differences were found for these variables. Third, children's knowledge and perceptions of their rights were associated with children's participation in different contexts in their lives and with children's SWB.

Cross-National Differences

Our results highlight some cross-national variations in children's knowledge and thinking about their rights. Children from Colombia, Poland, Norway, and Turkey showed the greatest knowledge of children's rights; higher percentages reported that they knew what rights children have and that they knew about the CRC. Children from England, South Africa, and South Korea

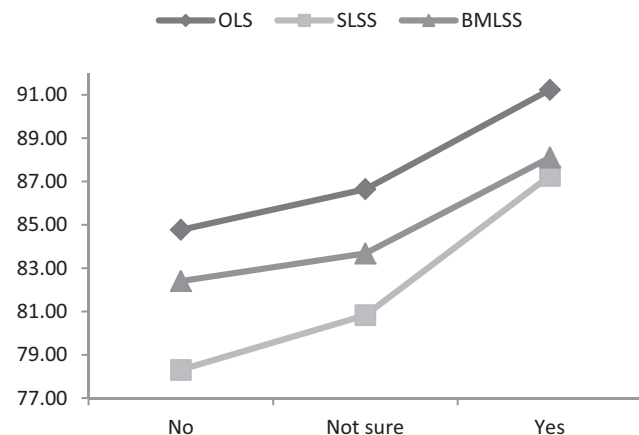


Figure 8. "I know what rights children have."

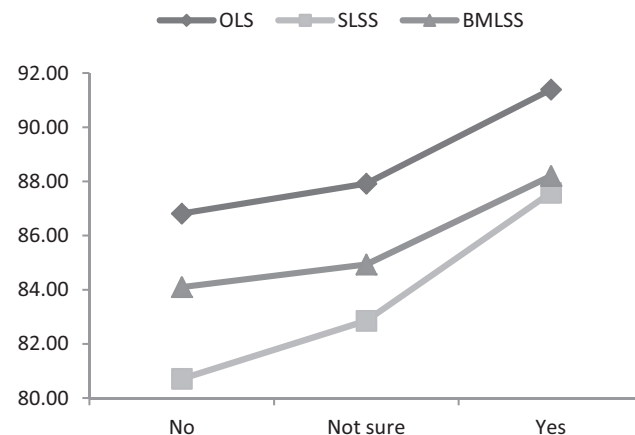


Figure 9. "I know about the Children's Rights Convention."

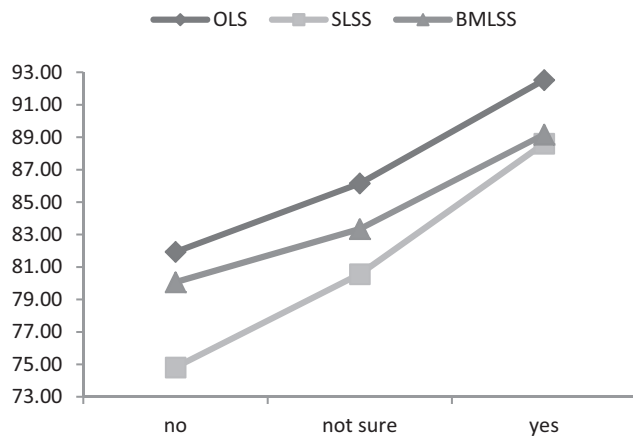


Figure 10. “I think in my country adults in general respect children’s rights.”

showed the lowest level of knowledge about what rights children have, and children from Germany, Malta, and South Africa showed the poorest knowledge of the CRC. Children’s perception of their rights showed similar patterns. Norwegian and Turkish children presented the highest level of agreement with the item “I think in my country, adults in general respect children’s rights”; children from South Korea and South Africa showed the lowest level. Almost the same countries appear at the top for all these items and also at the bottom. Therefore, it can be argued that children’s thinking and perceptions of their rights appear to be formed in a specific cultural, national, and political environment.

Our findings fit earlier studies finding national, ethnic and religious differences in children’s attitudes toward the concept of children’s rights (e.g., Cherney & Perry, 1996; Cherney & Shing, 2008; Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008; Limber et al., 1999; Melton & Limber, 1992; Peens, 1997). Thus, our findings reinforce the *cultural model* of children’s thinking about their rights, according to children’s knowledge and perceptions of their rights are constrained by their experience of, or exposure to, rights in the particular social, economic, political, and cultural context in which they live (Ruck et al., 2014). Our results have extended this model by examining children from 16 different countries, including children from non-Christian and non-Western cultures.

Our findings also support previous reports that children’s right to participation varies across cultures (Ben-Arieh & Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Helwig, 2006; Neff & Helwig, 2002). A greater percentage of children from Norway, Algeria, Colombia, and Malta reported that they were listened to by adults, that their opinion were taken into account and that they were treated fairly. The smallest percentages of children reporting on participation were from Ethiopia, Nepal, South Africa, and South Korea. These results indicate that the amounts of participation and autonomy which children enjoy vary across different cultural contexts. Although these findings are consistent with finding of previous studies that the implementation of the right to participation varies with cultural and national context, our results do not follow the same direction of differences observed in other

studies, which found differences between traditional cultures and Western cultures in children’s thinking about their rights and in their participation rights. It has been argued that children’s rights are a particularly individualistic concept and, therefore, more likely to be important to children from Western (individualistic) cultures, while traditional societies are slower to recognize and support children’s rights (e.g., Ben-Arieh & Khoury-Kassabri, 2008; Ben-Arieh et al., 2006; Bohrnstedt et al., 1981; Cherney & Shing, 2008; Helwig, 2006; Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2008, 2009; Peterson-Badali et al., 2003).

Our findings differ from this assumption in two ways: First, the countries in which children demonstrated the highest level of knowledge of children’s rights or reported the highest level of participation were not necessarily Western countries (Colombia, Turkey, and Algeria). Similarly, countries in which children reported the lowest knowledge of rights or participation were not necessarily those with traditional cultures (England, Germany, and South Africa). Second, the countries in which children demonstrated the highest knowledge of children’s rights and participation or the lowest were neither Western or traditional. Thus, according to our study a rough differentiation between traditional and Western cultures is not sufficient to explain the differences in children’s thinking and their reports about their rights. Nevertheless, it should be noted that our sample included more Western countries than countries with traditional culture. Also, it should be noted that the types of questions asked in the survey may not have allowed for the emergence of a full understanding of possible subtle differences in rights’ perceptions across cultures. Our results therefore call for further investigation of the factors contributing to the cultural differences in children’s knowledge and thinking about their rights and in their opportunities to exercise their participation.

In spite of the cross-cultural differences, only half the children in the sample knew about children’s rights, only one third knew about the CRC, and only half thought that adults in their country respect children’s rights. If children’s rights are to serve their intended function—to protect children from harm and promote

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Children’s Subjective Well-Being (Student Life Satisfaction Scale)

Independent variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	β	B	β
Listened to by parents	3.118**	.173	2.844**	.158
Treated fairly by parents	3.599**	.190	3.368**	.178
Listened to by teachers	2.468**	.133	2.158**	.116
Treated fairly by teachers	2.408**	.132	2.162**	.119
Know rights (yes) ^a			2.482**	.062
Know Convention on the Rights of the Child (yes) ^a			1.779**	.043
Adults respect rights (yes) ^a			5.236**	.131
F(df)	2,954.309		2,007.163	
df	4,45,741		7,45,736	
R ²	.205		.235	
ΔR ² change	—		.030	

^a reference category “no.”

** $p < .0001$.

Table 6. Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Children's Subjective Well-Being (Student Life Satisfaction Scale) by Country

Country	R^2	Parents		Teachers		Know rights	Know Convention on the Rights of the Child	Adult respect rights
		Listen to	Treated fairly	Listen to	Treated fairly			
Overall	.235**	2.844**	3.368**	2.158**	2.162**	2.482**	1.779**	5.236**
South Korea	.345	4.329**	3.929**	3.131**	3.173**	4.409**	-1.173*	4.873**
Poland	.344	4.066**	5.224**	1.468*	2.704**	3.790**	-.229	5.195**
England	.296	3.450**	6.032**	2.008**	2.226**	1.124	1.041	5.600**
Estonia	.272	2.577**	4.589**	1.684**	2.386**	3.186**	1.578*	4.539**
Israel	.267	3.610**	3.348**	1.186*	2.762**	2.427*	.315	5.327**
Germany	.258	4.311**	3.944**	3.009**	1.065*	1.525*	-.050	5.157*
Algeria	.236	2.053**	4.435**	2.533**	2.542**	2.992**	3.442**	5.753**
Spain	.233	3.498**	3.564**	2.062**	1.409**	1.561*	-.503	4.598**
Malta	.225	3.896**	2.388**	2.405**	2.691**	2.456*	1.122	2.720**
Ethiopia	.223	.741*	4.241**	2.302**	1.892**	5.468**	4.781**	4.282**
Norway	.208	3.041**	3.565**	1.237*	2.349**	2.205*	-.013	5.324**
Turkey	.198	1.735*	.718**	4.408**	1.816**	2.633**	1.266	7.123**
Colombia	.185	2.638**	3.123**	1.711**	1.675**	2.020*	3.247**	1.484*
Romania	.121	.758*	3.306**	.499*	1.946**	1.379*	1.566*	1.904**
South Africa	.115	2.600**	1.168**	2.093**	1.157**	-.008	3.629**	5.620**
Nepal	.100	.702	1.017*	2.203**	2.509**	.099	2.246**	5.141**

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

their development and well-being—it is essential that children understand and support their rights (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2011). Our findings imply that half of the children in the 16 countries are therefore at risk for not fulfilling their rights. Further examination is needed to determine why children are not familiar with the concept of children's rights and why they feel that adults in their country do not respect children's rights. Such research can help inform and design structures and procedures for implementing children's rights by policymakers and advocates for children's rights.

Gender and Age Differences

Age differences were observed for all items of children's rights. Children aged 10 and 12 expressed a higher knowledge of chil-

dren's rights and the CRC than 8-year-olds, while more 8-year-olds thought that adults respect children's rights. These results are consistent with previous studies which found that younger children possess poorer understanding of the concept of children's rights than older children. Studies have found that young children (6–8 years old) do not know or have difficulty indicating what a right is. Only at the age of 12 years do children understand that a right is an entitlement rather than a privilege and are aware of situations in which their rights are not respected by adults (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008; Ruck, Abramovitch, et al., 1998; Taylor, Smith, & Nairn, 2001). This can explain why more 8-year-olds than older children thought that adults in their country respect children's rights. We can assume that younger children see rights as privilege given to them by adult, while older children are already aware of

Table 7. Hierarchical Linear Model

Fixed effect	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	84.29**	.94	48.06**	.87	42.943**	.81
Individual-level variables:						
Listened to by parents			2.99**	.09	2.78**	.09
Treated fairly by parents			3.38**	.09	3.13**	.09
Listened to by teachers			2.60**	.09	2.25**	.09
Treated fairly by teachers			2.36**	.09	2.15**	.09
Know rights					1.75**	.13
Know Convention on the Rights of the Child					.70**	.11
Adults respect rights					3.71**	.12
Variance components						
Within country	401.54	(96.6%)	304.74	(96.8%)	293.18	(97.2%)
Between countries	13.92	(3.4%)	10.21	(3.2%)	8.34	(2.8%)
Total	415.46		314.95		301.52	
Log likelihood	476,755.80		420,877.99		399,017.81	
Pseudo- R^2			.12		.05	

** $p < 0.01$.

situations in which their rights are being provoked by adults and, therefore, tend more to report that adults in their country do not respect children's rights.

No significant differences were found among different age groups with regard to children's participation. This is somewhat surprising as, based on the principle of *the evolving capacities of the child*, one could assume that older children be given a greater degree of participation. The CRC recognizes that children are gradually becoming more competent and independent and thus are capable of utilizing more rights and responsibilities (Daiute, 2008; Ruck & Horn, 2008). Our findings raise the question why there are no differences in participation among children of different age groups.

Alternatively, the items used to evaluate children's participation may not have grasped the full range of children's participation, as children were only asked if they were listened to and if their views were taken into account. They were not asked if they take part in decision-making processes in their lives. While there are no differences in the low level of participation among different age groups, there may be differences within high levels of participation. Further studies should examine age differences based on the evaluation of the full range of children's participation.

No meaningful differences were found between boys' and girls' answers to the items on children's rights or children's participation. There is mixed evidence on gender differences in attitudes to children's rights (Ruck et al., 2014). Some studies found stronger support for nurturance rights in girls than boys (Covell & Howe, 1995; Day et al., 2006; Hart, Pavlovic, & Zeidner, 2001; Peterson-Badali et al., 2004; Rogers & Wrightsman, 1978) or that girls generally support children's rights more than boys (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009), while others report no differences (Ruck, Abramovitch, et al., 1998; Ruck et al., 2002). An Israeli study found gender differences in children's reports on their participation, with girls reporting higher levels of participation in the family and at school (Ben-Arieh & Attar-Schwartz, 2013).

The Relationship Between Children's Rights and Participation and Children's SWB

The results here support our initial assumption that children's own thinking and reports about their rights are associated with their SWB. First, the more children reported on participation, the more they were satisfied with different life domains and their life as a whole. Also, the more children reported that their parents listened to them and treated them fairly, the more they were satisfied with their family life and with their life overall. Furthermore, the more children reported that their teachers listened to them and treated them fairly, the more they were satisfied with their school life and with their life overall. A very small correlation was found between children's opportunities for being heard in the community context and their satisfactions with the area they live in and with their overall life. Also, the more children reported they had opportunities to participate, the more they were satisfied with the freedom in their lives and with being listened to.

We could confirm that the degree of children's autonomy and participation, especially in the family and in the school, is

important for their satisfaction with their life. This association between participation and well-being has been examined only in one recent study on children's understanding of their well-being, which found that participation in family decision-making and having a voice in school are both linked to greater well-being (Rees et al., 2010). Therefore, being treated with fairness and respect and being listened to are important considerations for how children conceptualize their overall well-being (Goswami, 2012; Rees et al., 2010).

It was also found that the higher the children's knowledge of the concept of children's rights, awareness of their rights and the more they agreed that adults in their countries respect children's rights, the more satisfied they were with their lives. Also children who lived in nations in which children's rights are respected appeared more satisfied.

Thus, we have confirmed our assumption that the concepts of children's rights and SWB are intimately connected. These results are, to the best of our knowledge, the first demonstration of the correlation between these two variables. Our findings indicate that children's rights and SWB should be studied together and that children's rights can be best conceptualized as determinants of children's SWB (see also, Moore, Murphey, Bandy, & Lawner, 2014).

Comparing regressions between countries showed that the predictors—children's perceptions and knowledge of their rights and children's participation—explained different proportions of the variance in children's satisfaction in the various countries. For example, in South Korea and Poland, the predictors explained 34% of the variance in children's satisfaction, but in South Africa, Nepal, and Romania, it predicted only 10–12% of the variance. Children's perceptions and knowledge of their rights and their participation appear of different importance to their well-being across nations and cultures.

HLM showed that only about 3% of the variance in children's SWB could be attributed to differences across countries, while the remaining variance was attributed to the individual level (the items of children's rights and participation). Previous studies also showed that children's immediate surroundings are of greater importance for their well-being than macrolevel factors, which are not significant predictors of children's SWB (Lee & Yoo, 2015); instead, children's relationships with their immediate surroundings are most consistently related to the levels of their SWB across the nations. Our findings have added children's participation to the factors at the individual level.

When considering and interpreting our findings, some limitations of the study should be considered. First, the items used to evaluate children's participation referred only to children's feelings of being listened to and having their views considered. They did not include children's reports on their participation in decision-making processes which are relevant to their lives. Also, the item on children's participation in the community was directed only to 12-year-olds and limited to children's participation through the local authority. Second, as noted in the method section, the scale used with the 8-year-olds differed from those used with the 10- and 12-year-olds. However, all results were calculated to a similar scale ranging from 0 to 100. This should be borne in mind while interpreting the results. Third, comparing the level of satisfaction between nations and cultural contexts is a great challenge in any

cross-national study on children's SWB. Therefore, all the cross national comparisons in our study should be examined with caution. In spite of these limitations, we believe that this study provides a broad picture of children's perception of their rights and well-being.

Keywords: children's rights; children's right to participation; children's self-determination rights; children's well-being; subjective well-being

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