

Gwyther Rees

Children's Views on Their Lives and Well- being

Findings from the Children's Worlds
Project

Children's Well-Being: Indicators and Research

Volume 18

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 Springer

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This book provides an overview of the second wave of the Children's Worlds project – an international survey of children's own perspectives on their lives and well-being. The second wave survey was conducted with over 60,000 children aged eight to 12 years old in 18 countries across four continents between 2013 and 2016. The survey makes an important contribution to a growing body of evidence on children's lives and quality of life globally. This introductory chapter places the project within the context of a broader set of developments in the study of child well-being; provides a historical overview of the development of the Children's Worlds project; and outlines the structure and content of the book.

1.1 Children's Well-Being

Children's well-being is an important concept both because it provides an indication of the quality of childhood as a life stage in its own right; and because childhood is the foundation for the individual's future life as an adult. Efforts to measure and monitor children's well-being, in a broad sense, through 'State of the Child' reports can be traced back at least to the 1950s (Ben-Arieh and Goerge 2001). More recently, indicators and collections of indicators of child well-being have proliferated over the past few decades in many countries. As well as these national initiatives, there has also been a growth in international reports on child well-being, within regions, continents, groupings of countries and globally. These include the annual State of the World's Children's reports published by UNICEF (e.g. UNICEF 2016); a series of reports on child well-being in Africa (e.g. African Child Policy Forum 2016); a series of reports on child well-being in rich countries published by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (e.g. UNICEF Office of Research 2016) and a chapter on children in a recent OECD report in its 'How's Life' initiative (OECD 2015).

These types of reports typically address different aspects or domains of childhood (such as health and education) and identify a number of indicators to represent each domain. Often these sets of indicators are primarily or entirely objective measures such as mortality rates, immunization rates, rates of educational participation, levels of educational attainment and so on. However there is also a developing interest in gathering subjective information from children themselves. This interest stems from a variety of different sources, some relating specifically to research on children and childhood and some related to broader trends in the study of well-being.

One source of the growth in interest in subjective indicators is the positive psychology movement which has aimed to develop a ‘science of positive subjective experience’ (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000, p. 1). A key principle of this movement is that positive well-being is viewed as being more than the absence of mental health problems. Running parallel to the emergence of this new branch of psychology, there has been a developing interest in subjective indicators in the field of economics. This trend reflects a recognition from the 1960s onwards¹ of the limitations of traditional measures such as GDP as indicators of quality of life (Layard 2005).

Alongside these broad developments, there have also been some which are more specific to the study of children and childhood. One key strand is the ‘new sociology of childhood’ (James and Prout 1997) which promoted the idea of children as competent social actors; and of childhood as an important life stage in its own right. A second strand is the increasing recognition of children as rights-holders, as enshrined within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). One of the key principles of the UNCRC is the importance of children having opportunities to express their views on issues affecting their lives and to have those views taken seriously.

All the above trends have contributed to a set of four shifts in the child social indicators movement which were summarised by Ben-Arieh (2008). The first of these is a shift from indicators of survival to indicators of well-being. The second is from negative indicators (such as problem behaviours) to positive indicators. The third is from well-becoming, which refers to the child’s future prospects as an adult, to well-being in the present. The fourth is from traditional domains (such as health and education) to new subject areas such as children’s daily activities. Complementing these four shifts, Ben-Arieh also notes the increasing focus on the child (rather than the family or household) as the ‘unit of observation’ (Jensen and Saporiti 1992).

There are thus many good reasons for gathering children’s own perspectives on, and evaluations of, their lives and to consider these as one way of viewing children’s well-being. This approach can complement objective ways of measuring child well-being by providing different perspectives on the same issue, as argued in a recent report card by UNICEF in relation to child well-being (UNICEF Office of Research

¹The point was eloquently made in a speech by Robert Kennedy in 1968. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/RFK-Speeches/Remarks-of-Robert-F-Kennedy-at-the-University-of-Kansas-March-18-1968.aspx>

2013) and by the OECD in relation to the measurement of population well-being in general (OECD 2011).

The field of research on children's subjective well-being has expanded rapidly over the last decade. There are now hundreds of journal articles on this topic, including in the *Child Indicators Research* journal which focuses on developments in both objective and subjective indicators of child well-being. It is beyond the remit of this book to attempt to review this evidence, although selected studies on specific topics are referenced in relevant chapters. Of more central importance to this book is to place the Children's Worlds study within the context of international comparative studies of children's subjective well-being. Two major international studies of children which have included some subjective well-being questions are the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). There have also been several smaller-scale comparative studies across groups of countries more specifically focused on the topic.

The HBSC study, as its name suggests, is primarily a study of children's health behaviours. However it does include a single-item question on life satisfaction as well as several other subjective questions about particular aspects of life such as children's relationships with peers at school. The study covers countries in Europe and North America. Bradshaw and Richardson (2009) used the life satisfaction data from HBSC as part of a proposed multidimensional index of child well-being in Europe (also including objective indicators from various sources). This approach was also taken in UNICEF Report Card 7, which compared child well-being across high-income countries (UNICEF 2007). The report card received substantial media and policy attention in many countries, particularly due to its approach of creating league tables of countries for different dimensions of child well-being. A report on a more recent wave of the HBSC study (Inchley et al. 2016) contains findings on the life satisfaction of children aged 11, 13 and 15 years old in 42 European and North American countries. The rankings of countries are quite different from those seen in research on adult populations. For example, Armenia, Albania and Romania sit near the top of the rankings for life satisfaction in the HBSC study which is not the case when comparisons are made for adult subjective well-being for the same set of countries. The difference between international patterns of subjective well-being of children and of adults is a topic which has so far received relatively little attention. A fuller discussion of this issue, including the presentation of new evidence, is to be found in Chap. 6.

The latest wave of the PISA study has included the same life satisfaction question as the HBSC study (OECD 2017). Findings on this question are discussed more fully in Chap. 6. The most recent two waves have also included questions on children's subjective experiences of school. One of the interesting findings from the previous wave of this study, of relevance to this book, is that there appears to be little association between countries that have the highest levels of educational performance and those where children have the most positive views of school. In fact some countries near the top of the attainment rankings, such as South Korea and Finland, are near the bottom of the rankings for children liking school (OECD

2014). This is also an issue which will be returned to later in the book. It is a pertinent example of the potential value of considering both objective and subjective measures of children's well-being which was discussed earlier.

Beyond these two major studies, there is a relative lack of recent large-scale international studies gathering children's views on their lives, although a notable initiative was a series of surveys conducted by UNICEF² between 1999 and 2001 which gathered views from almost 40,000 children aged 9 to 18 in 72 countries in East Asia and the Pacific; Europe and Central Asia; and Latin America and the Caribbean. Several studies have also published comparisons of children's subjective well-being between pairs or small groups of countries (e.g. Casas et al. 2012, 2013; Kim and Main 2017).

In summary, while substantial progress has been made in gathering children's own perspectives on particular aspects of their lives, this field of research is still at an early stage of development and many gaps exist. The main focus of data collection for international comparative research has been on the adolescent age group; most studies relate exclusively or primarily to high-income countries; and there has been a greater focus on some topics – overall life satisfaction, health and education than on others such as the quality of children's relationships with family and friends. The study which is the subject of this book aims to address some of these gaps. It intentionally focuses on a slightly younger age group (from 8 to 12 years old) than has been customary in much of the previous research on children's subjective well-being in order to expand the age range of children for which data is available. It covers a more diverse range of countries than studies such as HBSC and PISA. It also attempts to cover a comprehensive range of topics capturing all aspects of children's experiences.

1.2 The Children's Worlds Project

The Children's Worlds study began in 2010 when, in response to the evidence gaps discussed above, UNICEF's regional office for CEE/CIS countries in Geneva convened an exploratory meeting with researchers active in the field of children's subjective well-being in Germany, Israel, Spain and the UK. The aim was to discuss the potential to develop an international survey of children's views and experiences of childhood. It was agreed at the meeting that there were potential benefits of such a project in providing new information on children's lives and well-being which might inform policy makers, practitioners, researchers and all other concerned with children's lives. The main outcome of the meeting was a commitment by the group of researchers to work together to develop a pilot survey questionnaire, to be used to gather children's own accounts of their lives and well-being, which could then be tested in a range of different contexts.

In the early stages, two versions of the questionnaire incorporating sets of questions – some drawn from previous studies and some new – on different aspects of

²<https://www.unicef.org/polls/intro/why.htm>

children's lives were tested and discussed with children in Brazil, England, Germany, Honduras, Israel, Romania, South Africa, Spain and Turkey. This initial work led to a pilot questionnaire which was then used to explore the potential for a large-scale survey of the kind envisaged. The first (pilot) wave of the survey was conducted in 14 countries – Algeria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, England, Israel, Nepal, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Uganda and USA – in 2011 to 2012. The range of countries involved matched the aspirations of the project to include children in as diverse a range of countries and contexts globally as possible. Over 34,000 children aged 8 to 12 years old participated in the survey, although only in some countries were the samples of children broadly representative of the child population. A summary of the results of the pilot survey is available in Dinisman and Rees (2014) and more detailed findings using the data are presented in a set of journal articles in a special issue of *Child Indicators Research* devoted to the study (see Dinisman et al. 2015 for an overview).

Following the success of this pilot wave, the project was fortunate to receive a substantial grant from the Jacobs Foundation in Switzerland to develop a second full wave of the survey in a greater number of countries and with more representative samples of children. As well as extending the scope of the survey this provided an opportunity to learn from the pilot survey and to make substantial improvements to the survey questionnaires. The second wave of the survey ran from 2013 to 2016 in 18 countries and achieved samples of children which were broadly representative of the population of children in mainstream schools in the country or part of the country that was covered. It is this data which is the source of information in this book. Details of the countries involved and much more detail about how the survey was conducted are provided in Chap. 2. The survey was also conducted with smaller samples in two other countries - Portugal and Argentina.

At the time of writing (May 2017) a third wave of the survey has just begun. This will run for at least 2 years and early indications are that at least 40 countries across five continents will participate in this wave. In the long-term this will provide a major resource for international comparative research on children's experiences of childhood and their feelings about their lives in a very diverse range of contexts.

1.3 Outline of this Book

The aim of this book is to introduce key findings from the second wave of the project to a wide range of audiences. Initial descriptive comparative reports were produced on the surveys of children aged 10 and 12 years old in the first 15 countries to participate in the study (Rees and Main 2015) and on the survey of children aged 8 years old in the first 16 countries to participate (Rees et al. 2016). The book builds on those reports, covers 18 countries and, where possible, integrates findings from all three age groups of children to participate in the survey, totalling over 61,000 children. The book substantially expands the subject matter of those earlier reports with an additional focus on inequalities in children's lives and well-being. Alongside

the preparation of this book, numerous researchers are engaged in detailed analysis of the data, exploring in some detail specific topics such as children's experiences of family life, their feelings of safety in different context, how they use their time, and so on. This work is starting to appear in peer-reviewed journals and the book also discusses key emerging findings from articles that have already been published or have been accepted for publication during 2017. While many of the articles discussed above present detailed and sophisticated statistical analyses, the approach taken in this book is non-technical. The intention is to provide a broad overview of the scope of the project and some of the emerging findings in a way that is accessible without detailed knowledge of statistical techniques. For the most part the methods described are relatively simple and any statistical notes are restricted to tables and footnotes.

The structure of the book is as follows. Following this introduction there are two chapters providing background information on the project. The first of these provides a description of how the study was done. The second discusses some of the conceptual issues in asking children about their lives, particularly in an international comparative context, and some of the key ideas underpinning the project. Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the book then present findings from the project. The first two of these chapters provide a descriptive overview of the context of children's lives, including household structure and economic circumstances (Chap. 4), and an overview of findings from a set of questions that asked children about their daily activities (Chap. 5). These chapters provide substantial new insights into the diverse circumstances and nature of children's lives in different parts of the world, and also provide a context within which subsequent chapters can be viewed. Chapter 6 then looks at children's overall self-reported well-being (Chap. 6) and discusses possible reasons for variations between countries. This is followed by six chapters covering different aspects of children's lives, reflecting the framework for the project discussed in Chap. 3. Chapter 13 draws together and provides a synthesis of findings across all the different aspects of children's lives. Chapter 14 then discusses the issue of how and why children's subjective well-being varies within countries. The book concludes with a chapter that summarises the key findings presented; identifies key messages for policy and practice; and discusses future directions and potential priorities for future international comparative research on children's perspectives on their lives and well-being.

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Chapter 2

Details of the Study

This chapter provides an introduction to the second wave of the Children’s World study which generated the data on which this book is based. It provides details of the structure and content of the survey questionnaires; the selection of countries to take part in the study; the sampling strategies used within countries; research ethics; how the survey was administered; data preparation and cleaning; and the final achieved sample. Further information about these topics is available from an initial comparative report on the second wave (Rees and Main 2015) and from the project website.¹ Some basic information about statistical analysis procedures is also provided in the final section of the chapter.

2.1 The Questionnaires

There were three different questionnaires for the three age groups covered by the survey – children aged around eight, 10 and 12 years old. The questionnaire for the oldest age group included the largest number of questions and those for the younger two age groups were then reduced versions of this questionnaire with selected items omitted. The reason for this approach is that it had been found during piloting and in Wave 1 of the study that younger children tended to find answering questionnaires more tiring and therefore it was advisable to include fewer questions.

The questionnaires contained some introductory information about the survey, including key ethical points such as the right not to participate and also not to answer specific questions. The content of each questionnaire was then structured in ten sections entitled: you; your home and the people you live with; money and things you have; your friends and other people; the area where you live; school; how you use your time; more about you; how you feel about yourself; and your life and your

¹ www.isciweb.org

future. Some explanation of the thinking behind this structure and the specific questions asked is provided in Chap. 3.

The questions were mainly in one of four formats. First, there were factual-based questions such as which people the child lived with. Second, there were frequency-based questions asking children how often they did things (e.g. seeing friends outside school) or how often certain things happened (e.g. being hit by other children at school). These items either had four- or five-point response scales and further details about this are provided where relevant in subsequent chapters. Third, there were agreement-based items where children were presented with a statement (e.g. 'I feel safe at home') and were usually asked to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point scale from 'Not at all agree' to 'Totally agree', although some items about overall well-being used with the older two age groups used 11-point response scales. Finally, there were questions about satisfaction with specific aspects of life (e.g. 'life as a student'). With the older two age groups these items used an 11-point response scale with digits from zero to ten. The first point on the scale (zero) was labelled 'Not at all satisfied' and the last point (ten) was labelled 'Totally satisfied'. In relation to these types of questions, it had been found during the first wave of the study that children aged 8 years old in some countries were not comfortable with questions about satisfaction that used a numeric 11-point response scale from zero to ten. So for this age group, the scale for these questions was shortened to five response options and emoticons were used to denote the different points on the scale rather than numerals.

Unfortunately the different scales used for satisfaction questions in the survey of 8-year-olds mean that children's responses to these types of questions are not comparable with those for the older age groups. In the interests of brevity, the findings for children aged 8 years old for these questions are not discussed in this book - further details are available in a report produced specifically on the survey with this age group (Rees et al. 2016) and a forthcoming special issue of *Child Indicators Research* will include a number of journal articles presenting additional analysis of the data from children aged 8 years old. However, other questions – such as those using agreement and frequency scales – were presented to children in exactly the same way irrespective of age and, for these questions, findings are presented for all three age groups in this book.

In general, in Wave 2, a decision was taken to use unipolar rather than bipolar scales. For example, in Wave 1 the satisfaction questions were labelled from 'Totally dissatisfied' to 'Totally satisfied'. In Wave 2 the lowest point was labelled 'Not at all satisfied'. There were two main reasons for this. The first was a point of logic. If numerals are attached to scale points then logically an 11-point bipolar scale should be numbered from minus five to plus five rather than from zero to ten. However this may be difficult for children and there are also risks that this will lead respondents to focus on the mid-point of the scale. Response options from zero to ten are consistent with a unipolar rather than a bipolar approach. The second reason was a practical one. Some of the languages used for the survey did not have a specific word for 'dissatisfied' and this issue extended to the agreement scales as well. Thus unipolar scales provided more consistency from a translation point of view. However this

approach was also not without its problems. During piloting of the unipolar agreement scales in England children expressed frustration that they were not able to disagree with statements and felt that these questions were not allowing them to express the full range of views. In UK English ‘disagree’ has a clearly different meaning to ‘not agree’. Despite this issue, in the interests of consistency the unipolar agreement scales were used in all countries, but this example serves to illustrate some of the complexities of developing questionnaires for children that work effectively across different languages.

The draft questionnaires for Wave 2 were translated into each language from the initial English version and then independently back-translated into English. Comparisons of back-translated versions were then made with the initial English version and any major discrepancies were discussed and resolved in each language. The translated draft questionnaires were piloted and discussed with children in each country. This led to some amendments to the final questionnaire to improve clarity and understanding. Any ethical issues raised by children were also noted during piloting and as a result, in some countries and also some particular contexts within countries, specific questions were omitted from the questionnaires where they were deemed to be too sensitive.

2.2 The Countries Involved in the Survey

The countries for this wave of the survey were selected to reflect different economic, geographic and cultural contexts. The sampling strategy took account of existing conceptual frameworks of country categorisations (Esping-Andersen 1990; Arts and Gelissen 2002; Ajzenstadt and Gal 2010) as well as macro data such as the Human Development Index. On this basis, 13 countries were initially selected to participate with the funding received from the Jacobs Foundation. These included five countries representing different categories of the extended Esping-Andersen typology – Norway (social-democratic); Germany (conservative); Spain (western Mediterranean); the UK (liberal); and South Korea (productivist welfare). Other countries outside this typology were selected as follows: Turkey and Israel (eastern Mediterranean); Estonia and Romania (eastern European) and Algeria, Colombia, Ethiopia and Nepal to represent a range of other geographic and economic contexts. Subsequently a further five countries – Poland, South Africa, Malta, Finland and Italy – joined the survey with their own funding.

In 10 countries the sample was drawn from the whole country (although in some cases this included the selection of a number of geographical regions as a first sampling stage). In eight countries the survey only covered a specific region as follows – Algeria (Western region), Colombia (Antioquia state), Italy (Liguria), Poland (Wielkopolska region), South Africa (Western Cape province), Spain (Catalonia), Turkey (Istanbul), the UK (England).

A list of the countries is provided in Table 2.1. The ordering of the countries shown in the table, which will be used in tables throughout the book, represents

Table 2.1 Sample of countries participating in the survey with selected characteristics

Country and abbreviation ^a	World Bank income classification ^b	Human Development Index rank (1–187) ^c	GNI per capita (internat \$) ^d	Gini coefficient ^e	Gender Inequality Index (0–1) ^f
Nepal (NP)	Low	144	2500	32.8	0.497
Ethiopia (ET)	Low	174	1620	33.6	0.499
Algeria (DZ)	Upper middle	83	14,300	–	0.429
S Africa (ZA)	Upper middle	119	12,870	63.1	0.394
Colombia (CO)	Upper middle	95	13,550	55.9	0.393
Romania (RO)	Upper middle	50	21,610	27.4	0.339
Turkey (TR)	Upper middle	71	19,740	40	0.328
Israel (IL)	High	19	36,040	39.2	0.103
Malta (MT)	High	33	33,170	–	0.217
Spain (ES)	High	27	34,700	34.7	0.081
Italy (IT)	High	26	37,010	36	0.085
Poland (PL)	High	36	25,870	32.7	0.137
Estonia (EE)	High	30	28,390	36	0.131
Germany (DE)	High	4	49,090	28.3	0.066
UK (GB)	High	16	41,230	36	0.131
S Korea (KR)	High	18	34,810	–	0.067
Finland (FI)	High	23	42,600	26.9	0.056
Norway (NO)	High	1	65,210	25.8	0.053

Sources and notes:

^aThe two character ISO2 codes shown in brackets are those used to identify countries in charts in this book

^bWorld Bank data. <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups> for the fiscal year 2017, accessed on 08/05/2017

^cUnited Nations Human Development Data. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>. Human Development Index data for 2015 accessed on 08/05/2017

^dWorld Bank data. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD> Gross National Income per capita, PPP (current international \$) data for 2015 accessed on 08/05/2017

^eWorld Bank data. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI> Gini index (World Bank estimate) data for most recent year accessed on 08/05/2017. Data was not available for Algeria, Malta and South Korea

^fUnited Nations Human Development Data. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>. Gender Inequality Index data for 2015 accessed on 08/05/2017

different economic and geographical contexts but also some similarities in patterns of children's responses which emerged from the data analysis. The table also provides some national-level indicators for each country which are used in the analysis at various points in the book. The first of these is the World Bank income group classification for each country. This is a widely used classification which groups countries into four categories – low-income; lower-middle-income; upper-middle-income; and high-income – based on a measure of national income. The second indicator is the Human Development Index (HDI) rank for each country produced

by the United Nations Development Programme. The HDI is ‘a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living’.² Gross National Income per capita is an indicator of national wealth per person in the population. The figure shown in the table uses purchasing power parity (PPP) conversion factors which can be used to compare real value of outputs of different economies (World Bank 2016). The fourth indicator is the Gini coefficient which is a widely used measure of income inequality within a country. The final indicator, the Gender Inequality Index is produced by the United Nations Development Programme and ‘measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development’ – reproductive health, empowerment and economic status.³

2.3 Sampling Strategies Within Countries

The aim of the sampling strategy in each country (or region of a country) was to achieve the most representative sample possible of the population of children attending mainstream schools. The restriction to mainstream schools was necessary given the resources available for the survey, and an important area for future national and international research on children’s subjective well-being is to extend studies to include children not attending mainstream schools including those in special schools, street children and so on. Additionally in some countries it was necessary to omit a small proportion of mainstream schools from the sample for practical reasons. This happened in several countries where there were very small schools in remote rural areas and also in some countries where there were some private schools which it was not possible to recruit for the survey.

Because of differences in the structures of the school system and in key geographical and demographic characteristics, a tailored sampling strategy was developed for each country, following a set of agreed principles. These included the need for a probability sample covering the whole population in the target age groups in mainstream schools (with the above exceptions), a minimum target sample size of 1000 children in each age group, and a minimum number of participating schools in each age group to control for the effect of clustering. Stratification was used in all countries but the specific factors taken into account varied from one country to another. Some countries had access to information about the numbers of children in all schools and so were able to use random selection with probabilities proportional to the size of the schools. In other countries this information was not readily available and so schools were selected with uniform probability and, in larger schools more than one class was selected to reduce the need for high weighting coefficients in the final sample. Procedures for weighting the final data set are described later in this chapter.

²<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

³<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

A sampling panel made up of four experts within and outside the project team was created to review proposed sampling strategies. Each country's draft strategy was reviewed independently by two members of the panel and feedback and suggestions for improvement were fed back to the national research team. Changes were made until the amended strategies were approved by the sampling panel.

2.4 Ethics

It was a requirement of participation in the study for each national research team to gain approval for the survey from an appropriate ethics body within their country. Different approaches were taken to gaining informed consent depending on prevailing practices and legal requirements in each country. In some countries no parental consent was required as schools staff are regarded as being able to approve children participating in research during school time without checking with parents. In some countries passive parental consent was required in that information was sent to parents who were then able to notify the school that they did not wish their children to participate in the research. In South Korea and Germany, active parental consent was required. The issue of gaining parental consent is an interesting one from a children's rights perspective. Article 12 of the UNCRC clarifies children's right to express an opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in matters affecting them. There is therefore a pertinent and legitimate question for all research on children's views of their lives to consider whether parents should be able to override this right.

In connection with the above point, in all countries children were also informed verbally and in the introductory information on the questionnaire that they had the right not to participate in the survey. Practically, it seems more likely that children will exercise this right through not completing the questionnaire or adopting systematic response strategies such as selecting the same option for all questions of a particular type, rather than overtly withdrawing consent. High levels of missing responses and systematic responding were picked up during the data cleaning process and procedures to deal with these are discussed in more detail below.

Based on feedback from national research teams, and evaluative questions for children which were included at the end of the questionnaires, the survey content was viewed positively by children who felt that it covered important aspects of their lives. Some children reported that they found the questionnaire too long and this was also evidenced by increasing levels of missing data for questions later in the questionnaire. No adverse impacts on children of participating in the survey were reported by the 18 research teams.

2.5 Survey Administration

In all countries the survey was conducted with three age groups of children around the age of 8, 10 and 12 years old respectively. It was necessary for there to be some flexibility about age because the surveys were conducted in schools and usually all children within selected classes participated. The survey was targeted at year groups that typically contained children of the three above ages but inevitably also included some children who were younger or older than this.

In most countries the survey was administered using paper questionnaires. However in the UK and in some schools in Poland, the survey was administered via computer. In all countries with the exception of the UK, representatives of the national research teams were present in the schools at the time when the survey was conducted and were available to answer any queries from children about specific questions. In the UK this was not possible for resource reasons and it has become common practice for schools-based survey to be administered remotely. In this case information and guidance was provided to school staff introducing and managing the research process.

In some countries being asked to answer questionnaire surveys in school was already a very common experience for children. In other countries it was less familiar and for some children an entirely new experience. Perhaps partly for this reason, reported average lengths of times for survey administration varied widely from around 20 min in some countries to an hour or more in others.

In some countries, it was observed during piloting that children in the youngest age group found completing the questionnaire unaided to be particularly challenging. Consequently, some introductory ‘training’ questions were devised and used with the eight-years-old age group in some countries, and in some contexts the survey was administered to this age group by the researcher or teacher reading out loud each question and allowing children time to write their response before moving to the next question.

2.6 Data Preparation

Data inputting onto computer was undertaken by each national research team using standard coding templates provided in SPSS and Excel formats for this purpose. National research teams also had the responsibility to check the quality of inputting. Once data input was complete in each country, the data files were sent to a central data co-ordinator who ran a standard set of checks on the data. These checks covered consistency of data coding, levels of missing data within and across cases, logical consistency of responses across questions and identification of cases with systematic responding. A set of criteria was agreed within the project to deal with these issues. In particular, cases were excluded from the final data set if (a) the age of the child was more than 2 years different from the target age for the particular

questionnaire; (b) more than a third of questions had missing data; and/or (c) there was evidence of systematic responding across specific sets of questions. These criteria ensured that the data was as consistent as possible across all countries. On this basis around 4% of questionnaires were excluded from the final data sets. All changes to data and exclusions of cases were discussed and agreed between the data co-ordinator and the relevant national research team.

A second phase of data preparation was to agree on any weightings required to render the data sets as representative as possible of the target population. Weighting coefficients were calculated to take into account varying levels of participation within schools, and differences between planned and target numbers within schools and strata. Final weightings were discussed and agreed between the data co-ordinator and each national research team.

2.7 The Final Data Set

The numbers of cases for each age group and country in the final data set after data cleaning was completed, totalling over 61,000 children are shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Final sample numbers in each country

Country	8 years old	10 years old	12 years old	Total
Nepal	975	983	995	2953
Ethiopia	953	944	980	2877
Algeria	1244	1149	1283	3676
S Africa	996	1061	1131	3188
Colombia	902	939	975	2816
Romania	1242	1355	1507	4104
Turkey	959	1047	1018	3024
Israel	886	988	926	2800
Malta	802	840	942	2584
Spain	1032	1057	1667	3756
Italy	1145	1263	1293	3701
Poland	1021	1119	1017	3157
Estonia	1076	1013	1029	3118
Germany	1056	1101	852	3009
UK	990	989	1319	3298
S Korea	2432	2438	2597	7467
Finland	894	945	1003	2842
Norway	930	960	974	2864
Total	19,535	20,191	21,508	61,234

2.8 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis presented in this book uses the above final data set. Weightings are used for all analysis and, where relevant, this includes balancing the data within each country equally by age group for combined age group analysis. Where possible, analysis also takes account of the survey design (stratification and clustering) and robust standard errors were calculated. All analysis was conducted using Stata 14 unless otherwise stated. The main methods used were bivariate tests including ANOVA and non-parametric equivalents, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and linear regression. Where a finding is described as statistically significant this refers to a p-value of below 0.01 (99% confidence level) unless otherwise stated. For readers who are not familiar with statistical analysis this is a very common level of statistical confidence used in quantitative analysis of large-scale survey data of this type. Further details about analysis are available from the author on request.

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Chapter 3

Asking Children About Their Lives and Well-Being

The intention of the Children's Worlds survey was to gain the most comprehensive view possible of children's lives and well-being, from their own perspectives, by asking them factual and evaluative questions about their life as a whole and different specific aspects of it. With this aim in mind the project developed a framework based on previous conceptual and empirical work in this field. The framework is explained in the first two sections of this chapter. The first discusses the concept of self-reported well-being in general and the second addresses the issue of how to construct a list of domains or aspects of life which can be used to select and structure questionnaire content. A third section then provides some information about factual questions that were also asked in the survey to provide more detail about the context of children's lives. Having described the project's framework of concepts and measures, the fourth and final section of the chapter discusses the issue of making comparisons of children's lives and well-being between countries. It identifies some of the challenges to this type of approach and some of the ways that these challenges have been addressed in this project.

3.1 Concepts and Measures of Self-Reported Well-Being

There is a vast conceptual and empirical literature on the study of how people assess their own well-being. Many different conceptualizations and definitions of self-reported well-being have been proposed. The intention in this section is not to review this literature, which would be the subject of a book in its own right but to briefly describe the framework that was adopted and developed for this particular study. The project took, as a starting point, the most common framework that has emerged over time and that has been adopted in much of the research literature on this topic with adult populations. This was only seen as a starting point because it is not certain whether a framework developed with adults in mind, and primarily tested within North America and Europe is necessarily applicable to children in the

age group of the survey and across a diverse range of countries and contexts. In the long term, one of the goals of the project is to test and refine this framework.

One very common distinction that is made in the literature is between subjective and psychological well-being. Some writers (e.g. Deci and Ryan 2008) argue that these two different ways of looking at well-being are rooted in different traditions of Western philosophy stretching back to ancient Greek concepts of 'hedonia' and 'eudaimonia'. In modern research terms, subjective well-being is generally used as an umbrella term for a person's evaluations and feelings about their life; while psychological well-being refers to various aspects of positive functioning which are theorised to be important components of 'the good life'.

The concept of subjective well-being is commonly further sub-divided into cognitive and affective dimensions. The cognitive dimension includes people's sense of satisfaction with their lives as a whole (life satisfaction) and also with particular aspects of their lives, such as family relationships (domain satisfactions). The affective dimension refers to moods and emotions and this dimension is further divided into positive and negative affect. Cognitive subjective well-being is generally considered to be more temporally stable than affective subjective well-being which may be more prone to fluctuations due to events in daily life. This division of subjective well-being into life/domain satisfactions, positive affect and negative affect is often referred to as the 'tripartite model' and is described by Diener (1984) who discusses its origins in the work of Andrews and Withey (1976).

As the amount of research evidence on children's well-being has increased, a number of measures have been developed to attempt to capture aspects of children's overall self-reported well-being, broadly following the frameworks developed for adult populations as described above. These have been primarily focused on cognitive subjective well-being. Two of the most widely used measures are the Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS) (Huebner 1991) and the Personal Well-Being Index – School Children (PWI-SC) (Cummins and Lau 2005). The SLSS is a context-free scale in that it consists only of broad general statements such as 'My life is going well'. This scale has been extensively tested with children in the US (Huebner 1991) and also in a number of other countries (e.g. Marques et al. 2011 in Portugal; Park and Huebner 2005 in Hong Kong). The PWI-SC, on the other hand, contains seven question asking about different aspects of life such as health and relationships with other people. People's answers to these seven questions are then summed to represent their feelings about life as a whole. Tomyne and Cummins (2011) provide details of the validation of the scale in Australia. Testing of the scale has also been conducted in Spain, Algeria, Argentina, Brazil and Chile (Casas et al. 2012, 2013). Additionally, a single-item measure based on Cantril's ladder (Cantril 1966) has been used in some studies such as the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Study (HBSC) (Inchley et al. 2016) and the Programme for International Assessment Study (PISA) (OECD 2017). Measures of affective subjective well-being have also been developed such as the PANAS-C (Laurent et al. 1999). Several studies (e.g. Damásio et al. 2013; Ortuño-Sierra et al. 2015) have supported the distinction between positive and negative affect in child and adolescent populations. Huebner and Dew (1996) found evidence of distinct components of cognitive and affective

subjective well-being among children, which had already been demonstrated with adult populations.

The concept of psychological well-being is more difficult to pin down. One common framework is Ryff's (1989) six-component model comprising self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. A second framework was proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000) who identified three basic psychological needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness – which they argue to be 'universal and developmentally persistent' (ibid, p.75). In contrast with Ryff's model which identifies six components of psychological well-being, Ryan and Deci see these three psychological needs as requirements for the achievement of well-being. There is relatively little literature on the measurement of children's psychological well-being using or adapting Ryff's framework. Keyes (2006) used a measure which included four of Ryff's six components in a study of adolescents aged 12 to 18 in the US. Measures of Ryan & Deci's basic psychological needs have been utilised in studies of children (e.g. Cordeiro et al. 2016; Tian et al. 2016). However, this is a relatively under-developed aspect of research on children's well-being.

In summary, some of the concepts from the literature on adults' self-reported well-being have been translated into measures which show promise for use in child populations. However, there are currently several limitations to this work. First, some concepts have been more fully tested than others, and those relating to subjective well-being tend to have been the main area of focus. Second, there is a question about the potential lower age limits at which these concepts can be applied. The use of life and domain satisfaction measures has mostly been restricted to children aged 10 years old and above, although there are some examples of the use of such measures with younger children. Measures of affect have been utilised with children at least as young as 7 years of age (Chanfreau et al. 2013). This reflects the idea that children may be able to report on their moods and emotions at a younger age than they are able to make cognitive evaluations about their lives. The third limitation is that much of the development and testing of measures has occurred within Western high-income countries and so it is not known how well these ideas translate to different contexts globally. For example a third key component of self-reported well-being, termed 'social well-being', has been proposed by a number of writers (e.g. Keyes 1998). This idea has not yet been widely adopted but it may have particular importance when considering ideas about well-being across different cultures. Joshanloo (2014) argues that considerations of social well-being may be one of a number of aspects which are viewed as more important in Eastern conceptualizations of well-being than Western ones.

Some aspects of the above framework were adopted in the first pilot wave of the Children's Worlds study which included a multi-item measure of overall life satisfaction. The life satisfaction measure was a reduced and adapted version of Huebner's Student Life Satisfaction Scale. Casas and Rees (2015) report on statistical testing of the functioning of this scale in the Wave 1 survey. The main overarching findings were that the scale seemed to work in a reasonably comparable way

across countries and may be suitable for comparing relationships between life satisfaction and other factors between countries. However it did not meet the requirements for comparing mean scores across countries. The Wave 2 survey questionnaires included a revised version of this life satisfaction scale; a set of questions about positive affect based on Russell's ideas about 'core affect' (Feldman Barrett & Russell, 1998); and a set of six questions designed to relate to Ryff's six components of psychological well-being based on some initial testing in the UK (Rees et al. 2013). The inclusion of measures of these three components of self-reported well-being represents an important development in the field of international comparative studies of children's well-being. Chapter 6 provides more information about the wording and functioning of these measures and summary statistics based on them.

3.2 Aspects of Children's Lives

The second part of the conceptual framework for the study was to identify the key aspects (often termed 'domains' in the subjective well-being literature) of children's lives that will be covered. This is a more complex task than might first appear. Many domain-based frameworks of adults' well-being have been proposed. By the mid-1990s the title of an influential article by Robert Cummins (1996) – 'The domains of life satisfaction: An attempt to order chaos' – sums up the situation. Cummins argued that 'any proposed set of domains should, in aggregate, encompass the entire construct of subjective life quality' (ibid., p. 304). He proposed a set of seven domains which were developed further and subsequently formed the Personal Well-being Index (Cummins et al. 2003), consisting of standard of living, health, achievement in life, personal relationships, safety, community connectedness and future security. The index was originally used in Australia and subsequently in many other studies around the world. However, even with this broad and fairly abstract framework it is not clear that the domains are completely mutually exclusive. For example, what if one does not feel safe within one's relationships? It could also be argued that there are key concepts missing from the list such as autonomy. Cummins' approach has also been translated into an index for children – the Personal Well-being Index – School Children – which contains the same seven concepts although the questions in the measure are worded differently than in the adult version (Cummins and Lau 2005) and which was discussed in the previous section.

An alternative approach to defining domains of children's life satisfaction was proposed by Huebner and colleagues and consisted of five aspects - family, friends, school, living environment and self. Two versions of a measure based on this framework have been tested and validated – one consisting of multiple items for each domain – the Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS) (Huebner and Gilman 2002); and one consisting of five single-item questions – the Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS) (Huebner et al. 2006, 2011).

Neither of the above measures was derived directly from discussions with children. A separate strand of research taking this approach has emerged in a number of countries. A review by Dex and Hollingworth (2012) of research with children about their ideas on well-being identified a number of studies that took a concrete approach, similar to that of Huebner and colleagues. Dex and Hollingworth themselves summarize this work by proposing three broad domains – self, relationships and environments. Lippman, Moore and McIntosh (2011) propose a similar idea of individuals, relationships and context. Fattore, Mason and Watson (2009), also based on qualitative work with children, identify a multi-faceted model constituting the underlying mediums of children's emotional life and relationships; a set of three overarching dimensions of children's well-being – positive sense of self, agency and security; and six other themes – activities, physical environment, social responsibility, adversity, physical health, and material and economic resources. Their approach highlights some of the complexities inherent in this field of work and the way that different sets of concepts may cut across each other. A large-scale consultation with children in the UK (The Children's Society 2006) also led to a two-dimensional matrix of domains and themes. It identified domains such as family, friends, school and local area which are (sometimes overlapping) spheres of children's lives; and then a set of themes such as love, support, safety, autonomy, fairness and respect which cut across these different domains. Much of this work has been undertaken in a limited range of countries in Australia, Europe and North America. Camfield, Streuli and Woodhead (2010) describes some of the ways in which well-being (including subjective components) has been explored in the Young Lives study in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. There is a need for more research which takes a broader perspective on the meanings of children's well-being in different contexts around the world.

Wave 2 of the Children's Worlds study adopted several of the above ideas. The questionnaire included a set of questions (a total of 32 items in the 12-years-old questionnaire but fewer for younger age groups) asking children about their satisfaction with different aspects of their lives. This set included all seven items of the PWI-SC; and five items which related closely to the five domains in the BMSLSS. Additionally, the questionnaire attempted to incorporate the idea of cross-cutting themes from The Children's Society (2006) by including some consistent sets of agreement-based questions in different concrete domains. For example, children were asked about their feelings of safety at home, at school and in their local area; as well as an overarching question about satisfaction with safety which is one of the seven PWI-SC items. It was not possible to include a sufficient number of questions to incorporate all of the potential cross-cutting themes identified above, but there were also questions about feeling listened to and feeling treated fairly in different domains. The survey therefore offers some opportunity to view children's subjective well-being from both a domain-based and theme-based perspective. Findings relating to both these two perspectives are presented later in the book.

Table 3.1 Grouping of aspects of life covered by satisfaction questions in the survey of children aged 12 years old

Family/Home	School
The people you live with	Your school experience
All the other people in your family	Your life as a student
Your family life	Things you have learned
The house or flat where you live	Your school marks
All the things you have	Your relationship with teachers
Friends/peers	Self
Your friends	Your health
Your relationships with people	The way that you look
Other children in your class	Your own body
	Your self-confidence
Local area	Other
The people in your area	How you use your time
The local police in your area	The freedom you have
The outdoor areas children can use in your area	The opportunities you have
The area you live in general	What you do in your free time
	How you are listened to by adults
	Doing things away from your home
	What may happen later in your life
	How safe you feel

The above was the outcome of a six-factor exploratory factor analysis model using principal axis factoring and oblimin rotation. The model explained 59% of the total variance in a randomly selected 50% sample from the pooled data set

An exploratory analysis of the satisfaction items¹ provides some support for a set of six domains of children's subjective experience as shown in Table 3.1. These domains were similar to the structure of the questionnaire, but there were some notable differences. First the question about children's satisfaction with classmates, which was included in a section on 'School' seemed to connect more strongly with their satisfaction with friendships and with relationships in general than it did with other aspects of school. Second, a question about satisfaction with people in the local area, despite appearing in a section on 'Your friends and other people', connected more strongly with children's other answers about satisfaction with aspects of their local area. These patterns provide some confidence that children were carefully considering their response to each of the satisfaction questions.

The grouping of the satisfaction questions shown in Table 3.1 resembles to some extent the five domains in the multi-dimensional scales developed by Huebner and colleagues discussed earlier, with a sixth additional domain covering a range of

¹ This categorisation only includes 29 of the 32 items. An item on satisfaction with 'preparation for the future' was omitted in a number of countries so was not included in the analysis. Two other items about satisfaction with 'how you are dealt with at the doctors' and 'the things you want to be good at' did not fit clearly into the categories.

more abstract and psychological items. It should be emphasized that this is exploratory analysis that does not provide a definitive answer to the best grouping of domains, and also that the scheme did not work well in some countries. However, the outcomes of this work provide a framework to test further and are used to organise the material in Chaps. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of this book. One modification has been made to the framework shown in that the 'Family/Home' domain has been divided into two components – children's relationships with family (Chap. 7) and their home and material circumstances (Chap. 8). This is because patterns that emerged through the analysis process, which are discussed further in those two chapters, suggested that this was a potentially useful distinction to make.

For the purposes of some of the analysis presented in this book, a subset of 12 measures were selected as core indicators as a focal point for discussion. These indicators are discussed in the relevant chapters.

3.3 Other Topics Covered in the Questionnaire

As well as these two broad conceptual categories of overall self-reported well-being and domains of well-being discussed in the preceding sections, the questionnaires included a number of other items aimed at gathering some information about the context of children's lives. First, there were a set of questions about who children lived with. Second, there were some items designed to measure children's material deprivation. These two sets of items are discussed in Chap. 4 which discusses the context of children's lives. Third, there were a set of questions about children's activities. These were included with the intention of learning more about the nature of children's daily lives in different countries. Findings from this set of questions are discussed in Chap. 5. There were also a small number of other questions, for example asking children whether they were born in the country of the survey and asking about their knowledge of children's rights.

3.4 Comparing Children's Subjective Well-Being Between Countries

A final topic to be discussed in this chapter is the issue of comparing children's lives and well-being across a diverse set of countries. Comparative analysis of this kind has a number of potential benefits. One is that international comparisons have been shown to have a strong resonance with policymakers and the public and can be a catalyst for debate about the positive and negative aspects of childhood in a country. The existing international surveys of children discussed in Chap. 1 – PISA and the HBSC – have generated a great deal of interest and discussion in this way. However,

there are at least three reasons to be cautious about making these types of comparisons which related to conceptual, linguistic and cultural issues.

Conceptually, as discussed earlier, it is not yet clear that concepts of well-being that have been developed primarily in North America and Europe, and which are rooted in older ideas from Western philosophy, are necessarily applicable beyond this context. In terms of linguistic issues there are questions about the extent to which the exact meanings of words can be translated from one language to another. For example, can we be sure that the words used to ask about being satisfied with life in one country have an equivalent meaning to the words used in another? The third reason for caution is that, even if we can assume that a concept is understood in the same way in different countries and that questions can be translated so that they are entirely comparable across languages, there may still be cultural differences in the way that people respond to questions (Byrne and Campbell 1999; Diener et al. 2003).

There are statistical methods (multi-group confirmatory factor analysis) which can help to test whether sets of questions tap in to similar concepts in different countries, and also whether it is reasonable to compare mean scores across countries. One example of this is some work by Casas (2016) using the Children's Worlds Wave 2 data on life satisfaction. Casas finds that a multi-item measure of life satisfaction probably captures a similar concept across most countries in the survey, but that comparing mean scores is only defensible between some countries. Work of this kind on children's subjective well-being is still at an early stage of development and it is not currently possible to draw any overarching conclusions about issues of cross-cultural comparability.

Given these issues it may seem that international comparisons of subjective well-being are fraught with difficulty. However researchers have demonstrated that much of the variation in subjective well-being between countries can be predicted by other factors. Helliwell et al. (2015) report that 74% of the variation in adult life satisfaction scores between 156 countries could be explained by six factors – national wealth per capita, social support, health life expectancy at birth, freedom to make life choices, generosity and perceptions of corruption. In relation to children, Bradshaw et al. (2013) found that in a group of 29 rich countries an indicator of mean subjective well-being was significantly associated at a country level with objective indicators of child well-being in five domains – material, housing and the environment, health and safety, behaviour and education.

Comparing children's subjective well-being across the kind of diverse group of countries participating in the Children's Worlds study is, however, less well-explored territory. As a result this book takes a cautious approach to simple comparisons of mean scores between countries. These are presented in each chapter but are not the exclusive focus of the discussion. This book also discusses variations in subjective well-being within countries, but making use of a comparative perspective to provide greater insights. Of course, analysis of variations in subjective well-being within countries can be undertaken purely at an individual country level. However, a comparative approach can have substantial added value in a number of ways, and this is illustrated by two examples which will be discussed in more detail later in the book.

First, consider the finding that, out of 12 different aspects of life, children in Algeria tend to be most satisfied with family and then school. The fact that school ranks second in Algeria becomes much more informative when it emerges that this is the lowest ranked aspect of life in Spain, and second lowest in several other European countries. This broader pattern provides a context within which it is clear that children in Algeria have a relatively positive view of their school life.

A second example emerges from the UK. Within-country studies had already shown that girls in the UK had substantially lower satisfaction with their self-image than boys, and that this gap in satisfaction increased across the 11 to 15 years old age range. Taken in isolation this leaves open the question of whether such gender patterns are a global phenomenon. This possibility tended to lessen the impact of this particular finding on media and policy discourse about this finding in the UK. However, as will be seen in Chap. 12, this type of gender pattern is by no means universal and, in the survey, was restricted primarily to countries in northern Europe. Thus, a comparative perspective has shed new light on the importance of this finding within the UK context.

The approach of exploring variations in subjective well-being within countries is also borne out by the survey data. Even if we are confident that comparisons of means between countries is a reasonable approach, statistical analysis indicates that there is much more variation in levels of subjective well-being within countries than between them. The strongest evidence of between-country variation is for satisfaction with material possessions. Around 9% of the variation in satisfaction with this aspect of life is explained at the country level, leaving 91% of variation to be explained between individuals within countries. For children's satisfaction with the home where they live, their friendships and their relationships with classmates, between-country variations only account for less than 3% of the total variation. These findings show that while it is important to consider how average subjective well-being varies between countries, it is also fundamentally important to understand the reasons for variations within countries.

The comparative approach taken in Chaps. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the book uses three different measures for each of the focal variables which have been selected thematically as described above – mean well-being, a measure of inequality in well-being and a relative score, which will be explained more fully below. Mean scores are a useful summary measure for descriptive purposes, and rankings are provided for these scores across countries. Measuring inequalities in well-being within countries, is an important alternative way of summarising levels of well-being. Focusing on inequalities within countries may address some of the conceptual and linguistic challenges in comparative research discussed earlier. However it should be borne in mind that measures of inequality may still be affected by cultural response patterns. For example, if people in one specific cultural context are more prepared to utilise the extreme points on a response scale than in another then this will tend to increase the indicator of inequality in the first country compared to the second. There are some patterns consistent with this possibility in the survey data. Generally, there is a negative association between mean scores and inequalities – that is a higher mean score tends to be linked with a lower level of inequality.

However there are some differences across countries. South Korea tends to rank higher for indicators of equality than means while some other countries such as Turkey often rank lower. These patterns may reflect underlying differences in levels of inequality in these countries but they may also be attributable to cultural response differences. The higher rankings for South Korea on equality measures than means are consistent with a response pattern which tends to avoid the extreme options at either end of the scales. Thus the comparative patterns for these two statistics create a multi-faceted picture. It is a matter of judgement and option whether a high mean satisfaction score is seen to be more or less meaningful or important than a low inequality score. Presenting both of these statistics enables a more complete picture of children's well-being in each country.

The third statistic produced for focal variables in the thematic chapters on different aspects of life is a 'relative score' which was introduced in the initial comparative report on Wave 2 of the Children's Worlds survey (Rees and Main 2015). This score provides an indication of the relative rating of each aspect of life in each country, taking into account both the pattern of scores for this aspect of life across countries and the pattern of scores for all aspects of life within the particular country. The relative scores were computed by the formula shown in Fig. 3.1 which takes account of both the average satisfaction with each aspect of life across countries and the average satisfaction ratings across each aspect of life within countries. This is the same method as that used in Rees and Main (2015) but here the scores have been converted into a percentage for ease of interpretation. A positive percentage means that the aspect of life was rated positively in relative terms within a particular country and a negative percentage means that it was rated negatively. The relative scores calculated in this way have the properties that (a) the average relative score across all aspects of life within each country is zero; (b) the average relative score across all countries for each aspect of life is zero; (c) the further away from zero a relative score is then the more positively or negatively the aspect of life was rated.

These kind of scores are potentially useful for practical and policy purposes. To pursue an example already mentioned earlier, satisfaction with school was ranked 8th out of 12 aspects of life in a pooled sample of all 18 countries, with a mean score of 8.57 out of 10. Children in Algeria had relatively average satisfaction scores across 12 aspects of life (a mean score of 8.64 compared to 8.73 for the sample as a whole). Thus their mean satisfaction score for school might be expected to be just below the survey average of 8.57. However in fact mean satisfaction with school in Algeria was 9.15 which is around 8% higher than expected. Thus, school is an aspect of life about which children in Algeria feel relatively positive, which might not be immediately apparent purely by looking at the mean score in Algeria.

These scores also have two other important advantages. First, they go some way towards tackling the issues about cultural response differences discussed earlier. Because the scores take into account children's typical response patterns across a range of questions, systematic response differences are accounted for. Second, they provide a balanced account of positive and negative aspects in children's lives in each country. For each country there are some strengths and some areas where improvements might be made.

$$\text{Relative score} = 100 * \left(1 - \frac{\text{Mean}_{ij}}{\text{Mean}_i \times (\text{Mean}_j \div \text{Grand mean})} \right)$$

Where:

Mean_{ij} = Actual mean satisfaction score for aspect i in country j

Mean_i = Pooled mean satisfaction score for aspect i across all countries

Mean_j = Mean satisfaction score for all aspects within country j

Grand mean = Mean of all Mean_{ij}

Fig. 3.1 Calculation of relative scores

However, it is important to acknowledge that relative scores, by their nature, do not have any absolute meaning and are dependent on both the mixture of aspects of life being considered but importantly also on the mixture of countries in the sample. Algeria can be said to be doing relatively well in terms of children's evaluations of their school life compared to the other 17 countries in the sample (as it had the highest relative score for this aspect). However, if a future survey included a larger number of countries with comparatively high levels of satisfaction with school then the relative score for Algeria for this aspect of life would be lower. The next wave of the Children's Worlds survey will include a larger number and more geographically balanced group of countries, but for now we are only able to take a comparative perspective within the countries that participated in Wave 2.

This discussion of the different measures used in the book to compare countries concludes this introductory set of three chapters. The focus of the next 11 chapters is to present findings from the survey utilising the frameworks and approaches described in this chapter.

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Chapter 4

The Context of Children's Lives

This chapter considers information gathered from children that illustrates the different contexts of childhood in different countries around the world. First it looks at the type of home that children live in and the people that they live with. It illustrates a great diversity of circumstances and highlights some important issues that link to current demographic trends in different parts of the world, such as the growing prevalence in some countries of children spending time living in two homes when their parents separate. The chapter also briefly summarises information about whether children were born in the country of the survey. It then moves on to look at a measure of children's material deprivation which is being developed as part of the Children's Worlds project. This section highlights wide variations in children's ownership of and access to resources in different countries. The chapter concludes with an analysis of variations in material deprivation within countries according to the contexts of children's lives (home, family and country of birth) covered earlier in the chapter.

4.1 Introduction

A number of current demographic, geographic and technological trends have a direct impact on children's experiences of childhood around the world. In Europe, the 'second demographic transition' (Lesthaeghe 2014) means that children are living in ever more diverse family arrangements including an increase in lone-parent families (Chapple 2009) and multi-residence (people who live in more than one home) (Toulemon and Pennec 2010; Cancian et al. 2014). More broadly, there is a high rate of urbanisation such that already almost half of the world's children live in urban areas and it is projected that, by 2050, seven in ten people of all ages will do so (UNICEF 2012) This trend is linked to geographical mobility which in turn means that children may not be living close to extended family. Migration has become a major humanitarian and political issue in various regions of the world and

many children are refugees and asylum-seekers. UNICEF (2016) estimated that nearly one in 200 children in the world is a child refugee. The pace of technological change is rapid and this has major implications for the way that children experience childhood in different contexts (Livingstone and Bulger 2014).

This chapter provides an overview of factual information gathered from children which connects with the above topics. In the Children's Worlds survey, children were asked about the home they lived and the people they lived with; their country of birth; and their material circumstances. The results highlight the great diversity of children's lives within and between the countries participating in the survey.

4.2 Type of Home and People Lived With

The survey data provides a unique insight, from a child's viewpoint, on how children's home and family circumstances vary across different countries. Some key statistics on this aspect of children's lives are shown in Table 4.1 which covers the older two age groups only as these questions were not asked of children aged 8 years old.

Table 4.1 Type of home and people lived with

Country	Lives with family	Lives with grandparent (first home)	Siblings	Mother only/first (both)	Father only/first (both)	Two parents only/first	Two homes
Nepal	99.1	61	85	93	91	87	
Ethiopia	94.5	22	86	92	84	81	
Algeria	95.8	26	86	96 (97)	91 (91)	90	3
S Africa	97.9	35	78	91	69	66	
Colombia	96.7	26	69	92 (93)	62 (66)	59	7
Romania	97.7	35	68	93	85	83	
Turkey	98.6	19	86	98 (99)	94 (96)	92	3
Israel	99.1	7	91	98 (99)	90 (96)	90	7
Malta	98.0	16	73	97 (97)	86 (91)	85	6
Spain	99.2	10	78	97 (98)	79 (88)	77	8
Italy	98.5	15	63	97 (97)	81 (89)	79	8
Poland	99.4	33	72	98	86	84	
Estonia	99.0	23	72	95 (96)	78 (82)	75	10
Germany	97.6	16	77	97 (98)	79 (89)	76	6
UK	98.9	5	83	96 (97)	70 (79)	67	11
S Korea	99.7	13	85	97	93	91	
Finland	98.6	3	79	87 (89)	86 (94)	75	12
Norway	99.3	6	85	97 (98)	78 (93)	76	17

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old. In the 'Mother only/first(both)' and 'Father only/first(both)' columns, the first figure is the percentage of children living with the relevant parents in their first or only home and the second figure is the percentage living with the parent including information about second homes where relevant

In most countries, over 98% of children said that they lived with their family. The exceptions were Ethiopia, Algeria, Colombia, Romania, South Africa and Germany. In the first five of these countries children not living with family were mainly living in foster or residential care. Over 5% of children in Ethiopia said that they lived in foster care. In Germany just over 1% of children said that they were living in 'another type of home' – i.e. not with family or in public care. Overall only around 700 of the over 40,000 children in the older two age groups surveyed did not live with family. Table 4.1 also shows a selection of statistics about the people that children lived with. The proportion of children who had one or more grandparents living in their home – usually signifying a three-generation household – ranged very widely from less than 10% in Finland, the UK, Norway and Israel to over 60% in Nepal. The proportion of children living with one more siblings in their only or first home ranged from below 70% in Italy, Romania and Colombia to over 90% in Israel.

In 12 of the 18 countries children were asked whether they regularly slept in two homes and, if so, which people they lived with in each home. The reason for this set of questions is that, as discussed earlier, it is becoming more common in some countries, when parents separate, for children to spend some time living with each parent. The research teams in six countries – Ethiopia, Nepal, Poland, Romania, South Africa and South Korea decided not to include these questions – in most cases because this is not a very common phenomenon in those countries. More than 10% of children aged 10 and 12 years old regularly stayed in two different homes in Norway, Finland, the UK and Estonia. Additionally more than 5% of children did so in six of the other countries which included this question. So, spending time staying in two different homes is a common minority childhood experience in many of the countries in the survey, particularly those in northern Europe. This phenomenon creates important issues for social accounting about children's lives. For example, if we take the child as the 'unit of analysis' (Qvortrup 1997) then it raises questions about how to describe children's family structure (e.g. they may live with a lone parent in one home and in a step-family in the other) and how to define whether they live in poverty (economic circumstances may differ substantially across the two households where they spend time). This is an interesting illustration of the difference between child-centred and household-centred approaches to researching children's lives.

The information about which parents children lived with also provides some valuable insights. The first statistic in the columns for 'mother' and 'father' in Table 4.1 is the percentage of children living with each parent in their only home, or in the home they listed first if they said that they regularly spent time in two homes. On this basis, in most countries more than 95% lived with their mother, although the percentage is below this level in six countries – Finland, South Africa, Colombia, Romania, Ethiopia and Nepal. A smaller proportion of children lived with their fathers in all countries and this was below 70% in Colombia and South Africa; and below 80% in the UK, Estonia, Norway, Germany and Spain. Including information, where relevant, about the second home in which children lived did not increase the percentages living with their mother very much – that is, children liv-

ing in two homes tended usually to define their first home as the one where they lived with their mother. However, in many countries, introducing information about second homes made a substantial difference to the proportions of children living with their fathers. For example, in Norway, 78% of children lived with their father in their only/first home, but a total of 93% lived with their father at least some of the time if one includes information about second homes. This kind of difference has important implications for how one describes children's circumstances and also for research on issues such as lone parenting and father's involvement in children's lives. Taking a traditional household-based counting method (i.e. only or first home), one might say that 22% of children in Norway did not live with their father, but it is clear that only 7% of children in the survey in Norway did not spend at least some regular time living with their father. The table also shows the proportion of children living with both parents in their first or only home, which ranged from 59% in Colombia to 92% in Turkey.

Overall, the information gathered from children about their living circumstances illustrates the diversity of these circumstances both between and within countries. It also provides insights that would not be available through a household-based accounting approach. A further benefit of this information is that, through ongoing waves of the Children's Worlds survey it will be possible to track changes in family demography within and between countries over time from a child-centred perspective. This kind of information has the potential to make an important contribution to understanding how demographic changes affect children's experiences of childhood.

4.3 Country of Birth

Children were asked whether they were born in the country they lived in. In six countries (Ethiopia, South Africa, Turkey, Poland, South Korea and Algeria) a very small number of children (less than 1%) said that they had not been born in the country of the survey. In seven other countries (Colombia, Nepal, Estonia, Romania, Israel, Finland and Germany) less than 5% had been. This leaves five countries where more substantial numbers of children had been born outside the country – Italy (6.0%), Malta (7.1%), Norway (7.5%), the UK (8.0%) and Spain (14.7%). An analysis of whether these children experience more material deprivation is provided later in this chapter; and an analysis of whether children's subjective well-being in these countries varied according to whether the child was born in the country is presented in Chap. 14.

4.4 Things Children Have and Have Access To

A third aspect of children's contextual circumstances that was explored in the questionnaire was their material circumstances. Children were presented with a list of nine things and were asked to indicate whether they had or had access to these things or not. The list consisted of:

1. Clothes in good condition to go to school in
2. Access to a computer at home
3. Access to the internet
4. A mobile phone
5. Your own room
6. Books to read for fun
7. A family car for transportation
8. Your own stuff to listen to music
9. A television at home that you can use

Children could answer 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know'. The latter response is treated as missing data. Item 9 was not asked in Estonia, Finland, Germany and Poland as it was felt that all or almost all children had access to a television. Only items 1 to 3, 7 and 9 were asked in the 8-years-old survey as there were space restrictions due to the need for a shorter questionnaire for that age group.

The intention of this set of questions was, in addition to learning about children's different material circumstances in different countries, to provide a measure of children's material deprivation. This reflects a strand within poverty research that considers not having access to items and experiences that are common within a particular context as representing a form of deprivation. This approach was pioneered in the UK by Townsend (1979) and has since also been used in a wide range of poverty studies around the world. This includes, for example, some work that has been done with children in South Africa (Barnes and Wright 2012) and the UK (Main and Bradshaw 2012).

In relation to information reported by children this can be a valuable method for two reasons. First, it provides a means of assessing poverty in self-completion questionnaires in circumstances where children may not be able to provide information on other measures of poverty such as household income. Second, it provides a means of taking a child-centred perspective to defining and understanding poverty. For example in the UK, Main and Bradshaw (2012) used a child-centred measure of material deprivation and were able to gather matched information from parents about household income. They identified a group of children who did not live in households below the income poverty threshold, but who were experiencing material deprivation relative to their peers in terms of their ownership and access to items and experiences that were regarded as being part of a 'normal' childhood by children within the UK. Thus child-centred material deprivation measures can make a useful contribution to multidimensional approaches to defining and measuring child poverty (Barnes and Wright 2012).

Table 4.2 Percentage of children lacking access to material items in each country

Country	Clothes	Computer	Internet	TV	Car	Mobile	Own room	Books	Music
Nepal	4	88	94	33	92	24	41	30	46
Ethiopia	17	97	98	73	97	86	86	64	83
Algeria	3	47	55	18	41	61	62	28	55
S Africa	3	36	41	4	26	27	42	18	29
Colombia	2	23	28	3	61	23	39	29	42
Romania	1	14	21	3	39	18	36	12	13
Turkey	7	21	27	3	41	60	33	10	43
Israel	2	7	8	4	8	20	30	7	19
Malta	1	6	4	2	6	30	20	6	15
Spain	2	8	9	2	13	45	19	10	14
Italy	1	18	13	2	11	18	12	10	9
Poland	1	4	6	–	10	6	8	14	10
Estonia	1	5	6	–	14	4	28	4	12
Germany	3	19	16	–	8	8	11	21	5
UK	1	8	6	1	13	16	17	10	5
S Korea	1	4	4	4	8	10	11	4	10
Finland	1	8	8	–	3	1	15	5	2
Norway	0	4	3	1	3	3	7	3	1

Age group: 8, 10 and 12 years old (Items 1 to 3, 7 and 9); 10 and years old (Items 4 to 6 and 8). The item about television was not asked in Poland, Estonia, Germany or Finland

One of the challenges in adopting this approach in a cross-national context, particularly within a group of countries as diverse as those participating in the Children's Worlds study, is to identify items and experiences that are relevant across the full range of countries. Ideally, for this method, the research process would begin by holding discussions with a range of children in each country about the items and experiences they felt were essential for having a 'normal' kind of life. Unfortunately there was not enough time to adopt this approach for this wave of the survey and so the list of items was adopted from previous studies and then discussed with children during piloting. The final list included in the questionnaire was the best solution available at the time that the questionnaire was being finalised. While future work can certainly improve on the list, the responses gained from children do provide some rare and important insights into childhood circumstances in different countries.

The percentage of children lacking each item in each country is shown in Table 4.2. Some items – particularly access to a television and clothes in good condition to go to school in – were only lacked by a small minority of children in most countries. There were only three countries – Ethiopia, Nepal and Algeria – where more than 5% of children said that they lacked access to a television, although the high percentages lacking this item in these three countries are illustrative of some of the major contrasts in children's living circumstances around the globe – particularly as the survey sample under-represents low-income countries. Few children

said that they lacked clothes in good condition to go to school, although 17% did so in Ethiopia.

Other items show wide variations between countries. Mobile phone ownership varied from 99% in Finland to 14% in Ethiopia. While variations for this item appeared related to the level of economic prosperity in each country, there were also interesting variations between countries of relatively similar wealth. For example, GNI per capita is relatively similar in Malta, Spain and Italy (see Table 2.1, Chap. 2) but levels of mobile phone ownership were quite different. Another important aspect of variation was access to the internet which ranged from over 95% in Norway, Malta and South Korea to less than 10% in Ethiopia and Nepal. Access to information through this route may become an important new source of childhood inequalities. The proportion of children who said that they had access to the internet correlated strongly with available data on the proportion of individuals in each country who have access to the internet.¹ However in most countries the percentage of children in the survey who lacked internet access was substantially lower than the percentage for the population (all ages). It may be that households with children have higher than average access and also that children who do not have access to the internet at home do so via mobile technology or at school.

The three countries where more than half of children did not have access to the internet – Ethiopia, Nepal and Algeria – were also countries (along with Colombia) where more than a quarter of children did not have access to books to read for pleasure. However there are patterns which suggest other important reasons for international variation in access to these kind of items. For example, Germany is the third wealthiest country per capita in the survey sample, but ranked 14th in terms of the percentage of children having access to books to read for pleasure.

Rees and Main (2015) created a material deprivation score for 15 countries using the above data that consisted of a sum of whether or not the child lacked each of eight items (a ninth item – television – was not included as some countries had not asked this question). Table 4.3 updates this information to include all 18 countries in the study and summarises mean scores and inequalities in scores for each country. Based on this measure the highest levels of material deprivation were in Ethiopia (an average of 6.3 out of 8 items lacked) and the lowest levels were in Norway (an average of 0.2 items lacked). In fact in Ethiopia over half (53%) of children lacked at least seven of the eight items while in Norway over 85% of children did not lack any of the items. The information on inequalities in material deprivation creates a slightly different picture. Norway, the country with the lowest average deprivation, also had the lowest level of inequality. However, Ethiopia, which had the highest average deprivation was in the mid-range for inequalities in deprivation, with Algeria having the highest levels. It may be that experiencing relative deprivation within a particular context is a more important influence on subjective well-being than experiencing deprivation relative to a different context (e.g. a different country). In this case we might expect to see weak (or no) associations between mean

¹Obtained from <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/2014/>. Pearson correlation = 0.76.

Table 4.3 Summary statistics for material deprivation by country

Country	Mean	Inequality	Low	Medium	High
Nepal	4.2	1.38	30	28	41
Ethiopia	6.3	1.25	48	39	13
Algeria	3.6	2.00	49	16	35
S Africa	2.3	1.87	42	18	41
Colombia	2.4	1.79	37	18	45
Romania	1.5	1.60	34	27	39
Turkey	2.3	1.73	37	22	41
Israel	0.9	1.19	51	26	23
Malta	0.8	1.08	49	29	21
Spain	1.1	1.14	34	38	28
Italy	0.7	1.04	55	27	18
Poland	0.5	0.99	66	22	12
Estonia	0.7	0.93	56	29	15
Germany	0.8	1.00	50	32	18
UK	0.7	0.97	58	26	16
S Korea	0.5	1.03	71	18	11
Finland	0.3	0.58	78	19	4
Norway	0.2	0.53	85	11	3

Age group: 10 and 12 years old. The final three columns of the table show the percentage of children in each of three groups representing low, medium and high levels of material deprivation within the country as explained below

deprivation and mean subjective well-being at a country level but much stronger associations between individual children's deprivation and their subjective well-being within countries. These hypotheses will be explored further in Chaps. 6 and 14 respectively.

There was a strong association² between these mean scores and a measure of national wealth as shown in Fig. 4.1. Where information was available³ there was also a strong correlation between inequality of material deprivation and a measure of country-level income inequality.

There are drawbacks to using the score from zero to eight described above for statistical analysis. This is because in some countries very few children scored at particular points on this measure. For example, in Spain, Estonia, Israel and Norway no children in the surveys lacked all eight items. On the other hand in Ethiopia and Nepal less than 20 children did not lack any of the items. From a statistical point of view it is not straightforward to use a scale with these features to predict subjective well-being. So, for the analysis presented in this book, within each country a simplified material deprivation score was created consisting of three categories – low,

²The Pearson correlation between mean deprivation and log GNI per capita was -0.949

³The Gini coefficient was available from the World Bank database for 15 of the 18 countries participating in the survey. The Pearson correlation between the standard deviation of the deprivation score and the Gini coefficient was 0.718.

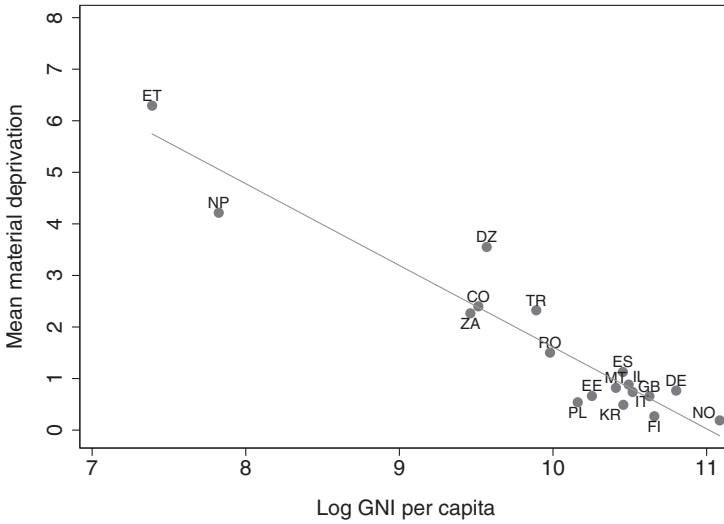


Fig. 4.1 Mean material deprivation scores by Gross National Income per capita (\$ international PPP) (logged)

medium and high deprivation. In most countries the categories consisted of children scoring below, at and above the median respectively. For example, in Algeria, the median score was four out of eight, so the three categories were less than four (49% of the sample), four (16% of the sample) and five or more (35% of the sample). However in eight countries the median score was zero as more than 50% of children did not lack any items. In these countries the three categories represented children who lacked zero, one and more than one item. Whichever of these two methods was used the three categories are described in this book as low, medium and high deprivation. The percentages of children in each category in each country are shown in the final three columns of Table 4.3. It does not matter that the measure was constructed differently in different countries for analysis which is only conducted within countries.

Further insights into children’s material circumstances in each country can be gained by examining age and gender variations in access to the items in the list. There were some notable age patterns in access to the internet and ownership of a mobile phone. In four countries – South Korea, Norway, Malta and Poland – over 90% of children aged 8 years old said they had access to the internet so there is little room for age-related patterns although in all these countries access exceeded 95% at the age of 12 years old. In some other high-income countries access rates increased substantially across this age range. For example in Germany the percentage of children lacking access to the internet fell from 29% at the age of 8 years old to less than 3% at the age of 12 years old. Potential explanations for these large changes are increased interest among children in accessing the internet, increased availability of internet access at school, or variations in parenting attitudes and practices in terms of the appropriate age to access the internet in different countries. In the five least

wealthy countries in the survey there was little evidence of changes in internet access across this age range which suggests that an important factor may be general internet availability as discussed earlier.

The second item for which there were strong age patterns in many countries was mobile phone ownership. This was only asked in the surveys of the older two age groups. There were some countries – Finland, Estonia, Norway and Poland – where ownership was already very high (above 90%) for children aged 10 years old. In other countries there were substantial increases in ownership across this two-year age range. For example in Spain, ownership more than doubled from 34% at 10 years old to 76% at 12 years old; and in Italy the figures were 66% and 97% respectively. Other countries with this type of pattern to a lesser degree were Malta, the UK, Turkey and Romania. In all of these countries children make the transition from primary to secondary school between these two ages and it is possible that this may be associated with differing expectations and norms in terms of children's mobile phone ownership.

The item for which there were most commonly gender variations was access to books to read for pleasure, which was a question included for the older two age groups. In 16 countries, a higher percentage of girls reported access to this item than boys and in 14 of these countries the differences were statistically significant. For example, in Poland 20% of boys lacked this item compared to 8% of girls. In Ethiopia and Nepal, however, girls were more likely to lack this item than boys, significantly so in Nepal where 34% of girls lacked access to books compared to 27% of boys. The widespread gender differences for this particular question raises issues about the extent to which it is purely measuring material deprivation or also picking up something more complex such as differences in parenting or children's leisure preferences.

Apart from mobile phone ownership and access to books there were not a large number of gender differences in children's access to this list of items. In four countries boys were more likely to have their own room than girls; and also in four countries, girls were more likely than boys to have access to equipment on which to play music.

4.5 Material Deprivation for Children in Different Circumstances

The three-category measure described above can be used to look at variations in material deprivation for some of the different sub-groups of children discussed earlier in this chapter – children not living with family; children not living with both parents in their first or only home; and children not born in the country of the survey. Because the proportions of children in the first two sub-groups are very small in some countries, statistics are only calculated for selected countries.

First, in all five countries with the highest rates of children not born in the country – Malta, Spain, Italy, the UK and Norway – children who had not been born in the country were significantly more deprived than children who had. Some of the differences here are quite substantial – in Italy 36% of children not born in the country had high material deprivation compared to 17% of other children. Percentages for the two groups for the other countries were – Malta (31 and 21%), Spain (42 and 26%), the UK (20 and 15%) and Norway (10 and 3%). It is important to bear in mind with all the percentages in this section that it is only possible to compare levels of deprivation within countries and not across countries as the deprivation thresholds are different within each country relative to the distribution of deprivation within that country. Second, the percentages with high material deprivation were calculated for children not living with family in six countries – Ethiopia, Algeria, South Africa, Colombia, Romania and Germany. In all these countries except Colombia this sub-group of children were significantly (with 95% confidence) more likely experience high deprivation than other children. Again some of the gaps here are quite large – for example, 34% of children not living with family were in the high deprivation group in Germany compared to 17% of other children. Finally, the percentages of children with high deprivation were compared for children who only lived with one parent and who lived with two parents in all countries. This sub-group were significantly more likely to have high deprivation in 10 out of 18 countries.

4.6 Discussion

The material presented in this chapter has painted a diverse picture of children's living and material circumstances across the countries participating in the survey. There are wide variations in indicators such as the proportion of children living in three-generation families; living with their father; who were not born in the country of the survey; and who have access to various material items including technology has implications for access to information. The insights generated from some fairly simple questions asked of children provide an indication of the value of adopting a child-centred approach to understanding the context of children's lives. They also establish a valuable baseline which can be used to assess time trends in children's experience of childhood around the world.

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Chapter 5

Children's Activities

Information about children's activities provides an important means of exploring how the nature of childhood varies around the world. The way that children spend their time and the things that they do are also relevant issues for public policy. For example, in wealthier countries there are concerns about whether children have enough exercise and whether the increasing access to, and appeal of, electronic technologies has led to children adopting a more sedentary lifestyle. Children's activities have therefore come to be seen as of broad policy relevance. This chapter explores children's answers to 16 questions about the frequency of their participation in different activities in four categories – housework and caring; learning; social activities with family and friends; and leisure. It demonstrates the substantial diversity of children's daily lives in different countries with wide variations in the frequency of activities such as helping with housework. It also sheds light on contrasting age and gender variations in activities, including some fairly consistent gender-related patterns of participation in activities such as housework, homework, reading for pleasure, sports/exercising and using computers.

5.1 Introduction

Some initial clarification on terminology is necessary. A distinction is often drawn in the research literature on this topic between 'time use' and 'participation'. In this sense, time use refers to the quantity of time that people spend on particular activities, whereas participation relates to the frequency with which they engage in activities. Both approaches have their merits (Kuykendall et al. 2015). As will be described later in this chapter, the Children's Worlds questionnaire asked about participation rather than about time use.

A comprehensive review of global research on children's activities was undertaken by Larson and Verma (1999). They summarised major differences in the balance of time spent on work, education and leisure between industrialised and

non-industrialised countries; and also, within industrialised countries, between North America, Europe and East Asia. There is also more recent research international comparative research on children's time use and participation within specific countries or groups of countries and/or for specific kinds of activities. For example, Hallal et al. (2012) were able to combine data from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study in primarily high-income countries and from the Global School-based Student Health Survey in mostly low- and middle-income countries to explore physical activity across 105 countries. They estimate that 80% of adolescents in the countries covered did not do one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, and that girls were less active than boys. Braithwaite et al. (2013) explored television viewing habits across a diverse set of 37 countries and found substantial variations in the percentage of adolescents who watched television for three or more hours a day from 17% in China to 78% in Côte d'Ivoire.

However, there is a shortage of studies which are diverse both in terms of the range of countries and the types of activities covered. The information from the Children's Worlds study can therefore make a useful contribution to the overall picture of children's daily activities in different types of countries and contexts. The survey included 16 questions about how children spent their time. All of these questions asked about the frequency with which children did each activity in a week. Thus in the context of the discussion above the information is about 'participation' – how often or frequently children did each activity – rather than 'time use'. The questions that were asked are shown below.

Family Questions

How often in the past week have you spent time doing the following things with your family?

- Talking together
- Having fun together
- Learning together

Responses were on a four-point frequency scale from 'Not at all' to 'Every day', plus 'Don't know'

Friends Questions

How often in the past week have you spent time doing the following things with your friends apart from at school?

- Talking together
- Having fun together
- Meeting to study

Responses were on a four-point frequency scale from 'Not at all' to 'Every day', plus 'Don't know'

General Time Use Questions

How often do you usually spend time doing the following activities when you are not at school?

- Taking classes outside school time on matters different than at school
- Participating in organised leisure-time activities*
- Reading for fun (not homework)
- Helping around the house
- Doing homework
- Watching TV or listening to music
- Playing sports or doing exercise
- Using a computer
- Spending time just being by myself*
- Taking care of brothers or sisters or other family members*

Responses were on a four-point frequency scale from ‘Rarely or never’ to ‘Every day or almost every day’, plus ‘Don’t know’. The three items marked with a * were only asked in the questionnaire for 12-year-olds.

Although this set of questions is quite extensive there are some notable gaps and omissions. For example, it would have been helpful if a question had been included on children’s work (paid or unpaid) outside the home. There is a need to continually review these types of lists to ensure that they are relevant and cover the main activities in different countries and contexts.

In the remainder of this chapter, children’s responses to these 16 questions will be discussed in four broad categories – housework and caring; learning; social activities with family and friends; and leisure. For each of these groups of activities, variations between countries will be discussed as well as any age and gender patterns within countries. The analysis presented here summarises and extends two published analyses (Rees 2017a, b) which covered the first 16 countries to complete the survey. The first of these articles looked specifically at age variations while the second presented general findings and discussed gender variations but only covered the 12-years-old age group. It should be noted that, in relation to the age variations discussed in this chapter, because the data was gathered from several age groups of children at the same point in time it is possible that the patterns observed are cohort effects rather than maturation effects. Longitudinal data from the same children across a range of birth cohorts at different time points would be needed to test this possibility. However given the relatively narrow age range under consideration maturation effects seem the more likely cause of age differences and this will be assumed to be the case in the discussion in this chapter. The findings of significant differences between countries and by age and gender are based on statistical analysis of the full range of responses to each question. However, for simplicity, this chapter refers to the percentage of children who said that they did the activity every day or almost every day. This is sometimes referred to in the text as children doing the activity frequently or often.

Table 5.1 shows the percentage of children who said that they did each activity frequently (every day or almost every day) in each country. The first thing to note is that the average level of percentages was much lower in some countries (e.g. Ethiopia and South Korea) than in others (e.g. South Africa and Malta). This may be an accurate reflection of children’s participation in this particular list of activities in

Table 5.1 The percentage of children doing each activity frequently (daily or almost daily) in each country

Country	Housework	Caring	Classes	Homework	Family learn	Friends study	Family talk	Family fun	Friends talk	Friends fun	Org. Leisure	Sport/exercise	Read	Watch TV	Use computer	Self/alone
Nepal	70	53	17	71	51	23	51	40	32	31	12	40	44	33	7	12
Ethiopia	64	46	17	64	29	24	42	31	30	35	11	23	23	22	3	11
Algeria	66	61	31	78	64	29	67	55	56	44	13	42	44	60	36	24
S Africa	62	55	32	74	55	32	64	52	65	62	29	57	51	68	39	47
Colombia	55	35	34	69	53	24	46	43	50	53	19	55	38	77	53	29
Romania	67	40	21	89	51	17	76	47	55	46	10	60	49	77	49	15
Turkey	38	18	25	86	56	20	52	43	42	46	21	54	50	63	38	33
Israel	55	37	30	82	35	16	65	42	63	50	12	59	41	77	63	47
Malta	50	45	35	93	47	10	66	57	45	52	21	48	53	72	63	48
Spain	60	50	42	87	41	7	75	37	55	48	9	57	43	74	44	57
Italy	33	32	36	72	33	5	65	34	50	44	4	44	33	76	25	25
Poland	64	31	25	91	47	15	63	30	60	47	5	68	39	78	51	39
Estonia	50	48	52	92	33	14	66	30	48	38	5	57	31	80	60	43
Germany	34	9	41	82	21	5	79	42	53	46	7	54	42	72	30	25
UK	48	40	17	44	25	9	65	41	51	47	20	54	43	78	51	57
S Korea	25	19	35	66	22	18	42	21	53	44	2	42	32	64	21	25
Finland	49	51	37	92	20	10	64	24	41	33	7	82	39	62	32	50
Norway	53	24	-	87	28	8	79	41	54	47	-	59	36	78	41	32

The percentages are for all three age groups except for the items about 'Caring', 'Organised leisure', and 'Being by oneself' which were only asked in the survey of children aged 12 years old. Data is not available for 'Classes' and 'Organised leisure' in Norway

different countries – perhaps there are other activities that children do frequently in some countries. Alternatively it may be that there is an issue of cultural response differences for these types of questions. If so, this would affect comparisons of the percentage of children doing each activity between countries which is one aspect of the material contained in this chapter; but would not affect comparisons of the frequency of each activity within countries, or the exploration of age and gender differences, which are also addressed.

This information creates a picture of a great deal of diversity between countries. For example, children in South Africa were the most likely to frequently spend time with friends – either having fun, talking or studying, while children in the UK were the least likely to spend time on two learning activities outside school – taking classes and doing homework. Comparisons of this kind between countries are discussed in more detail within each group of activities in the following sections. Another way of looking at the information in this table is to consider the relative frequency of participation in the different activities among children within each country. Here there was much more consistency. Doing homework was the most frequent daily activity in 15 of the 18 countries and watching TV in the remaining three (Colombia, Italy and the UK). The least frequent activities were using a computer in Nepal and Ethiopia; studying with friends in Malta, Spain, Germany, the UK and Norway; and taking part in organised leisure activities in the remaining ten countries.

5.2 Housework and Caring

Helping around the house was a common activity for children. In most countries (13 out of 18) more than half of children said that they helped around the home every day or almost every day. The percentage ranged from 25% in South Korea to 70% in Nepal. Children aged 12 years old were also asked about caring for siblings and other family members. Here there was also a wide range across countries with less than 10% of 12-year-olds doing this every day, or almost, in Germany to over 60% in Algeria. Amongst children aged 12 years old there was a significant association between the percentage of children participating frequently in these activities in each country and a measure of national wealth. There was a pattern that children in lower-income countries were more likely to regularly undertake housework and caring for others than children in higher-income countries, although Norway was an unusual case in having a level of participation – around the average for the 18 countries – although it is the richest country per capita in the sample. This pattern is illustrated in Fig. 5.1.

There were diverging patterns in children's participation in helping at home between the ages of eight and 12 years old. There was an age-related decrease in Algeria, Colombia, Romania, Turkey and Estonia; but an age-related increase in Ethiopia, Nepal, Finland and Norway; with no significant change or in the frequency of this activity in the remaining countries. The four countries where there were

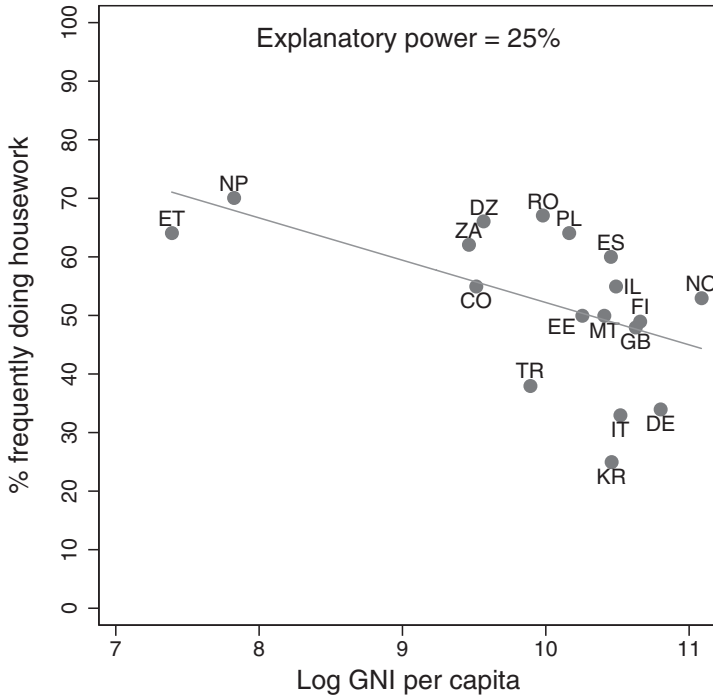


Fig. 5.1 Scatterplot of the percentage of children frequently doing housework in each country by Gross National Income per capita (logged) per country

increases in participation with age consisted of two contrasting pairs both economically and geographically. Ethiopia and Nepal were the two low-income countries in the sample and this raises the possibility that this is a distinctive feature of childhoods in countries in this group. As Finland and Norway are not that different in terms of per capita national wealth to Germany and the UK, it seems more likely that the patterns in these countries are to do with differing expectations of children in these countries rather than being economically driven. Both of these are hypotheses which would need to be tested with larger samples of countries. There is clearly something more to be understood about patterns of children's engagement in helping around the home within specific national and cultural contexts.

Helping around the home was an activity for which there were substantial gender differences in many countries. Girls were significantly more likely to do this activity than boys in 14 countries. There were gender gaps of 10% or more in Algeria, Colombia, Turkey, Italy, Poland, Estonia and Norway. In Malta and Spain girls tended to be a little more likely to do this activity than boys but the difference was not statistically significant. In Nepal and Ethiopia there was no gender difference at all. Overall, then, there are distinctive patterns in Nepal and Ethiopia compared to other countries in the survey with high rates of participation in this activity, increasing participation with age and no evidence of gender differences. As these

were the two countries in the survey sample with the lowest per capita wealth this raises questions to be explored in future research about how consistent these patterns are across economically similar countries.

The question about caring for family was only asked of the older age group so it is not possible to explore age variations in participation in this activity. A notable finding here is that, in the 12-years-old age group, there were no significant gender differences in participation in this activity except in Norway where boys were more likely to care for family members frequently than girls and Malta where the opposite was the case. It would be interesting to understand more about the context of these specific patterns.

As noted in the introduction an important gap in the information gathered about children's work-related activities is work that they do outside the home. This might include contributing to family businesses (e.g. farming) or independently doing some form of work for money or food.

5.3 Learning

The study explored a number of different types of learning-related activities. As well as doing homework and taking classes outside school, these questions also covered children spending time learning with family and studying with friends. Children's answers to these questions should perhaps be viewed within the context of different expectations on the amount of time that children spend in school in different countries. Table 5.2 shows the average number of compulsory school hours per year in 11 countries participating in the survey, based on information from the OECD. There are substantial variations between countries. In the primary school age group total hours varied from below 650 in Finland, Poland and South Korea to over 850 in England and Italy and over 900 in Israel. In the lower secondary level the number of hours were higher in all countries, varying from 810 in Poland to 1061 in Spain. The difference in hours between the primary and lower secondary levels was much more substantial in some countries (e.g. Spain and Finland where the difference was over 200 h per year) than in others (e.g. England and Israel where the difference was only around 50 h). Given these variations it may be that children in countries with more compulsory school hours will spend less time on educational activities outside school. It might also be that age-related patterns of engagement in learning activities outside school differ according to the extent that there are increasing expectations on children as they get older.

The relative participation rates in learning outside school across countries depend very much on which type of activity is being considered as shown in Table 5.1. For the most part, frequent participation in homework and taking classes outside school appeared to be more common in European countries than in countries outside Europe, although the UK is a notable exception to this pattern – having the lowest levels of participation in both these activities of all countries in the survey. The UK did have one of the higher levels of compulsory school hours as shown

Table 5.2 Average compulsory school hours per year (selected countries)

Country	Primary	Lower secondary
England	861	912
Estonia	661	823
Finland	632	844
Germany	683	866
Israel	957	1004
Italy	891	990
Korea	648	842
Norway	748	868
Poland	635	810
Spain	787	1061
Turkey	720	840

Source: OECD (2014), "Indicator D1: How much time do students spend in the classroom?", in *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933119530>

in Table 5.2 but other countries with higher numbers of hours such as Italy and Israel were also ranked higher for frequency of children taking classes outside school. There are some indications that frequency of spending time learning with family and studying with friends is linked to national wealth. The seven countries in the survey sample with the lowest per capita wealth were all among the eight countries with the highest levels of participation in learning activities both with family and with friends. The two exceptions to this pattern are Malta, which had relatively high rates of participation in learning with family; and South Korea which had the fourth highest rates of participation in studying with friends.

Overall these findings point both to some general patterns but also to some distinctive features of children's participation in learning activities outside school in various countries as shown in Table 5.3 which provides between-country rankings for the percentage of children frequently doing each of the four learning activities discussed here. For example, taking classes outside school has a relatively high participation rate in Germany (41% of children do this every day or almost every day) compared to learning with family (21%) or friends (5%). The UK has notably low rankings for participation in all four activities. South Korea is similar to the UK for homework and taking classes; but there is more emphasis on learning with family in the UK and on studying with friends in South Korea. Algeria and South Africa had the highest rates of participation in learning with family (64%) and friends (32%) respectively.

There were some notable age patterns in children's frequency of participation in learning activities across the age range covered by the survey. Age-related patterns for taking classes outside school and homework were varied. In some countries, participation in homework increased with age, with by much the largest increase in Italy where 60% of 8-year-olds did homework every day or almost every day com-

Table 5.3 Country ranking of % of children frequently doing different learning activities

Country	Classes	Homework	Family	Friends
Nepal	16	14	5	5
Ethiopia	15	17	13	3
Algeria	10	11	1	2
S Africa	9	12	3	1
Colombia	8	15	4	4
Romania	14	5	6	8
Turkey	12	8	2	6
Israel	11	9	10	9
Malta	6	1	8	12
Spain	2	7	9	16
Italy	5	13	11	17
Poland	13	4	7	10
Estonia	1	3	12	11
Germany	3	10	17	18
UK	17	18	15	14
S Korea	7	16	16	7
Finland	4	2	18	13
Norway	–	6	14	15

Age groups: 8, 10 and 12 years old

pared to 87% of 12-year-olds. In some countries participation in homework decreased with age – most substantially in South Korea (down from 72% of 8-year-olds to 54% of 12-year-olds). There were more consistent age-related decreases in learning activities with family and friends. Rates of frequent participation in learning with family decreased substantially between 8 and 12 years old in all countries except Ethiopia and Nepal where there was little change; and studying with friends decreased in eight countries and did not increase in any. Overall, the survey provides much more evidence of decreases than increases in frequency of participation in learning activities across the age range covered. As discussed earlier, this is not equivalent to saying that children spent less amounts of time on these activities as it is still possible that the time become more concentrated on particular parts of the week.

Girls tended to do homework more frequently than boys and this difference was statistically significant in 14 countries. However the differences here were not that large, with the biggest gender gap being over 8% in Colombia, Algeria and the UK. There were no gender differences for frequency of learning with family, but in eight countries (all high-income) girls more frequently spent time studying with friends than boys. On the other hand there was evidence in five countries (Spain, Algeria, Colombia, Turkey and Ethiopia) of boys significantly more often taking classes outside school than girls. There was no gender difference in the other 13 countries. The overall pattern of girls in many countries being more engaged in self-directed learning activities (homework and studying with friends) is consistent with the more positive views of school expressed by girls than boys (see Chap. 10).

5.4 Social Activities with Family and Friends

The amount of time that children spend socially with their family might be expected to vary between countries according to different patterns and expectations of family life. Time spent with friends outside school may differ between countries for a number of reasons including pressure of other activities and also opportunities. In terms of other pressures, expectations on children to spend time on learning activities and/or to spend time helping around the house may constrain the free time they have available to socialise with friends. In relation to opportunities, it may be more difficult for children to see each other in some geographical contexts (e.g. sparsely populated areas) than others. Additionally children in countries with high levels of access to technology may take into account social media activity with friends when answering questions about how frequently they spend time talking and having fun with them. Children's levels of participation in these activities might also change considerably with age. For example, there may be an increasing emphasis on time spent with friends rather than family as children grow older.

In general, looking at patterns across countries, children in South Africa and also in Malta were the most frequently engaged in social activities (talking and having fun) with family and friends and these activities tended to be least frequent in Ethiopia, Finland, South Korea and Nepal. Looking more specifically first at time spent with family, in almost all countries more than half of children said that they talked with family every day. The highest daily percentages were in Germany and Norway (both 79%). In fact this was the one of the three most frequent of children's daily activities in 11 countries. Children said they had fun with family less frequently than they talked with family in all countries. In some countries (South Korea, Finland, Spain, Estonia and Poland) this was a relatively infrequent activity. The balance between talking and having fun varied considerably between countries. For example, 75% of children said that they talked with family every day in Spain and 37% who said they had fun with family every day. This can be compared with Colombia where 46% of children talked with family every day and 43% had fun (a higher percentage than in Spain). This may be due to different patterns of family life. It could also be a linguistic issue in terms of translating the term 'having fun' into different languages, but as will be seen below this seems unlikely as the differences did not work the same way for talking and having fun with friends.

There were relatively few age differences in frequency of talking with family although this activity did increase a little with age in six countries (Norway, Turkey, Germany, the UK, Spain and Finland). On the other hand children tended to report having fun with family substantially less often as they got older in all countries except Nepal and Ethiopia where there was no age pattern. There were not such major gender differences in this group of activities as there were for some of the others discussed in this chapter. The most substantial pattern was that in seven countries (South Korea, Poland, Algeria, Romania, Estonia, Finland and the UK) girls much more frequently spent time talking with family than boys.

Time spent socialising with friends was noticeably less frequent in Nepal and Ethiopia (where around a third of children spent time every day either talking or having fun with friends) than in other countries. In contrast, close to half or more of children did one of these two activities every day in the other 16 countries. There did not tend to be such a difference within countries in frequency of talking and having fun with friends as there was for family. There was limited evidence of gender difference in frequency of these activities with friends. There were however age patterns. There was a tendency for children to talk more frequently and have fun less frequently with friends as they got older. However children did both activities less frequently with age in South Africa, Algeria and Ethiopia. With these exceptions, these patterns, along with those for family, suggest something of a transfer of emphasis from 'having fun' to 'talking' as aspects of socialising as children get older.

One of the possibilities suggested earlier in this section is that children may switch the emphasis of socialising from family to friends as they grow up. In fact, the patterns in this respect are quite diverse across countries. Rees (2017a) notes that there were different patterns across countries¹ in terms of different age patterns of the balance between the frequency of talking with family and friends. These patterns can be seen in Fig. 5.2. Apart from in South Korea and in one or both of the older age groups in South Africa, Colombia, Israel and Poland, children more frequently spent time talking with family than friends across all three age groups. In some countries (for example, Nepal and Algeria) there was an increasing gap between frequency of talking with family and friends as children got older. In other countries (for example, Spain, Italy and the UK) the gap narrowed with age. In Israel, Colombia and Poland there was some evidence of a switch in emphasis from talking with family to talking with friends across this age range. In South Korea, frequency of talking with family stays fairly constant across the three age groups while frequency of talking with friends increases. There is therefore a complex picture of diverse patterns in children's engagement with family and friends by age group and across countries.

5.5 Leisure

Children's patterns of leisure activities might be expected to vary considerably across countries for similar reasons to those discussed for time spent socialising above. There may also be opportunity constraints here in terms of the availability of specific items (e.g. books, televisions and computers in the home) as discussed in Chap. 4 and also the availability of sports and leisure facilities within the local area, which will be discussed further in Chap. 11. Indeed there were substantial differences in how often children took part in in different types of leisure activities

¹This journal article only included the first 16 countries to complete the survey. Finland and Italy, which completed the survey later, have been added to the categorisation above.

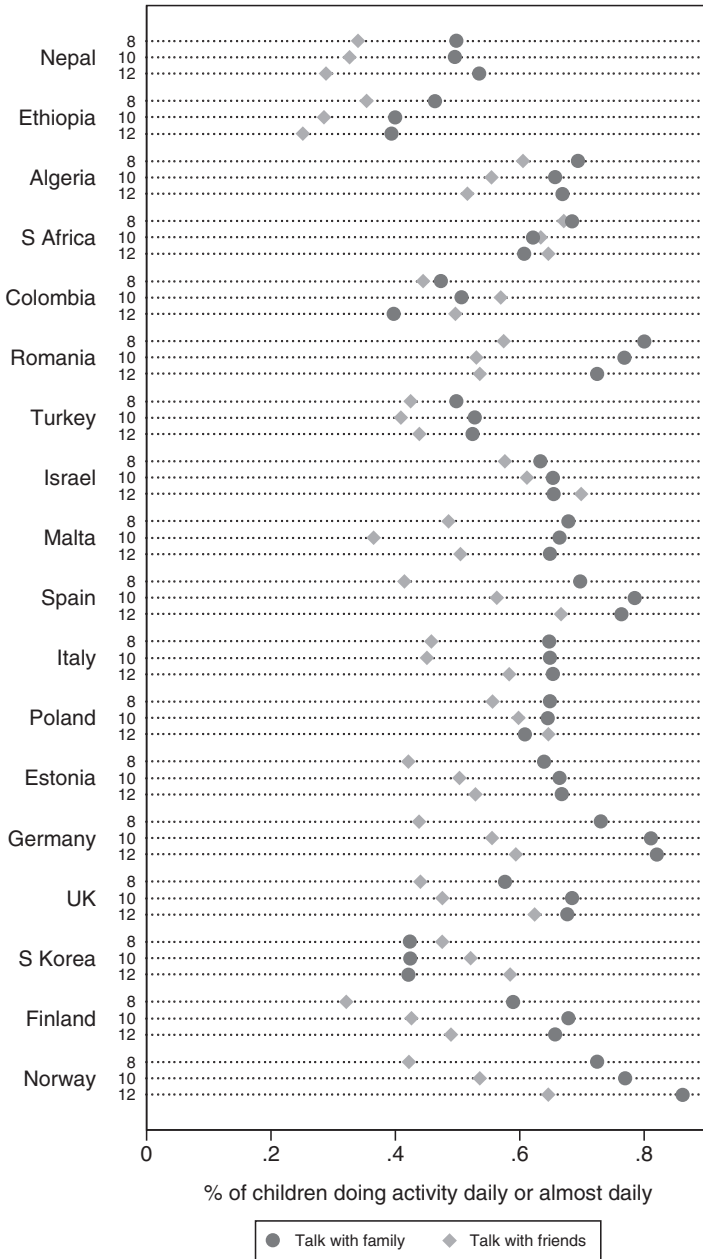


Fig. 5.2 Percentage of children talking frequently with family and friends by age group and country

across countries; and also some notable differences within countries according to age group and gender.

Children's use of televisions and computers for leisure purposes varied particularly widely between countries. Some of this variation is to be expected from the information discussed in the previous chapter about children's access to these items at home. The countries where these items were least common in the home – Ethiopia and Nepal – also had the lowest participation rates in watching television and using a computer. Less than 10% of children in these two countries frequently used a computer for leisure and less than a third watched television frequently. There were however also other variations that do not seem so directly linked to issues of availability. Over 60% of children in Israel, Malta and Estonia used a computer for leisure frequently while in South Korea far fewer children did so (21%), even though availability of computers in the home did not vary much between these countries (see Table 4.2). The use of computers was also notably low in Germany (30%) and Italy (25%) although a higher proportion (close to 20%) of children in these countries had said they did not have access to a computer at home. Similarly, although the availability of a television at home was almost universal (above 95%) in all high-income countries (where this question was asked), Finland (62%) and South Korea (64%) had much lower rates of frequent (daily or almost daily) television watching than Estonia (80%). So there are clearly some substantial variations in children's use of technology for leisure even within countries with fairly similar geographical and economic contexts.

Frequent computer use was more common among boys than girls in 11 (mostly European) countries. There was little evidence of substantial gender differences in watching television. Frequency of both of these activities increased substantially in most countries across age groups, although both declined in Algeria and there was no change in watching television in Ethiopia, South Africa and Poland, or in using a computer in Nepal, Ethiopia or South Africa.

Reading for pleasure did not vary so substantially between countries although there were still a spread of activity rates from 23% of children doing this activity every day or almost every day in Ethiopia to 53% in Malta. There were clear links with availability of resources here. Sixty-four percent of children aged 10 and 12 years old in Ethiopia had said that they did not have access to books to read for pleasure at home compared to only 6% in Malta. So material deprivation was part of the picture here. On the other hand, slightly fewer children (less than 5%) in Norway and Finland lacked books but substantially fewer children (36% and 39% respectively) read for pleasure in these two countries than in Malta. Children tended to read for pleasure much less frequently as they got older in most (16) countries although there was no change in Turkey and an increase in this activity with age in Ethiopia. Girls more frequently read for pleasure than boys in the majority (13) of countries and in only one country (Algeria) were boys more frequent readers.

In contrast, boys much more frequently participated in sports and exercising than girls in all countries and these gender differences were statistically significant in most (14) countries. Frequent participation rates in sports and exercise were notably the lowest in Ethiopia (23%) but there were no clear patterns in general for this

activity. For example, 82% of children in Finland said that they participated in sports or exercising every day or almost every day compared to 59% in Norway. Sports participation declined significantly with age in seven countries, increased in two and stayed fairly constant in the other nine. There was a very substantial decrease in the participation rate in South Korea from 50% of children aged 8 years old to 27% of children aged 12 years old.

Overall some of the patterns across these four activities in terms of age and gender are quite striking. Participation in reading decreased with age in most countries and there was also a tendency for sports participation to decrease in some. Meanwhile there were substantial increases in frequency of watching television and using a computer as children got older. Because the questionnaire asked children how often they did activities rather than how much time they spent on them it is not possible to say from these participation patterns that there is a typical shift in time use from sports and reading to television and computer usage, but the evidence does tend to point in that direction in many countries. However the combined pattern of a significant increase in frequency of computer and/or television activity together with a significant decrease in frequency of playing sports and exercising only occurred in five countries (Romania, Spain, Poland, Germany and South Korea) and the drop in sports participation was not particularly large (less than 10%) in the first four of these countries. So the more pronounced age shift is between different types of sedentary activities – decreasing reading for pleasure and increasing screen-based usage. The combination of higher participation rates in reading among girls and higher participation rates in computer usage among boys was seen in ten countries (six of which were in the northern half of Europe) and provides evidence of gender-typing of leisure activities. This is also evident in the comparison of frequent participation in reading and sports/exercising illustrated in Fig. 5.3.

Finally, two questions about participation in organised leisure activities and time spent alone were asked only of the oldest age group surveyed. Participation in organised leisure activities was one of the least common activities in all countries, with more than one in five children participating frequently in this activity only in five countries (the highest participation rate was 29% in South Africa). Girls participated in this activity significantly less frequently than boys in Algeria, South Africa, Turkey and South Korea. The percentage of children who frequently (every day or almost every day) spent time just being by themselves varied considerably from 11% in Ethiopia and 12% in Nepal to over half (57%) in the UK and Spain. There were no really clear geographic or wealth patterns to this activity with the above figure for the UK and Spain contrasting with 25% in both Germany and Italy. As with many other patterns in the data it would be interesting to contextualise these very wide differences between countries in terms of children's daily experiences.

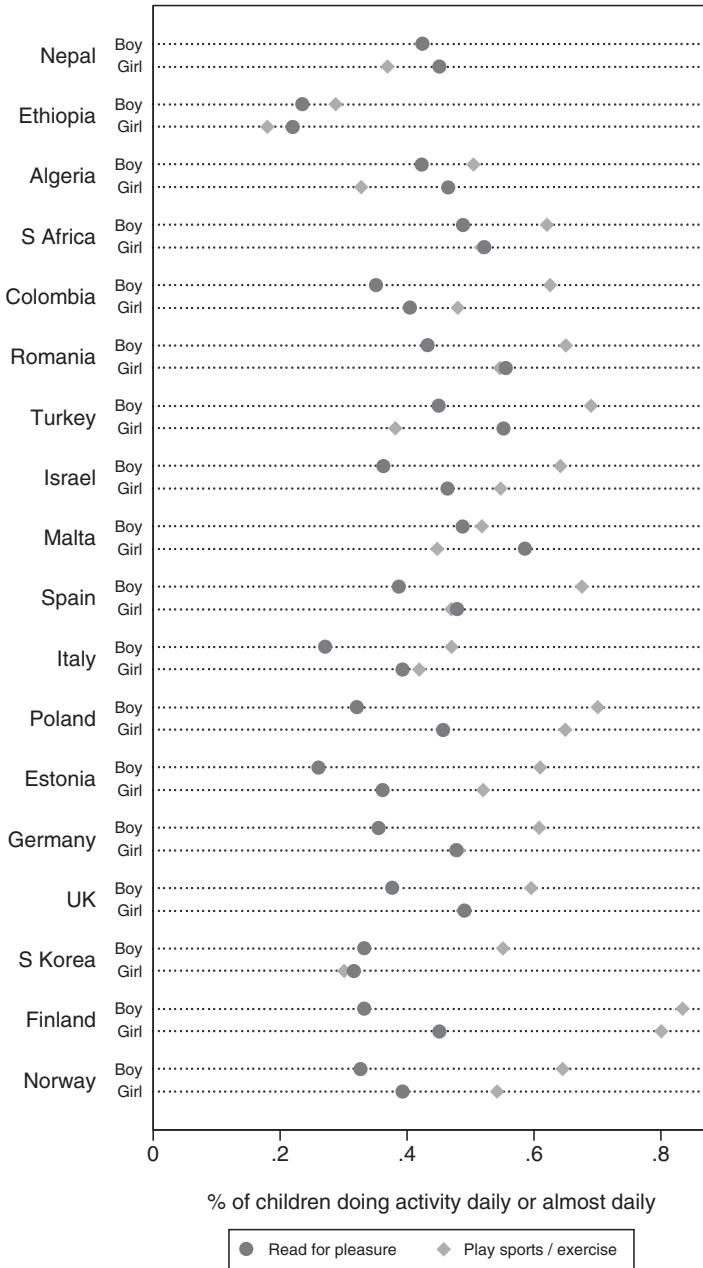


Fig. 5.3 Percentage of children frequently reading for pleasure and playing sports or exercising by gender and country

5.6 Age and Gender Variations in Participation in Activities

The above review of different types of activities has highlighted some significant age and gender patterns. It is informative to draw these findings together across all of the different activities covered in this chapter. There are some age patterns which are fairly consistent across 14 of the countries surveyed (excluding Nepal, Ethiopia, Algeria and South Africa). In these 14 countries as children get older they less often spend time learning with family; having fun with family; having fun with friends; and reading for pleasure; and more often spend time talking with friends and on screen-based activities (watching TV and using a computer) in the large majority of countries. Finland was a slight exception in that increasing computer usage went alongside a decrease in frequency of watching television. However, some of these patterns did not apply in Nepal and the three countries in Africa. In common with the above group, frequency of learning with family and having fun with friends also tended to decrease in this group. However, the frequency of screen-based activity did not increase (except for television watching in Nepal) while frequency of talking with friends decreased and homework increased. It will be interesting in the future to see whether these different patterns are replicated in other countries with similar contexts.

There was also substantial evidence of gender differences in children's participation in activities. Five patterns occurred in the majority of countries in the survey sample. Girls were significantly more likely than boys to spend time on housework (14 countries); homework (14 countries) and reading for pleasure (13 countries). However none of these patterns applied in Nepal or Ethiopia where there was no significant gender difference for housework or homework; and in Ethiopia boys tended to read for pleasure more frequently than girls. Boys participated significantly more frequently than girls in playing sports or exercising (14 countries) and using a computer (11 countries). In fact boys participated more frequently than girls in both of these activities in all 18 countries even if not always at a level of statistical significance. A further point about these patterns, identified in Rees (2017b) is that there does not seem to be any link between the extent of gender differences in children's daily lives in different countries and measures of adult gender inequality (data for one such measure – the UN's Gender Inequality Index is to be found in Table 2.1). The two countries in the sample with the highest adult gender inequality scores, Ethiopia and Nepal, had fewer significant gender differences in children's daily activities than the two countries with the lowest gender inequality scores, Norway and Finland. For example, in all four of these countries, girls tended to do housework more frequently than boys. However in Nepal and Ethiopia the gender difference in participation rates in housework was 3% and 4% respectively while in Finland and Norway it was 8% and 10%. This raises some interesting issues about the roots of the gender differences identified in children's daily lives in this chapter.

5.7 Children's Satisfaction with Time Use

As well as the set of frequency questions discussed above, children were asked how satisfied they were with how they used their time. Summary statistics for this questions are shown in Table 5.4. This was not an aspect of life where there were dramatic differences between countries. Romania, Colombia and Turkey had the highest mean satisfaction scores and South Korea, Ethiopia and Nepal the lowest. The small relative scores indicate that for the most part these patterns of responses reflected those across the survey as a whole. There were however a few notable differences between the rankings for mean scores and inequalities. Italy and Norway ranked five or more places higher for equality of satisfaction than for mean satisfaction; while the opposite was the case in Turkey, Israel and Colombia where there were relatively high levels of inequality in satisfaction. This is an aspect of the findings that might warrant further exploration and contextualisation.

Table 5.4 Summary statistics for satisfaction with time use

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.34	16	0	0.28	15
Ethiopia	8.31	17	2	0.26	14
Algeria	8.34	15	-2	0.28	16
S Africa	8.35	14	1	0.30	18
Colombia	9.02	2	1	0.21	7
Romania	9.18	1	1	0.17	2
Turkey	8.95	3	0	0.22	11
Israel	8.72	6	-1	0.24	12
Malta	8.79	5	0	0.20	4
Spain	8.56	9	-1	0.20	5
Italy	8.47	12	-1	0.20	6
Poland	8.71	7	2	0.22	9
Estonia	8.50	11	1	0.22	10
Germany	8.53	10	1	0.21	8
UK	8.42	13	0	0.25	13
S Korea	7.91	18	-2	0.28	17
Finland	8.81	4	0	0.16	1
Norway	8.62	8	-3	0.19	3

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

5.8 Discussion

The material presented in this chapter creates a detailed picture of some of the differences in the nature of children's lives in the 18 countries included in the survey, as well as some of the similarities. There were very large differences between countries in frequency of participation in some activities. Frequent computer use ranged from over 60% in Israel, Malta and Estonia to less than 10% in Ethiopia and Nepal. Rates of children's frequent participation in housework ranged from 25% in South Korea to 70% in Nepal. While some of these differences may possibly be attributed to different economic contexts, it is clear that this is only one of a set of factors which can explain the variations. For example, the four wealthiest countries in the survey – Norway, Finland, Germany and the UK – also all in fairly close geographic proximity – had substantially different rates of frequent computer usage among children (ranging from 30% to 51%). Given the age range of the children in the study, it is possible that other factors such as different parenting practices and different educational expectations may play a part in explaining these patterns. There is also a degree of similarity in the patterns in many countries in relation to age and gender, although here there are also some tentative findings of differences between groups of countries which would require further exploration, ideally in a larger selection of countries.

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Chapter 6

Overall Well-Being

This chapter looks at how children feel about their lives as a whole. The measurement of overall well-being is a cornerstone of the Children's Worlds project. As well as providing a valuable overview of how children feel about their lives across countries, it also provides a basis for analysing the relative importance of various factors for children's overall well-being. This chapter provides a descriptive account of the measures of overall well-being included in the survey. It describes variations between countries based on mean well-being and also inequalities in well-being; and considers some of the possible factors that explain these variations. This general approach of exploring variations, including a focus on inequalities, is one which will also be employed in subsequent chapters which look at specific aspects of children's lives. The chapter shows that looking at means and inequalities creates a slightly different picture of comparisons between countries, with some countries ranking higher for mean well-being and other countries ranking higher for equality in well-being. This is an important issue which will also be pursued later in the book. This chapter will also look at variations within countries according to demographic characteristics – age and gender. Chapter 14 will look at a selection of other factors in children's lives that might explain why, within countries, some children have substantially higher or lower overall well-being than others.

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 provided an overview of some of the main conceptualisations of overall self-reported well-being. It discussed the tripartite model of subjective well-being (Andrews and Withey 1976; Diener 1984) consisting of a cognitive component (life and domain satisfactions) and two affective components (positive and negative moods and emotions). It also discussed the separate concept of psychological well-being which is linked to the Greek notion of eudaimonia, and relates to positive functioning (Deci & Ryan 2008). There are a growing number of single-country

studies of children's self-reported well-being (e.g. Hurrelmann and Andresen 2010 in Germany; UNICEF Spain 2012; Rees et al. 2010 in the UK). However, the focus in this section, and throughout the report, is primarily on comparative cross-national studies.

One of the most substantial previous pieces of evidence on cross-national variations in children's subjective well-being is the HBSC study which included a single-item life satisfaction question based on Cantril's ladder (1966). The most recent wave of the study conducted in 2013/14 (Inchley et al. 2016) covered children aged 11, 13 and 15 years old in 42 countries in Europe and North America. The study showed wide variation across countries in the proportion of children reporting a score of six or higher out of ten for life satisfaction – ranging, for example among 11-year-olds, from around 76% in Belgium (Flemish-speaking) to more than 95% in Albania. There were also age and gender patterns. Inchley et al. report significant gender differences in 9 countries among 11-year-olds, increasing to 35 countries among 15-year-olds, with boys tending to be more likely to have high life satisfaction than girls. There was also evidence of children becoming less satisfied with their lives with age, particularly for girls, in many countries.

The most recent round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study used the same single-item (Cantril's ladder) measure of life satisfaction in a large sample of children aged 15 years old in 48 countries, primarily OECD-member countries (OECD 2017). The average score across these countries was 7.3 out of 10. The mean score for countries ranged from 8.5 in the Dominican Republic and also more than 8.0 in Mexico and Costa Rica to below 6.5 in Turkey and South Korea. Girls tended to have significantly lower life satisfaction than boys in a majority of countries surveyed. Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds had lower mean life satisfaction in most countries. There was also some evidence that children who were first-generation immigrants tended to have lower life satisfaction, with some marked differences in Qatar and Spain.

Apart from these two major international surveys, a number of other studies have compared subjective well-being levels and patterns across smaller groups of countries. Casas et al. (2012) tested a number of indicators in four Latin-language-speaking countries, finding some significant differences in countries in mean well-being scores, and also evidence in three of the countries of decreasing well-being with age. Casas, Tiliouine and Figuer (2013) undertook similar analysis comparing samples of children in Spain and Algeria. Here also there was evidence of significant age variations, with the decline in life satisfaction between the ages of 12 and 20 being steeper in Algeria than in Spain. Finally, Rees and Dinisman (2015) compare life satisfaction of 12-year-old children in 11 countries participating in the first wave of the Children's Worlds study. Mean life satisfaction scores varied from 9.3 out of 10 in Romania to 6.6 out of 10 in Uganda.

In summary, prior to the current wave of the Children's Worlds survey, there was substantial comparative evidence on children's life satisfaction within European countries, although only based on a single-item measure, and relatively sparse evidence on countries outside Europe. This compares poorly with data on adult well-being which is widely available for most countries worldwide from the Gallup

World Pool (Helliwell et al. 2016) and other sources. Additionally, the other comparative data that does exist is only available for children from the age of 11 years old upwards.

6.2 Measures of Overall Well-Being Used in the Study

The Children’s Worlds study included three sets of questions intended to tap in to three of the concepts discussed above – life satisfaction, positive affect and psychological well-being. The questions are listed below. The inclusion of a measure of psychological well-being is an important innovation in comparative research on children’s well-being. In this chapter, three scores will be used which were created by summing children’s responses to all the questions within each set and then transforming the scores onto a scale from 0 to 100 in order to facilitate comparisons between measures.

Cognitive Subjective Well-Being¹

Here are some sentences about how you feel about your life as a whole. Please tick a box to say how much you agree with each of the sentences

- My life is going well
- My life is just right
- I have a good life
- The things in my life are excellent

In the 10- and 12-years-old surveys, response options were on an 11-point scale from ‘Not at all agree’ to ‘Totally agree’. A shorter five-point agreement scale was used in the 8-years-old survey.

Positive Affect²

Below is a list of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please read each word and then tick a box to say how much you have felt this way during the last two weeks

- Happy
- Satisfied
- Relaxed
- Active

¹This set of questions is derived from the Student Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner 1991). The first three items are taken directly from that scale and the fourth is an additional item being tested for the first time. A fifth question was also asked but this is not used here on the basis of statistical testing done by Casas (2016).

²This set of questions is based on ideas from Russell’s work on ‘core affect’ (Feldman Barrett & Russell 1980). The items were selected with the age group and cross-national nature of the survey in mind. It was decided in this survey only to focus on positive affect so there are no items relating to negative affect.

- Calm
- Full of energy

Response options were on an 11-point scale from ‘Not at all’ to ‘Extremely’. This set of questions was only asked of the older two age groups.

Psychological Well-Being³

Please say how much you agree with each of the sentences:

- I like being the way I am
- I am good at managing my daily responsibilities
- People are generally pretty friendly towards me
- I have enough choice about how I spend my time
- I feel that I’m learning a lot at the moment
- I feel positive about my future

Response options were on an 11-point scale from ‘Not at all agree’ to ‘Totally agree’. This set of questions was only asked in the 12-years-old survey.

It is not certain that these types of measures are completely comparable across countries. There may be issues relating to cultural response differences (Diener et al. 2003; Kim et al. 2012) and also to the ways that different questions are translated and then interpreted by children in different countries. Casas (2016) found that the four-item life satisfaction scale was suitable for comparisons of mean scores between many of the countries involved in the survey, but further work is needed on this aspect with all three measures. The reader should bear this issue in mind in interpreting the results in this chapter. It seems clearer from the above-cited testing that the measures can be used in a comparative way for the purposes of correlations and regressions and so the discussion of age and gender differences within countries later in this chapter is more strongly supported. For the pooled sample of countries the Pearson correlations between the three measures are all around 0.75 suggesting that there is substantial overlap but also some distinction between them.

6.3 Variations Between Countries

In considering how to compare children’s subjective well-being across countries, one important issue is what indicator to use. While comparing mean scores is one option, there are others such as comparing the percentage of children with scores above or below a certain level or comparing indicators of equality or inequality in subjective well-being. Each of these approaches might be relevant to different

³This set of items covers the six components of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff (1989). The final two items are alternative options for the component relating to ‘purpose in life’. Some of the items are based on ones originally suggested by Keyes (2006) and Ryan & Deci (www.selfdeterminationtheory.org/questionnaires/).

Table 6.1 Three different comparisons of life satisfaction between countries

Country	Mean		% Low		Equality	
	Score	Rank	%	Rank	Score	Rank
Nepal	84.2	11	3.5	4	0.202	6
Ethiopia	80.3	17	9.1	17	0.257	14
Algeria	87.9	8	5.0	7	0.215	8
S Africa	83.9	13	8.8	15	0.265	16
Colombia	89.8	4	3.3	3	0.181	4
Romania	94.7	1	1.8	1	0.133	1
Turkey	89.8	5	6.0	10	0.219	10
Israel	88.3	6	5.4	9	0.219	9
Malta	88.0	7	5.4	8	0.214	7
Spain	87.7	9	4.3	6	0.192	5
Italy	84.1	12	6.7	11	0.232	11
Poland	83.8	14	8.8	16	0.267	17
Estonia	81.7	16	8.4	13	0.248	12
Germany	83.2	15	8.4	14	0.255	13
UK	84.8	10	8.2	12	0.261	15
S Korea	76.5	18	11.9	18	0.289	18
Finland	90.5	3	3.3	2	0.176	2
Norway	90.7	2	3.6	5	0.179	3

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

policy perspectives on maximising happiness, minimising misery or minimising inequalities in well-being.

Table 6.1 takes all three of these approaches with the life satisfaction score in the 10- and 12-years old surveys. It is not possible also to include the 8-years-old in this table because of the different (shorter) response scale used with that age group. Low well-being here is defined as a score below the mid-point on the scale. The measure of inequality is the coefficient of variation, which is the standard deviation divided by the mean. A higher value indicates a higher degree of inequality. As discussed in Chap. 3, there are a number of other options for measuring inequality and future research might explore the relative merits of each.

In Table 6.1 there is substantial cross-national variation in all three measures with, for example, mean scores ranging from less than 77 out of 100 in South Korea to over 94 out of 100 in Romania. Romania also ranked highest for the other two summary measures. South Korea also had the highest percentage of children with low life satisfaction and the highest level of inequality in life satisfaction. For some countries, such as Algeria, Germany, Malta and Finland there is very little difference in rankings whichever measure is used. However for other countries there were some notable differences. For example Turkey and the UK both ranked five places lower for equality of life satisfaction than mean life satisfaction. On the other hand Nepal ranked five places higher for equality than means, and Spain ranked four places higher.

Table 6.2 Summary statistics and ranking for positive affect by country

Country	Mean		% Low		Equality	
	Score	Rank	%	Rank	Score	Rank
Nepal	83.8	9	3.9	8	0.203	10
Ethiopia	82.0	14	4.4	10	0.204	11
Algeria	89.4	4	3.1	4	0.171	4
S Africa	82.8	11	6.5	13	0.238	14
Colombia	90.4	3	2.3	2	0.164	2
Romania	92.2	1	1.4	1	0.136	1
Turkey	91.2	2	3.6	6	0.181	5
Israel	87.9	5	4.7	11	0.199	9
Malta	83.8	10	3.7	7	0.193	7
Spain	83.9	8	4.1	9	0.194	8
Italy	81.1	15	5.8	12	0.214	12
Poland	82.8	12	6.9	14	0.244	16
Estonia	78.9	16	7.1	15	0.229	13
Germany	78.6	17	7.3	16	0.239	15
UK	82.3	13	7.9	17	0.254	17
S Korea	77.1	18	10.1	18	0.273	18
Finland	86.9	6	2.9	3	0.169	3
Norway	84.2	7	3.3	5	0.186	6

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

The country rankings for life satisfaction in the 8-years-old survey (not shown) differed a little to those in Table 6.1. Romania was ranked highest for this age group also, but Poland was ranked second highest (in comparison with ninth in the older age groups). Estonia was also ranked four positions higher; while Nepal, Norway and the UK were all ranked four or five positions lower. This suggests that there are some different age profiles to life satisfaction across the 18 countries.

Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show the same types of summary statistics for positive affect and psychological well-being. Many of the country rankings are similar to those for life satisfaction. However there are some notable differences. Looking at mean scores across the three measures, Norway, Finland and Italy rank lower for positive affect and psychological well-being than they do for life satisfaction. The opposite is the case for Ethiopia, Algeria and Turkey. This suggests that it is important to look at a range of measures of overall well-being covering the different components discussed earlier.

There is a lot of detail in these three tables. In order to provide a brief overall summary, averages were calculated for the ranking of mean scores on each measure and the ranking of inequality in scores on each measure. These two averages were mapped against one another to create a broad picture of means and inequalities in overall well-being for the 18 countries. The results are shown in Fig. 6.1. For example, four countries – Romania, Colombia, Finland and Norway – tended to have high rankings for both means and equalities in overall well-being. Three countries –

Table 6.3 Summary statistics and ranking for psychological well-being by country (12-years-old survey)

Country	Mean		% Low		Equality	
	Score	Rank	%	Rank	Score	Rank
Nepal	83.5	9	3.6	8	0.196	12
Ethiopia	80.2	13	3.6	7	0.193	10
Algeria	87.9	5	3.3	6	0.178	8
S Africa	83.4	10	5.4	14	0.217	15
Colombia	88.5	3	2.4	3	0.156	3
Romania	89.9	1	1.8	1	0.144	2
Turkey	88.8	2	4.7	11	0.194	11
Malta	87.9	4	2.3	2	0.164	4
Spain	83.8	8	3.8	9	0.177	7
Italy	79.9	15	5.2	12	0.200	13
Poland	79.4	16	7.9	15	0.244	16
Estonia	82.8	11	4.1	10	0.188	9
Germany	80.1	14	5.4	13	0.206	14
UK	81.3	12	9.1	16	0.254	17
S Korea	73.1	17	11.2	17	0.264	18
Finland	86.3	6	2.9	5	0.170	5
Norway	85.8	7	2.7	4	0.175	6

Age group: 12 years old. Note: Israel is not included in this table because this set of questions was not included in the survey

South Korea, Germany and Poland – tended to have low rankings for both. Although it can be seen that there quite a strong association⁴ between the rankings of means and equalities, there is also some divergence. Turkey and the UK, for example, tend to rank much higher for mean well-being than equality of well-being, while the opposite is true in Estonia and Ethiopia, as can be verified in the three tables above.

Irrespective of the measure of children’s overall well-being used above, there was substantial variation in mean scores and inequalities between countries. Comparative international research on adult subjective well-being has been able to identify a set of factors that can explain much of the variation in mean life satisfaction between countries. Helliwell, Layard and Sachs (2015) report that it is possible to explain substantial amounts (73%) of the variation in adult life satisfaction between countries using six variables – national wealth per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make choices, generosity and perceptions of corruption. Some of these variables are, themselves, based on subjective assessments by individual adults and so there is some question about the extent to which cultural response patterns could contribute to some of the explanatory power of variables such as perceptions of social support. However it is clear that objective macro indicators such as national wealth and healthy life expectancy can make an

⁴The Pearson correlation between the average rank of the mean and the average rank of inequality was 0.86.

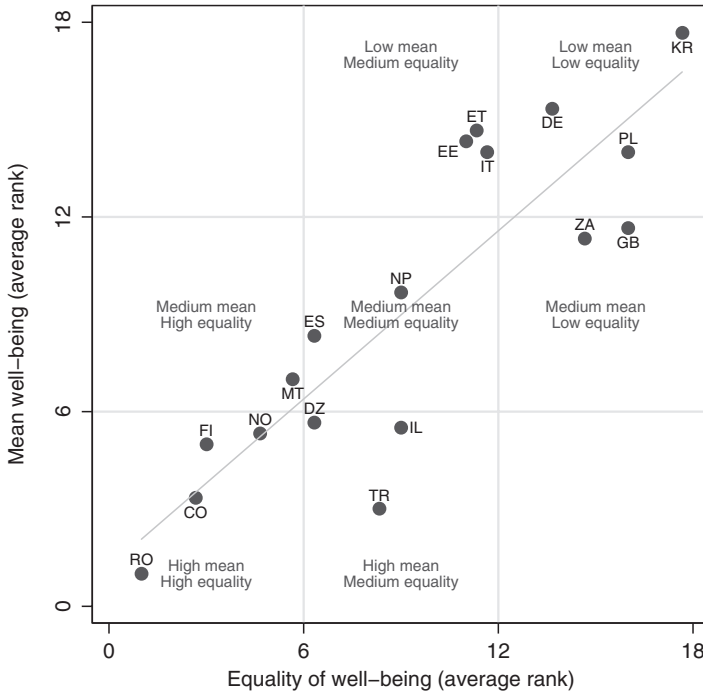


Fig. 6.1 Overview of ranking of countries in terms of means and equalities in overall self-reported well-being

important contribution to understanding variations between countries in the average subjective well-being of adults.

In view of this it is logical to explore whether similar factors might explain variations in children’s average subjective well-being. Such analysis yields interesting results. The focus here will be on the indicator of children’s life satisfaction discussed above as some comparisons are made with findings for adult life satisfaction. However the patterns are broadly the same for the other two measures of child self-reported well-being and further information is provided in footnotes where relevant. Figure 6.2 shows a scatterplot of mean life satisfaction for children aged 10 and 12 in the study by Gross National Income per capita (logged). There is no clear pattern here and this is evidenced by a weak and non-significant correlation⁵ between these two variables.

This analysis is based on a very small sample. However, using data on adult life satisfaction, taken from the Gallup World Poll, which is presented in Helliwell et al. (2015) for the countries involved in the Children’s Worlds study, Fig. 6.3 shows the comparable scatterplot for mean adult life satisfaction and national wealth. Here

⁵The Pearson correlation between child life satisfaction and log GNI per capita was 0.241, $p = 0.33$. The corresponding coefficients for positive affect and eudaimonic well-being with log GNI per capita were -0.105 , $p = 0.67$ and -0.022 , $p = 0.93$.

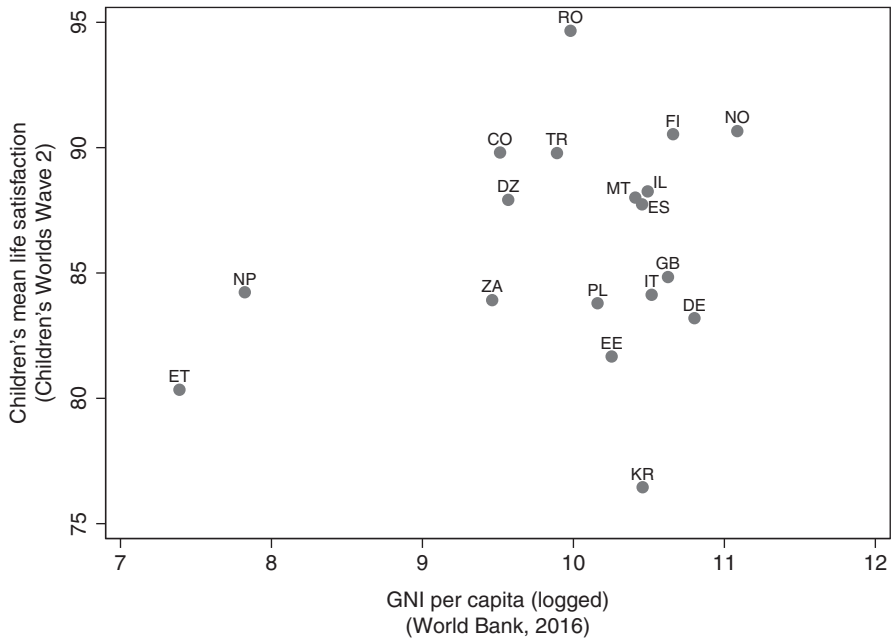


Fig. 6.2 Scatterplot of children's mean life satisfaction in the Children's Worlds survey and national wealth (Gross National Income) per capita

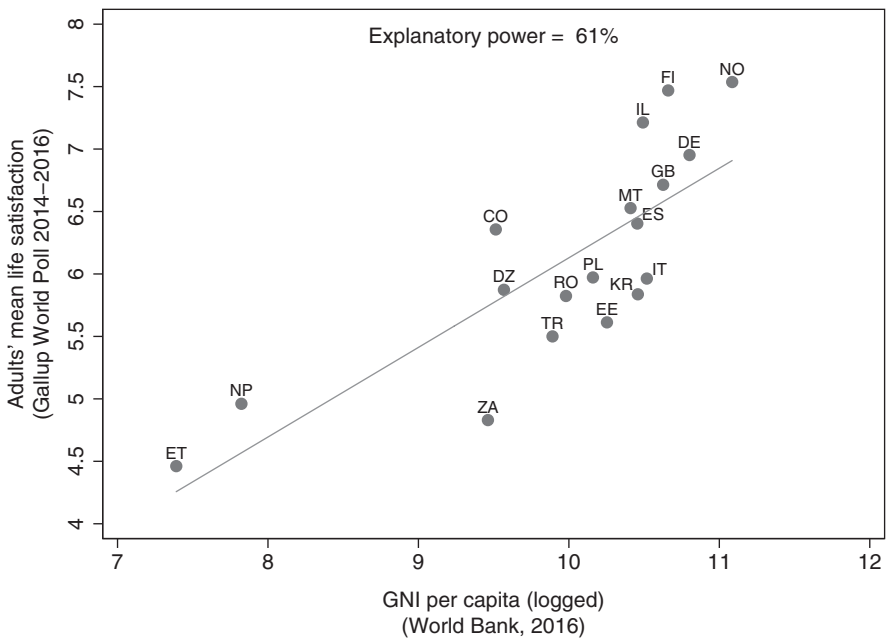


Fig. 6.3 Scatterplot of mean adult life satisfaction from the Gallup World Poll (published in Helliwell et al. 2016) for countries participating in the Children's Words survey, and national wealth (Gross National Income) per capita

there appears to be a relatively strong and statistically significant positive association and this is confirmed by a Pearson correlation coefficient of .797 between the two variables, suggesting that national wealth ‘explains’ around 63% of the variation in adult life satisfaction between these countries, although of course some of this explanation may be due to other factors linked to national wealth such as those considered in Helliwell et al.’s analysis cited above.

This type of comparison of associations with national wealth for child and adult life satisfaction among the same group of countries suggests important differences between the two age groups. Underlying the differences in these two graphs is another important piece of evidence which is illustrated in Fig. 6.4. Among the 18 countries included in Wave 2 of the Children’s Worlds study there is a moderate and non-significant association⁶ between mean child and adult life satisfaction. The association is somewhat stronger if Romania and South Korea are excluded from the analysis but it is not clear why that would be justified.

In order to check that the above findings were also more widely applicable, analysis was also carried out using the recently published findings from the Programme for International Assessment (PISA) study (OECD 2017) discussed earlier which contained life satisfaction data for children aged 15 years of age in 48 countries. Using this data also there was only a modest correlation between mean adult life satisfaction and mean child life satisfaction across this group of countries. Mean adult life satisfaction explained around 9% of the variation in mean child life satisfaction. Again there was almost no association between a country’s per capita wealth and mean child life satisfaction. In fact there was a very weak negative association – meaning that wealthier countries tended, if anything, to have lower mean child life satisfaction than less wealthy ones. Furthermore there was the expected strong association between national wealth and mean adult life satisfaction. A country’s wealth per capita explained 25% of the variation in adult life satisfaction. The fact that the results are broadly in line with those presented above for the countries involved in the Children’s Worlds study, and using a different measure of life satisfaction, provides more confidence in the broad conclusions of a weak link at an aggregate country level between child life satisfaction and both adult life satisfaction and national wealth.

This set of findings – showing that national wealth is much more strongly associated with adult life satisfaction than child life satisfaction; and that child and adult life satisfaction at a country level are not very closely related – has important practical implications. It suggests that the factors that are associated with child and adult subjective well-being can not be assumed to be the same. This makes it even more important that research on children’s subjective well-being is considered alongside research on adult subjective well-being by policy makers in order to develop a balanced picture of potential priorities for improving the quality of life.

⁶Pearson correlation = 0.438, $p = 0.07$.

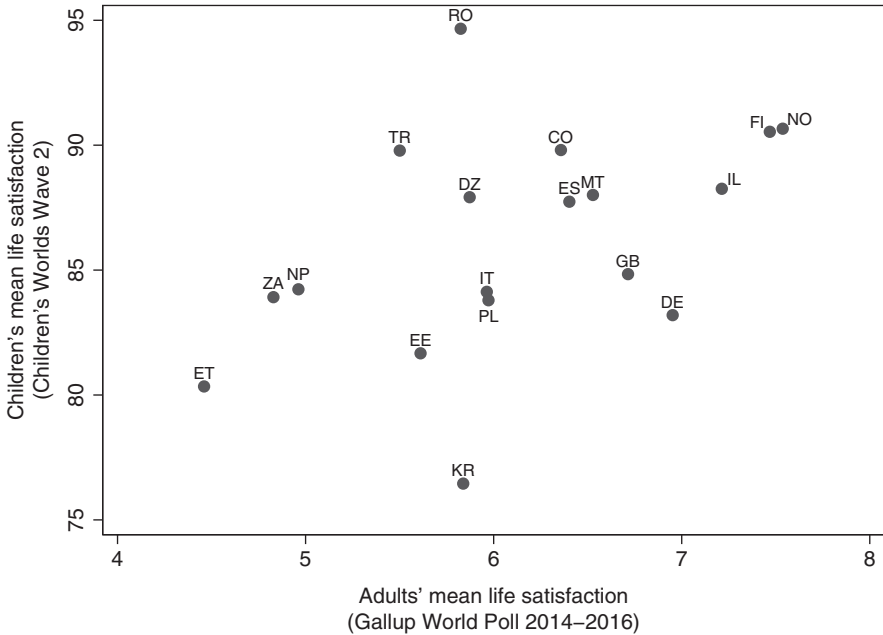


Fig. 6.4 Scatterplot of mean child life satisfaction in the Children's Worlds survey and mean adult life satisfaction for the same set of countries from the Gallup World Poll (Published in Helliwell et al. 2016)

These findings also raise the question of what factors can explain the variation in average child life satisfaction between countries. Bradshaw and Rees (2017) report on an examination of associations between mean child life satisfaction in the first 15 countries to complete the Children's Worlds survey and a wide range of over 100 macro indicators taken from World Bank Economic Indicators, the UNDP World Development Indicators, UNICEF's State of the World's Children data base, and the World Policy Forum's indicators of institutional arrangements in childhood. They find very little evidence of any significant associations between any of these indicators and children's subjective well-being.

However, Bradshaw and Rees do find evidence of an association between adults' assessments of some aspects of life as captured in the Gallup-Healthways Global Well-Being Index (GHGWBI) (Gallup/Healthways 2014). These findings have been updated for this book to include all 18 countries participating in the Children's Worlds survey. The GHGWBI measures five elements of well-being based on 10 questions asked of adults aged 15 and over. The five elements are Purpose, Social, Financial, Community and Physical. The index also includes an overall statistic which is the percentage of adults who are thriving in three or more of these elements. Correlations between these six measures and the three measures of children's

Table 6.4 Correlations of three indicators of overall child well-being in the Children’s Worlds survey with six indicators of adult well-being in the Gallup-Healthways Global Well-Being Index

	Life satisfaction	Positive affect	Psychological
% Thriving	0.641**	0.413	0.511*
Purpose	-0.455	-0.161	-0.252
Social	-0.708**	-0.604**	-0.650*
Financial	-0.214	-0.090	0.014
Community	-0.500*	-0.284	-0.505*
Physical	-0.403	-0.507*	-0.351

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old for life satisfaction and positive affect; 12 years old for psychological well-being. * denotes a p-value<0.05; ** denotes a p-value<0.99.

overall well-being covered in the Children’s Worlds survey are shown in Table 6.4. The strongest association was for the Social indicator in the GHGWBI that covers ‘having supportive relationships and love in your life’ (ibid., p. 8) and which is significantly correlated with all three child well-being indicators. The Community, Physical and Thriving indicators are also significantly associated with one or more of the child well-being indicators. The Financial indicator in the GHGWBI, which covers ‘managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security’ is the most weakly correlated with all three child well-being indicators. The association between the GHGWBI Social indicator ranking and the measure of child life satisfaction in the Children’s Worlds survey is shown in Fig. 6.5. Countries where adults were more positive about their social lives also tended to be ones where children had higher levels of life satisfaction. The Social indicator explained 47% of the between-country variation in children’s life satisfaction.

The above finding provides an important insight into the type of factors that may explain why children in some countries tend to be more satisfied with their lives than children in others. Given that currently available objective indicators do not appear to be helpful, an important direction for future research is to test other hypotheses. For example, it is possible that an indicator of child friendliness might have some explanatory power.

The extent to which country-level inequalities in children’s overall self-reported well-being was associated with an indicator of income inequality for the country (Gini coefficient) was also tested. Unfortunately this latter indicator was not available for three countries in the survey sample, which places a further limitation on the findings. However there were only weak correlations between inequalities in each of the three overall well-being measures in the Children’s Worlds survey and income inequality. This finding contrasts with that of Bradshaw et al. (2013) who report a significant country-level association between income inequality and children’s subjective well-being in 29 countries in Europe and North America.

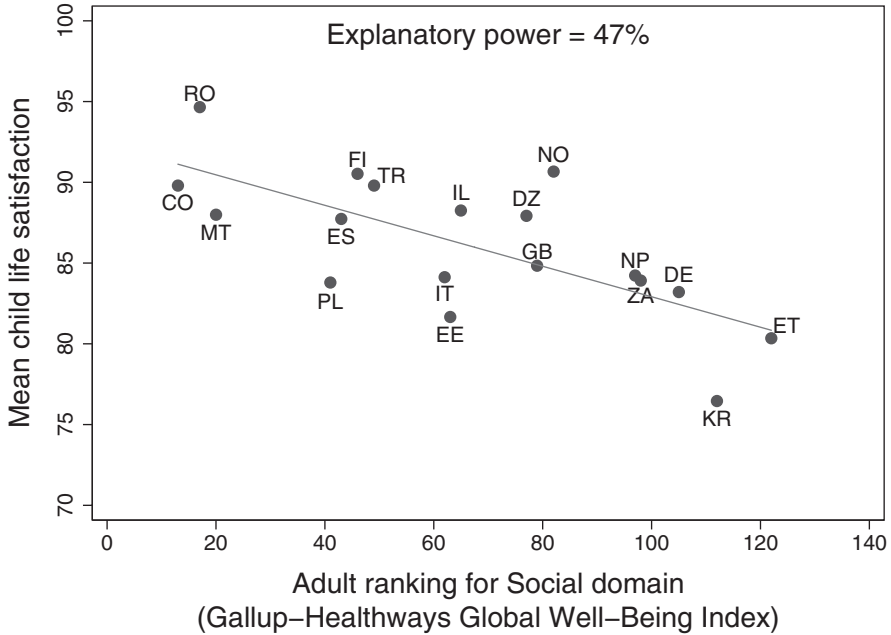


Fig. 6.5 Scatterplot of mean child life satisfaction in the Children’s Worlds survey and the country ranking for adult’s social well-being in the Gallup-Healthways Global Well-Being Index) for which a smaller ranking number indicates a more positive score

6.4 Variations Within Countries

As well as considering variations in children’s well-being between countries it is also important to consider variations and inequalities between children within countries. This section discusses the extent to which children’s overall self-reported well-being varies according to age and gender, and the extent to which these variations are similar across the countries in the survey. Chapter 14 will present some additional analysis of the amount of variation in children’s overall well-being within countries that can be explained by factors such as material deprivation and negative peer experiences.

In line with the previous research discussed earlier, there was a general picture of decreasing subjective well-being with increasing age. Table 6.5 shows the mean scores for life satisfaction and positive affect in each country for children in the 10-years-old and 12-years-old surveys. It was not possible to include the 8-years-old survey in these comparisons due to the different response scales used; and the measure of psychological well-being discussed earlier was only included in the 12-years-old survey. The table also shows which age differences were statistically significant. There was no evidence of significant age differences in Israel, Romania and Malta for either variable; in Norway for life satisfaction; and in Algeria for positive affect. There was a particularly large decrease in life satisfaction of more than

Table 6.5 Age variations in subjective well-being by country

Country	Life satisfaction			Positive affect		
	10 years old	Sig.	12 years old	10 years old	Sig.	12 years old
Nepal	86.2	**	82.3	85.4	**	82.2
Ethiopia	82.2	**	78.4	83.2	*	80.8
Algeria		n/a	87.9	90.4	ns	88.5
S Africa	86.8	**	81.1	86.3	**	79.3
Colombia	92.1	**	87.4	92.9	**	87.9
Romania	95.2	ns	94.0	92.4	ns	91.9
Turkey	93.9	**	85.4	94.8	**	87.5
Israel	88.3	ns	88.2	88.5	ns	87.2
Malta	88.0	ns	88.0	83.8	ns	83.7
Spain	91.6	**	83.9	87.8	**	80.2
Italy	88.2	**	80.2	85.0	**	77.5
Poland	87.9	**	79.8	87.2	**	78.6
Estonia	84.8	**	78.7	82.2	**	75.7
Germany	87.0	**	79.3	82.8	**	74.6
UK	87.7	**	81.9	85.0	**	79.6
S Korea	83.2	**	69.9	83.0	**	71.4
Finland	91.8	**	89.2	89.1	**	84.9
Norway	91.6	ns	89.8	85.7	**	82.8

*denotes a statistically significant difference with 95% confidence ($p < .05$)

**denotes a statistically significant difference with 99% confidence ($p < .01$)

ns denotes that there is not a statistically significant difference

n/a for Algeria indicates that this set of question was not asked in the 10-years-old survey so age comparisons are not possible

13 points on the 100-point scale in South Korea and decreases of more than five points in a number of other countries – Turkey, Germany, Poland, Spain, Estonia, the UK, South Africa and Italy. Children’s levels of positive affect also decreased between the ages of 10 and 12 years old most substantially in South Korea (more than 11 points) and by more than five points in Estonia, Spain, Colombia, Turkey, Germany, the UK, Poland, South Africa and Italy.

These cross-national comparisons therefore show that across the 10- to 12-year-old age range there is a variation in age-related patterns of life satisfaction from no decrease in some countries to a sharp decrease in others. The reason for these variations require further investigation. There may be a range of factors at play in different countries to explain these patterns, such as transitions in schooling and variations in expectations of children at different ages.

Gender comparisons of children’s scores on the three overall well-being measures were conducted using the 12-years-old survey to ensure comparability across measures, as this was the only age group where all three measures were used. There was little evidence of strong gender differences in life satisfaction. There was only a significant difference in South Korea where boys were more satisfied with their lives than girls. These patterns do not match those reported in other comparative international research with older age groups of children. It is notable that in the

HBSC study (Inchley et al. 2016) there was much more evidence of gender differences in life satisfaction amongst children aged 13 and 15 years old than amongst children aged 11 years old. In view of that, there is some consistency here with the findings presented above. The Children's Worlds study therefore makes a potentially useful contribution to our understanding of the timing of the development of gender differences in children's life satisfaction over a wider age range than covered in previous research.

However, for the other two measures there were a greater number of gender differences. Boys had significantly higher levels of positive affect in five countries – Spain, Turkey, Germany, the UK and South Korea. In Germany, the UK, South Korea and Malta boys had higher levels of psychological well-being than girls. There were also two countries – Nepal and Ethiopia – where girls had significantly higher levels of psychological well-being than boys. These findings highlight the importance of using more than one measure of overall well-being. They also illustrate the risks of generalising findings from one country to another, particularly across different cultural contexts. It would be relevant to explore in more detail which aspects of psychological well-being were attributable for the gender differences in each country.

6.5 Discussion

This chapter has provided an overview of the measures in the Children's Worlds study relating to children's evaluations of, and feelings about, their lives as a whole. It has explored the extent of variation in overall self-reported well-being between countries and also within countries on the basis of age, gender and material deprivation.

The findings on between-country variations show substantial differences in mean levels of well-being, the experience of low well-being and inequalities in well-being. This finding is consistent with other international comparative research on children (e.g. Inchley et al. 2016) and adults (e.g. Helliwell et al. 2015). The existence of such differences poses the question of how to explain them. The analysis presented here shows that while differences in mean adult subjective well-being between countries can at least partly be explained by differences in national wealth, this does not apply to the same extent for children. For example, the country in the study with the highest mean child life satisfaction – Romania – was substantially poorer than the country with the lowest mean child life satisfaction – South Korea. This lack of explanatory power of national wealth – which is fairly strongly associated with adult self-reported well-being – raises important questions about the factors that might explain variations between countries in children's self-reported well-being. Some of those questions are beyond the scope of the data available in the current study. However it is possible to explore the associations between various aspects of children's experiences and their overall sense of well-being, and this will be a theme which is returned to in Chap. 14.

Regarding within-country variations, consistent with previous research (Inchley et al. 2016; Casas et al. 2012, 2013) there was evidence of decreasing self-reported well-being with age in many but not all countries. Evidence of gender differences was more inconclusive and depended on which measure of well-being was being considered. Bearing in mind the age group surveyed, this is, however, not inconsistent with Inchley et al.'s analysis of child life satisfaction in Europe and North America which shows growing gender differences from the age of 11–15 years old.

These findings provide fresh insights given that the Children's Worlds study covers a much more diverse set of countries than has been included in previous similar comparative research. The ability to compare the factors associated with children's sense of well-being across such a wide range of geographical, economic and cultural contexts offers a new perspective which can potentially be used to improve the quality of children's lives. For example, since the gender differences in how children feel about their lives in some countries are not replicated in others, it is no longer possible to imagine that such differences are inevitable. This can provide a fresh impetus, within the countries where there are gender differences, to try to understand and tackle the sources of these inequalities.

The analysis presented in this chapter also has important implications for future research. The survey used three different measures of overall well-being including, probably for the first time in comparative research with children, psychological well-being. The differences in gender patterns for these three measures highlight the value of considering, in research on children, the different components of self-reported well-being discussed in the introduction to the chapter. There is nevertheless more work to be done to validate and further develop these types of measures for cross-cultural research. These issues, and possible directions for future research will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter of the book.

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Chapter 7

Family

This chapter looks at children's feelings about their relationships with their family and the people that they live with. It explores overall satisfaction and also children's evaluations of the quality of family time, the way that they are treated by their parents, and the extent to which they feel safe at home. As with the other thematic chapters in this book, this chapter compares children's evaluations of this aspect of their life between countries using three different approaches – mean satisfaction scores, relative scores and inequalities. It reports on evidence of differences within countries in children's views of family according to their age and gender. The chapter also briefly reviews findings from two other pieces of analysis of the Children's Worlds data that explore variations in children's subjective well-being according to the household structure in terms of the parents or carers that they live with.

7.1 Introduction

Family, in one sense or another, is at the core of most children's experiences of childhood. Ecological models of child development place great emphasis on the importance of 'proximal processes' within the family environment for child well-being and development (e.g. Bronfenbrenner 1986). As shown in Chap. 4, children's family contexts, in terms of the people they live with, vary substantially among the 18 countries participating in this wave of the survey. The idea of 'family' can also have different connotations in different cultural contexts and often extends well beyond the parents, siblings and other relatives with whom the child shares a home (see for example Madhavan and Gross 2013 in relation to kin and childrearing in South Africa). Despite this diversity, Lee and Yoo (2015), in an analysis of data from the pilot wave of the Children's Worlds survey, find evidence of a significant and substantive effect of family factors on children's life satisfaction across the range of countries involved in that survey, although there were some differences in

the relative importance of different aspects of family life (e.g. home safety and family activities).

There is considerable potential in the Children's Worlds survey to explore variations in children's subjective well-being and how these relate to different characteristics of households in different countries. This kind of analysis is potentially valuable because a recent review (Bernardi et al. 2013) concluded that there is variation in the extent to which aspects of family constitution influence child well-being both within and between countries. Two analyses of this type using the second wave of the Children's Worlds data have already been published taking this kind of approach. The findings from these pieces of work will be summarised later in the chapter, after an initial overview of the questions asked about family relationships and a summary of children's responses.

7.2 Children's Views About Family Life

As explained in Chap. 3, a set of 12 core indicators were selected for use in the thematic chapters in this book. A synthesis using this set of indicators is presented in Chap. 13. The core indicator selected for children's evaluations of family was the mean of two satisfaction questions about 'family life' and 'the people you live with'. These two indicators were combined because it was found in the exploratory analysis discussed in Chap. 3 that there was some variation between countries in the extent to which each of them linked to an underlying 'family' factor. Summary statistics for this indicator for each country are shown in Table 7.1. Turkey had the highest mean score for this aspect of life although it was third behind Romania and Norway in terms of equality of satisfaction. Nepal, Ethiopia and South Africa scored the lowest for this aspect of life on each summary indicator. In relative terms (see Chap. 3 for details about relative scores), the countries that scored highly for satisfaction with family, compared to the pattern of responses across all aspects of life, were South Korea, Estonia and Algeria. On the other hand, children in Nepal scored relatively low. There was little difference between the ranking of countries according to means and inequalities for this aspect of life – countries that had higher mean satisfaction scores also tended to have lower inequality of satisfaction.

There were four more in-depth questions about family relationships, using a five-point agreement scale which asked about enjoyment, fairness, respect and safety. The aim of these questions was to create a more detailed picture of children's experience of family life. The question about feeling safe at home might appear to be more related to the home environment than family relationships. However, children's responses indicate that in 13 out of the 18 countries it was more strongly associated with their satisfaction with family relationships than their satisfaction with the home where they lived. So although there is clearly some overlap here it seems that children's assessments of safety at home are made with consideration to their family relationships more than their home environment. For this reason this

Table 7.1 Summary statistics for satisfaction with family

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.45	17	-5	0.232	18
Ethiopia	8.44	18	-2	0.225	17
Algeria	9.32	5	3	0.160	8
S Africa	8.82	16	0	0.210	16
Colombia	9.29	6	-2	0.159	7
Romania	9.56	2	-1	0.119	1
Turkey	9.58	1	1	0.129	3
Israel	9.35	4	0	0.152	5
Malta	9.22	8	-1	0.162	10
Spain	9.15	11	0	0.167	11
Italy	9.16	10	1	0.161	9
Poland	9.09	12	0	0.178	14
Estonia	9.17	9	3	0.158	6
Germany	9.08	13	1	0.168	12
UK	9.04	14	1	0.182	15
S Korea	8.94	15	4	0.174	13
Finland	9.26	7	-1	0.139	4
Norway	9.37	3	-1	0.127	2

Age group: 10 and 12 years old

question is considered here rather than in Chap. 8 which discusses children's home and material circumstances.

The patterns in the data (Table 7.2) suggest that this is a complex and multi-faceted topic. For example, Romania ranked second for the question about being treated fairly by parents; but 11th for the question about whether children felt their parents listened to them and took them seriously; and 13th for the question about having a good time with family. Poland ranked 12th for overall mean satisfaction with family as discussed above but ranked much higher (in the top six) for all four of the agreement questions, so it is unclear what is behind the low satisfaction rating in Poland. Turkey, which ranked first for satisfaction with this aspect of life, nevertheless ranked 13th and 14th for feeling that parents listened and acted fairly respectively.

These patterns raise important questions about which dimensions of children's experience of family are important for their overall satisfaction with this aspect of life. Some answers to this are provided by testing¹ the extent to which the four agreement questions predicted overall satisfaction with family in each country. The results of this approach indicate that the four questions about enjoyment, fairness, respect and safety explain over 50% of the variation in satisfaction with family in Germany and over 40% in Estonia, Norway, South Korea, and the UK. This is a

¹ Using linear regression models with each of the four agreement questions entered as factor variables along with age and gender as control variables.

Table 7.2 Summary statistics for children's views of family relationships

Country	Good time		Parents fair		Parents listen		Home safe	
	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank
Nepal	42	18	48	18	41	17	52	17
Ethiopia	46	16	58	13	40	18	49	18
Algeria	66	10	71	5	64	5	71	12
S Africa	65	11	55	16	49	14	66	14
Colombia	67	9	79	1	69	1	79	5
Romania	64	13	74	2	55	11	73	11
Turkey	73	4	58	14	50	13	76	8
Israel	71	6	70	6	66	3	80	2
Malta	72	5	65	11	58	7	70	13
Spain	69	8	70	7	57	8	77	7
Italy	45	17	62	12	41	16	56	15
Poland	79	2	74	3	62	6	89	1
Estonia	78	3	66	10	52	12	79	4
Germany	56	14	57	15	55	10	74	10
UK	64	12	68	9	56	9	75	9
S Korea	52	15	50	17	46	15	56	16
Finland	70	7	68	8	68	2	77	6
Norway	81	1	71	4	65	4	80	3

Age group: 8, 10 and 12 years old. The 'Value' column for each question shows the percentage of children who totally agreed with each statement. The wordings of the statements were: 'We have a good time together in my family', 'My parents (or the people who look after me) treat me fairly', 'My parent (or the people who look after me) listen to me and take what I say into account' and 'I feel safe at home'

reasonably strong level of explanatory power and suggest that in these countries these dimensions of children's experience are important factors associated with their level of satisfaction with family life. On the other hand, the same questions only explained 6% of the variation in family satisfaction in Nepal and 14% in South Africa. These latter findings indicate that children's evaluations of satisfaction with family are not strongly related to their feelings about enjoyment with family, fairness and respect from parents and safety at home in these two countries. If one assumes that children's sense of satisfaction with family is informed by various different aspects of their day-to-day experiences of family life then it seems that it is necessary to develop a greater understanding of the experiences and qualities of family life which children feel are important in different contexts. This is an important area for future international comparative research on children's satisfaction with family life.

Children's responses about feelings of safety at home warrant some further comment. In all countries some children chose 'not at all agree' in response to the statement 'I feel safe at home'. The percentage of children responding in this way ranged from just under 1% in Spain to over 12% in Ethiopia. While these are small propor-

tions they will still add up to substantial numbers of children in each country who feel this way about their home. This might be regarded as an important core quality of life indicator for children.

7.3 Variations by Age and Gender

Family was one of the aspects of life covered in the survey where there were few marked gender differences in children's responses. Girls were more satisfied with their family life and relationships than boys in Algeria, Israel and Romania. However the differences were quite small here – the largest being a gap of 0.25 points out of ten in Algeria. There were also only a few instances (six out of 72 comparisons) of significant gender differences in response to the four agreement questions, distributed across six different countries. Overall, children's evaluations about family life did not differ that much between girls and boys in any of the countries in the survey.

There were, however, some notable age patterns. Children's satisfaction with family decreased significantly between the ages of 10 and 12 years old in four countries – South Korea, Germany, Poland and Italy – and increased significantly in Nepal. It is also possible to look at variations over a wider age range using the four agreement questions about this topic which were asked of all three age groups. Table 7.1 summarises statistical tests of age variations in responses to each of the four agreement questions for each country. Cells in the table with a letter indicate a statistically significant age difference. A 'U' indicates that there was an increasing level of agreement and a 'D' indicates a significantly decreasing level of agreement with age (Table 7.3).

The findings here shows increases in children's evaluations of one or more of these aspects of family life in 12 countries; including Algeria (all four aspects) and Israel, Malta and Finland (three aspects). There were decreasing evaluations with age for two aspects in South Africa and Poland; and also for several other countries for the question about having a good time together with family. Overall there were more age-related increases in agreement than decreases and some very different patterns between countries which would require more detailed investigation and contextualisation.

Table 7.3 Age variations in children's agreement with statements about family life

Country	Good time	Parents listen	Parents fair	Home safe
Nepal			U	U
Ethiopia	U			
Algeria	U	U	U	U
S Africa	D	D		
Colombia				
Romania	D			
Turkey			U	U
Israel		U	U	U
Malta		U	U	U
Spain	D		U	
Italy			U	
Poland	D		D	
Estonia		U		
Germany	D			
UK		U		U
S Korea	D			
Finland		U	U	U
Norway			U	U

Age group: 8, 10 and 12 years old. 'U' and 'D' indicate increasing and decreasing levels of agreement with age respectively

7.4 Family Structure, Family Relationships and Well-Being

Given the important role of the family in most children's lives, exploring the associations between family structure, family relationships and child subjective well-being is an important area for comparative research. A study by Bjarnason et al. (2012) used data from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study and looked at differences in life satisfaction according to family structure for children aged 11–15 years old in 36 Western industrialised countries. Key findings of this analysis were that mean life satisfaction was higher in intact two-parent families than other family structures and lowest among children living with a lone father or in a father-stepmother household. The study also identified a group of children living between two households who were in the mid-range for life satisfaction. The study concludes that the explanatory power of family structure in terms of predicting individual differences in life satisfaction was quite modest. Bjarnarson et al. also found that the gaps in life satisfaction between different family forms were somewhat less strong when income inequality in a country was greater.

Two analyses (Dinisman et al. 2017; Rees 2017) have been published along similar lines using data from the second wave of the Children's Worlds study. There are additional challenges in this kind of work with the sample of countries included in the study. As discussed in the introduction, identifying detailed family forms of the kind utilised by Bjarnason et al. in primarily European countries may not make sense across more diverse contexts. The two analyses take slightly different

approaches to this issue and also to the countries included in the analysis and the subjective well-being measures utilised.

Dinisman et al. (2017) look at the ten countries out of the first 15 to participate in the study who included the items on living in two homes as discussed in Chap. 4. These were Algeria, Colombia, Estonia, Ethiopia, Germany, Israel, Norway, Spain, Turkey and the UK. They categorise children's family situation into three groups – two parents, single parent and separated families. The latter category referred to children who said that they regularly lived in two different homes. A small minority of children whose circumstances did not fit these categories were excluded from the analysis. The results indicate that children living with both parents tended to have more positive views about their family relationships and their overall life than children in the other family forms, although some of the differences were less pronounced in Israel and Algeria than in the other countries. Dinisman et al. note that these differences may be due to other factors such as differing socio-economic status or different levels of family stability across the different family forms.

Rees (2017) looks specifically at the relationship between family structure and satisfaction with family life among the children aged 12 years old in the first eight European countries to complete this wave of the study – Germany, the UK, Norway, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Malta and Spain. In this analysis children are categorised into four family types – two parent, stepfamily, lone parent and split families (children living in two homes). Again a small minority of children whose living circumstances did not fit these categories were excluded from the analysis. The main focus of the analysis was to explore the extent to which family structure explained variations in children's satisfaction with family life, and whether variations could be explained by differences in the frequency with which children spend time with family, or in material deprivation between family types. The results indicate significant differences in family satisfaction according to family type, with children in two-parent families being the most satisfied. These differences were only partly reduced in some countries when family time and material deprivation were taken into account. There was also a diversity of patterns across different countries. For example, in Norway, children in step- and split-families but not lone-parent families had significantly lower satisfaction with family life than children in two-parent families after controlling for material deprivation and family time. In the UK only, children in lone-parent families had significantly lower family satisfaction than children living in two-parent families.

The overall conclusion from these two separate analyses of Children's Worlds data, as well as that of Bjarnason et al., is that while there is persistent evidence of some differences in children's subjective well-being in different family structures across countries, the exact nature and size of these differences varies from one location to another. Future research could usefully cast further light on these differences and develop a deeper understanding of them within the broader cultural and policy context of each country.

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Chapter 8

Children's Home and Material Circumstances

This chapter discusses children's satisfaction with the home that they live in, how this varies between countries and according to age and gender. It also looks at their material circumstances through two questions – one about satisfaction with possessions and one relating to the extent to which children worried about family money. Children's answers to these two questions often diverge and provide different perspectives on the way that they view their material and economic circumstances. There are also some notable age-related differences with younger children reporting greater worries about family money than older children. The chapter also presents some analysis looking at the links between children's material deprivation (as discussed in Chap. 4) and their answers to each of these three questions about their home and material circumstances.

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presented findings on measures of children's material deprivation. This chapter focuses more on children's evaluations about their material circumstances. There is a small but rich body of qualitative research on children's views and experiences of their material situation, and particularly of living in poverty. Redmond (2008) reviews nine qualitative studies on this topic in rich countries. He identifies three key themes from these studies – the detrimental impact of the social exclusion that children experience as a consequence of poverty; the fact that children actively find coping strategies to deal with poverty; and the centrality of family in children's lives. Since that time a number of other qualitative studies with children have been conducted in a range of countries including the Young Lives study in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam (Crivello et al. 2009); several studies in the UK (reviewed in Ridge 2011) and other recent studies in European countries (Harju and Thorød 2011; Farthing 2016; Hakovirta and Kallio 2016) which have echoed the themes of social exclusion and agency identified by Redmond. However, there is a relative

shortage of quantitative data, particularly with a comparative international perspective, on children's views and evaluations of their material circumstances. The Children's Worlds survey gathered some data of this type and therefore provides an important new source of international comparative evidence from children's perspectives on this topic.

8.2 Home

Summary statistics for children's overall satisfaction with their home are shown in Table 8.1. Unlike satisfaction with family relationships covered in the previous chapter this is an aspect of life where there were some notable differences according to whether one considers average satisfaction or inequalities in satisfaction. Turkey, Romania and Norway had the highest mean satisfaction scores while Ethiopia, Nepal and South Africa had the lowest. In terms of inequalities, Finland was the most equal country in children's satisfaction with their homes and Turkey (highest for mean satisfaction) was fourth. In some countries there were substantial differences in rankings for means and inequalities. South Korea ranked 15th for mean satisfaction but 9th for equality. Italy was 10th for mean satisfaction and 5th for equality. Colombia and Israel ranked much lower for equality (14th and 10th) than

Table 8.1 Summary statistics for satisfaction with home

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.53	17	-2	0.293	18
Ethiopia	8.45	18	0	0.264	16
Algeria	8.88	14	0	0.255	15
S Africa	8.61	16	0	0.291	17
Colombia	9.10	7	-2	0.225	14
Romania	9.37	2	-1	0.169	2
Turkey	9.41	1	+1	0.173	4
Israel	9.10	6	-1	0.208	10
Malta	8.94	9	-2	0.213	12
Spain	8.90	11	-1	0.199	8
Italy	8.92	10	0	0.182	5
Poland	9.15	4	+2	0.192	7
Estonia	8.88	13	+1	0.211	11
Germany	8.99	8	+2	0.185	6
UK	8.89	12	+1	0.215	13
S Korea	8.73	15	+4	0.201	9
Finland	9.12	5	0	0.153	1
Norway	9.15	3	-1	0.171	3

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

for mean satisfaction (7th and 6th). There were few strong deviations from zero for relative scores for this aspect of life with the exception that children in South Korea scored relatively positively.

The survey also asked two factual questions about the home environment – whether the child had their own room (discussed in Chap. 4) and whether they had a quiet place to study. Both these factors were significantly associated with children’s satisfaction with their home in almost all countries (study space was not associated with satisfaction with home in Nepal and Colombia). In some countries children who did not have a quiet place to study had, on average, satisfaction scores at least one point lower on a 10-point scale than children who did. Also in many countries children who did not have their own bedroom had satisfaction scores more than 0.5 points out of 10 lower than those who did. Thus, measurable features of accommodation were associated with children’s satisfaction with their home environment. An area for further research is to understand the factors that children feel are important for their satisfaction with the home where they live, and similarities and differences in these factors across countries.

More generally, satisfaction with home was one of the aspects of life most strongly associated with the deprivation measure discussed in Chap. 4 (which included the question about having one’s own room). Children who had high levels of material deprivation were significantly less satisfied with their home in all 18 countries. The largest associations were in Ethiopia, Poland, Estonia, the UK and Finland. As shown in Fig. 8.1, in these five countries children with high deprivation had mean satisfaction with their home more than one point lower on a 10-point scale than children with low deprivation. There is therefore a clear link between children’s experiences of material deprivation and their satisfaction with the home where they live.

8.3 Possessions

A second question on children’s views of their material circumstances related to their satisfaction with ‘the things that you have’ also on the standard 11-point satisfaction used in the surveys of children aged 10 and 12 years old. Summary statistics for this question are shown in Table 8.2. This was an aspect of life where a number of European countries – Germany, Italy, the UK and Poland – had high relative scores (see Chap. 3 for how these were calculated) while Ethiopia and Algeria ranked low in relative and absolute terms. In fact, there was a strong correlation between these mean satisfaction scores and national wealth¹ although this was partly attributable to the very much lower ratings in Ethiopia and Algeria. However, the link between a country’s level of economic prosperity and children’s mean satisfaction with the things they have was not always completely straightforward. Middle-income countries such as Romania and Colombia ranked alongside Norway

¹Pearson correlation = 0.713.

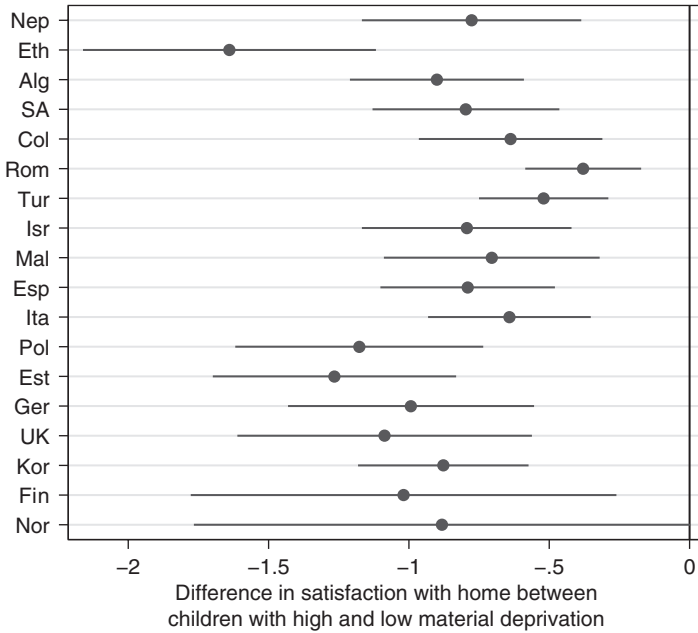


Fig. 8.1 Differences in satisfaction with the home for children with high and low levels of material deprivation, controlling for age and gender. The *dots* in the chart show the gap in satisfaction between children with high and low levels of deprivation in each country. The *line* either side of the dot shows a 99% confidence interval

in the top three mean scores for this question while high-income countries such as South Korea (16th) and the UK (12th) ranked much lower.

There were a few notable differences between rankings for average scores and those for inequalities. Germany and Finland ranked much higher for equality of children’s satisfaction with possessions than they did for mean scores, while Israel, Colombia and Turkey had greater levels of inequality than their rankings for mean scores would suggest. Inequalities in satisfaction with possessions were not particularly strongly related at the country-level to a measure of income inequality², so it does not seem that countries with high income inequality necessarily are the ones where there is high inequality in children’s evaluations of their material circumstances. It is possible that children’s subjective evaluations are more strongly determined by comparisons with other children they know than with the broader national picture, and this is a hypothesis that could be explored through analysis that takes account of the clustering of the Children’s Worlds data in schools.

Children’s satisfaction with possessions was, however, significantly associated with their material deprivation, as would be expected, in all 18 countries. This association was particularly strong in Ethiopia and Algeria – the two countries with

²Pearson correlation = 0.320 (ns) for 15 countries for which the Gini coefficient was available.

Table 8.2 Summary statistics for satisfaction with ‘the things you have’

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.77	14	0	0.238	15
Ethiopia	7.20	18	-16	0.440	18
Algeria	8.10	17	-9	0.326	17
S Africa	8.74	15	0	0.253	16
Colombia	9.45	3	1	0.147	8
Romania	9.57	1	0	0.119	3
Turkey	9.19	10	-2	0.198	13
Israel	9.40	4	2	0.151	9
Malta	9.28	7	1	0.154	10
Spain	9.28	8	2	0.144	6
Italy	9.33	6	4	0.127	4
Poland	9.27	9	3	0.145	7
Estonia	8.96	13	1	0.184	12
Germany	9.19	11	4	0.138	5
UK	9.17	12	4	0.165	11
S Korea	8.54	16	1	0.213	14
Finland	9.36	5	1	0.107	1
Norway	9.46	2	2	0.111	2

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

markedly lower than average levels of satisfaction with possessions – as shown in Fig. 8.2. In Ethiopia children experience high material deprivation had mean satisfaction scores more than three points lower on a 10-point scale than children with low material deprivation; and the gap in Algeria was around 2.4 points.

8.4 Worrying About Family Money

A different approach to asking children to evaluate their material circumstances was taken through a question about how often they worried about the amount of money their family had. Responses were on a four-point scale from ‘Never’ to ‘Always’. This question was not asked in the UK as, during piloting, children felt that it was too sensitive.

In Finland, over half (51%) of children said that they never worried about how much money their family had, and in Israel, Algeria, Turkey, Norway, Germany and South Korea over 40% never did so (Table 8.3). On the other hand, in three countries – Nepal, Colombia and Spain – less than one in five children said that they never worried. In Colombia over 30% of children said that they ‘always’ worried about family money and in Nepal and Spain almost a quarter of children did so. These findings indicate that most children aged 8–12 years old in the countries

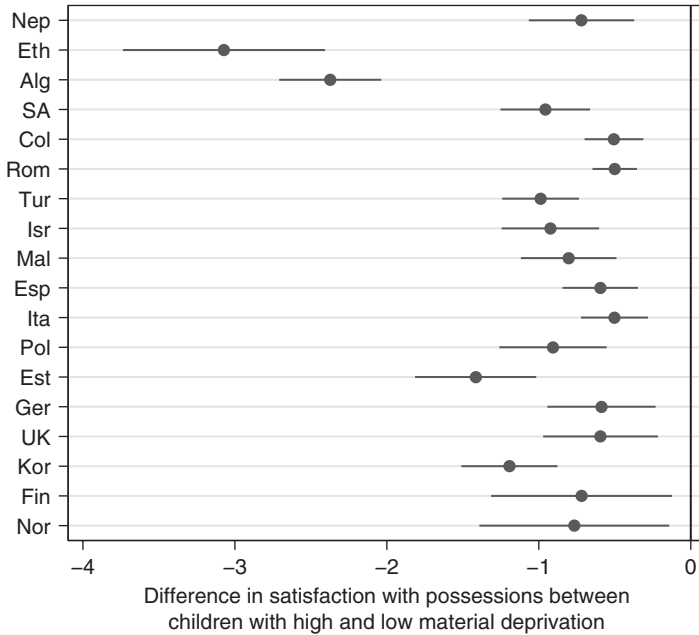


Fig. 8.2 Differences in satisfaction with possessions for children with high and low levels of material deprivation, controlling for age and gender. The *dots* in the chart show the gap in satisfaction between children with high and low levels of deprivation in each country. The *line* either side of the dot shows a 99% confidence interval

Table 8.3 Frequency of worrying about family money

Country	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)
Nepal	13	52	11	24
Ethiopia	32	36	18	15
Algeria	42	30	12	15
S Africa	32	37	10	21
Colombia	15	36	18	31
Romania	32	35	13	20
Turkey	43	38	6	14
Israel	48	24	10	19
Malta	36	36	11	16
Spain	16	37	23	24
Italy	23	30	31	15
Poland	31	44	14	11
Estonia	26	43	17	14
Germany	41	42	12	6
S Korea	41	44	12	3
Finland	51	42	5	2
Norway	41	42	10	7

Age groups: 8, 10 and 12 years old

surveyed are aware of and have concerns about their family economic situation and that there are substantial differences in levels of concern between countries. A comparison between countries suggests that levels of worry are not clearly linked to national wealth. Children in Spain and Italy had much higher levels of worry (mean scores of 1.6 and 1.4 respectively on a scale from zero to three) than children in Ethiopia (mean score 1.2). It is likely that children's concerns about these issues are at least partly influenced by concerns expressed by their parents. The survey was undertaken at a time when many countries were experiencing a significant negative impact as a result of the global recession. These findings suggest that it is important to recognise that family economic circumstances may cause considerable levels of worry for children in this age group.

There was little evidence of gender differences in worrying about family money. However, there were some notable age differences as shown in Fig. 8.3. In nine countries, children in the 8-years-old age group were significantly the most likely to often or always worry about family money and the percentages declined with age. In contrast, only in one country were there significant age-related increases in worries about family money. The fact that younger children were often particularly likely to worry about family money is a finding that warrants further exploration.

There were only quite weak correlations between worries about family money and satisfaction with possessions at the individual child level within countries – i.e. children who worried about family money a lot did not tend to be a lot less satisfied with their possessions. In fact in many countries the frequency of worrying about family money was more strongly associated with overall life satisfaction than with satisfaction with possessions. This suggests that money worries may be important in understanding variations in children's overall subjective well-being.

In most countries children with higher levels of material deprivation were more likely to worry frequently about family money (Fig. 8.4). However this pattern was not statistically significant in Nepal, Malta and Italy where the differences in worrying were quite small; or in Colombia or Spain where there was no discernible association. The chart shows how large the gap was in some countries such as Ethiopia, Norway, South Korea and Germany where it is quite apparent that children experiencing high deprivation are considerably more likely to worry about family money than children with low deprivation. The diversity of these patterns across countries suggests that further work could be done to understand the relationship (or lack of) between deprivation and money concerns among children.

At the country level there was no significant or apparent association between mean satisfaction with possessions and mean frequency of worrying about family money. This can be seen by the fact that countries such as Romania and Colombia who had relatively high satisfaction with possessions (first and third respectively) also had relatively high levels of worry about family money (fifth and first respectively). Meanwhile, South Korea had low levels of satisfaction (16th) but also low

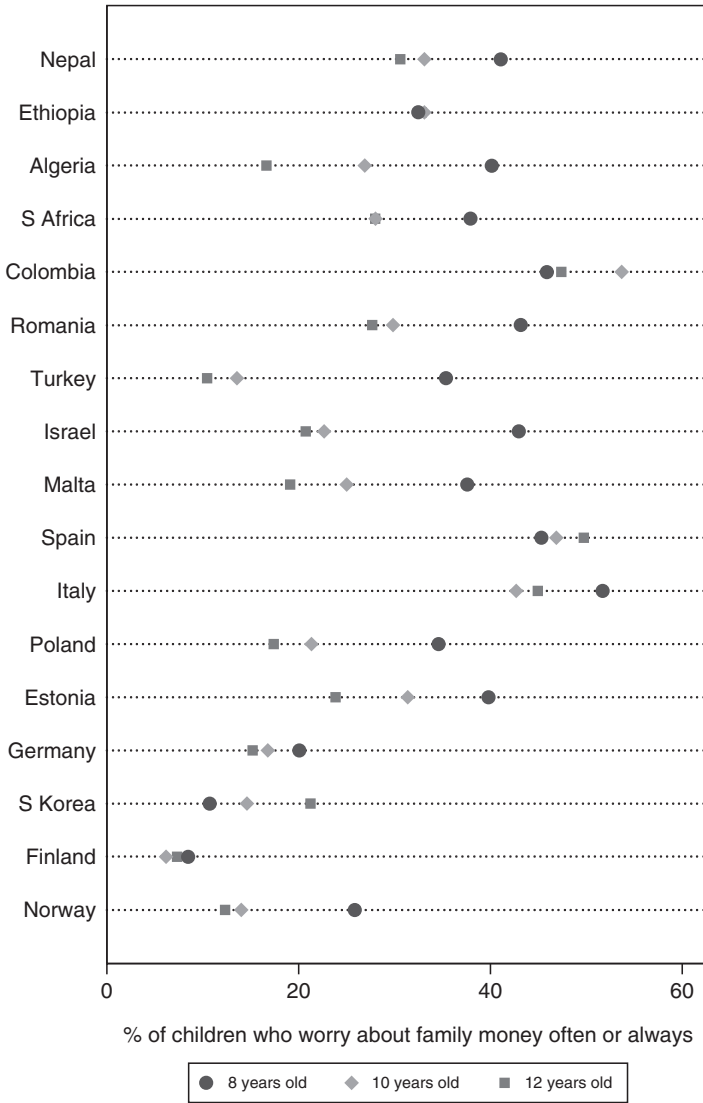


Fig. 8.3 Percentage of children worrying often or always about family money by age group and country

levels of worry (16th). Because these two evaluative questions work in different ways, both may be useful components of a multi-dimensional approach to understanding children's views and experiences of economic circumstances.

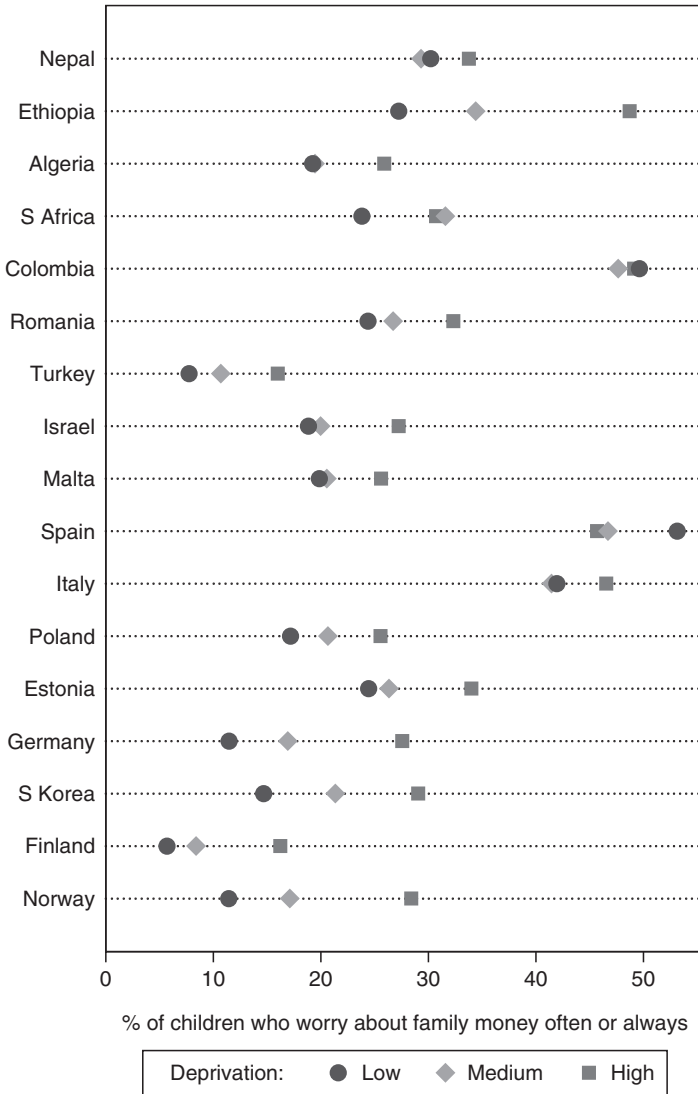


Fig. 8.4 The percentage of children frequently worrying about family money by level of material deprivation and country

8.5 Discussion

The findings presented in this chapter show substantial variation within and between countries in terms of how children feel about their home environment, their possessions and about their family’s economic situation. Some of the findings about variations within countries are as one might expect. Children who were more materially

deprived (as defined by the measure introduced in Chap. 4) tended to have substantially lower levels of satisfaction with their home environment and with their possessions. These patterns do however demonstrate that material deprivation does have an impact on children's feelings about their lives. Further evidence of this is provided by the fact that many children in the survey said that they often or always worried about the amount of money that their family had. Younger children reported feeling worried about family money issues more frequently than older children. Worrying about family money more often was also generally linked with lower life satisfaction. The different patterns for the different variables considered here suggest the important of taking a multi-dimensional approach to understanding children's views about their material circumstances in future research on this topic.

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Chapter 9

Friends and Peers

This chapter provides an overview of children's views about the quality of their relationships with friends and classmates. It also looks at two aspects of negative peer experiences that children may have at school – being hit by other children and being socially excluded. These kinds of experiences have been found in many countries to have a notably negative association with children's sense of well-being. As with the other thematic chapters the discussion here will focus on comparisons between countries and also on variations in children's evaluations of their peer relationships and frequency of negative peer experiences according to age and gender.

9.1 Introduction

When asked about the key ingredients for a good childhood, children often identify friendships as very important (Dex and Hollingworth 2012; Navarro et al. 2017). However, statistical evidence suggests that friendships do not always show as strong a contribution to children's subjective well-being as might be expected from the emphasis that children place on them. For example, in the UK, Goswami (2012) found that, for children aged 10–15 years old, the quality of their family relationships explained much more of the variation in children's life satisfaction than did the quality of their friendships. One of the possible explanations for this is that friendships contribute more to children's day-to-day happiness than their underlying sense of life satisfaction and this is discussed further in Chap. 14.

As well as the questions children were asked about their friendships this chapter also covers children's relationships with their classmates at school and negative experiences of being hit and socially excluded by peers at school. As explained in Chap. 3, although questions on these topics were included in a section of the questionnaire about school, statistical analysis has indicated that children's views on these topics are more closely related to their views about friendships than they are to the educational aspects of school. This is a point that has also been made by

Casas and González Carrasco (2017) who find that, in a number of countries included in the Children's Worlds survey, there is evidence of a distinction between children's feelings about friendships and about educational aspects of their school experience.

Other large-scale international studies have also asked children about their relationships with, and experiences of, peers at school. The Health Behaviour of School-aged Children (HBSC) study (Inchley et al. 2016) asks children whether they agree that their classmates are kind and helpful. The percentage of children agreeing or strongly agreeing at the age of 11 years old ranged from below 50% in Bulgaria to almost 90% in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This indicator has been used in several of the UNICEF Report Cards on child well-being in rich countries (UNICEF 2007; UNICEF Office of Research 2013). More recently the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study has also included some questions about children's relationships with peers at school (e.g. 'Other students seem to like me') in a multi-item measure of school belonging. A significant relationship was found between sense of belonging and academic performance with a particular drop in performance for children with a very weak sense of school belonging (OECD 2017). A weak sense of belonging was also associated with children having lower expectations of continuing education beyond secondary level; and lower mean overall life satisfaction. These findings illustrate the potentially important impacts of the quality of children's relationships with peers at school.

A further area of concern is the impact of experiences of being bullied by peers at school. Both the HBSC and PISA studies include questions on this issue. The HBSC study (Inchley et al. 2016) reports overall prevalence of being bullied at school at least two or three times a month in the past couple of months as around 12% for boys and 10% for girls in the 11- to 15-years-old age group. Again, here there were very wide variations in prevalence across countries with low rates (less than 5%) in Armenia and much higher rates (well over 20%) in Lithuania. Bullying tended to decrease with age. The PISA study (OECD 2017) finds that being bullied is associated with lower academic performance, weaker sense of school belonging and lower life satisfaction and a higher likelihood of truanting. At a school level rates of bullying were also higher in schools with a poorer quality school climate. The World Health Organization's Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) has also gathered data on bullying from children aged 13 to 17 years old in 90 low- and middle-income countries. Fleming and Jacobsen (2010) report rates of being bullied in the last 30 days ranging from under 8% in Tajikistan to over 60% in Zambia.

There is ample evidence of associations between experiences of being bullied and a range of problems in children's lives (Arseneault et al. 2010; Gini and Pozzoli 2013). There is also now some evidence from longitudinal studies in the UK and the US of long-term impacts of childhood experiences of being bullied which can stretch well into adulthood (for a review see Wolke and Lereya 2015; McDougall and Vaillancourt 2015). However, it is not yet clear to what extent these results are generalisable. For example, Klocke et al. (2014) report varying strengths of association between being bullied and life satisfaction among children in 28 OECD coun-

tries. Bradshaw et al. (2017) report that, in a sample of European and North American countries, rates of bullying at a national level are significantly associated with lower mean subjective well-being scores. This chapter, together with analysis presented in Chaps. 10 and 14, provides some further insights on these issues.

9.2 Friendships

Table 9.1 presents summary statistics for satisfaction with friendships in the surveys of children aged 10 and 12 years old. This is an aspect of life where children in Norway, Finland, Germany, Malta and Spain score highly, whether one considers mean scores or inequalities in well-being. At the other end of the spectrum, the three African countries tend to score lowest for this aspect of life whichever of these measures are used. There is some difference between country rankings based on means and inequalities. South Korea, Estonia and Poland rank several places higher for equality of satisfaction with friends than they do for mean satisfaction. The opposite is true of Turkey and Colombia who have relatively high levels of inequality in this domain, although their mean scores are close to the average. Turning to relative scores, this is an aspect of life which children feel relatively positive about in Germany, South Korea and the UK; and relatively negative about in Colombia, Romania and Poland. The rankings here for Colombia and Romania are particularly notable as these countries tend to rank very highly for most aspects of life.

Table 9.1 Summary statistics for satisfaction with friends

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.56	13	1	0.258	15
Ethiopia	8.23	18	-1	0.278	17
Algeria	8.51	16	-2	0.265	16
S Africa	8.36	17	-1	0.303	18
Colombia	8.72	11	-4	0.258	14
Romania	8.96	7	-4	0.203	7
Turkey	8.96	6	-2	0.230	13
Israel	8.83	9	-2	0.223	11
Malta	8.99	5	+1	0.183	4
Spain	8.99	4	+2	0.189	5
Italy	8.83	10	+1	0.194	6
Poland	8.52	15	-3	0.229	12
Estonia	8.71	12	+1	0.211	8
Germany	9.08	3	+5	0.164	3
UK	8.84	8	+3	0.211	9
S Korea	8.55	14	+4	0.215	10
Finland	9.17	2	+2	0.148	1
Norway	9.22	1	+2	0.153	2

Age group: 10 and 12 years old

Table 9.2 Summary statistics for children's views of friendships

Country	Friends nice		Enough friends	
	%	Rank	%	Rank
Nepal	38 (3)	17	41 (4)	18
Ethiopia	50 (3)	12	53 (4)	16
Algeria	56 (4)	6	59 (5)	14
S Africa	52 (7)	11	66 (7)	9
Colombia	46 (4)	15	62 (4)	13
Romania	53 (3)	9	63 (4)	12
Turkey	58 (6)	4	70 (6)	6
Israel	59 (3)	3	73 (4)	4
Malta	54 (3)	7	65 (6)	10
Spain	59 (2)	2	70 (3)	5
Italy	32 (3)	18	58 (3)	15
Poland	54 (2)	8	76 (2)	2
Estonia	50 (2)	14	75 (3)	3
Germany	57 (3)	5	69 (5)	8
UK	52 (2)	10	64 (5)	11
S Korea	39 (1)	16	49 (2)	17
Finland	50 (1)	13	70 (2)	7
Norway	62 (1)	1	76 (2)	1

Age group: 8, 10 and 12 years old. The '%' column for each question shows the percentage of children who totally agreed with each statement and, in brackets, the percentage of children who did not agree at all. The wordings of the statements were: 'My friends are usually nice to me' and 'I have enough friends'

In addition to this overall evaluative question, the survey also asked children to indicate their level of agreement with two statements about the quantity and quality of their friendships – 'My friends are usually nice to me' and 'I have enough friends'. The percentage of children totally agreeing and (in brackets) not at all agreeing with each of these statements is shown in Table 9.2. In most countries a majority of children 'totally agreed' that their friends were nice to them. Only four countries – Italy, Colombia, Nepal and South Korea had lower than 50% total agreement. There were also small minorities of children who did not agree at all (highest at between 6% and 7% in South Africa and Turkey). Responses to the question about the quantity of friendships were similar with more than half of children totally agreeing with this statement in 16 out of the 18 countries. The exceptions were Nepal (41%) and South Korea (49%). Fewer than 8% of children in all countries did not agree at all that they had enough friends, with the highest levels of non-agreement being in South Africa, Turkey and Malta.

In summary, most children felt positive about the quantity and quality of their friendships. It is interesting to consider to what extent these two specific aspects can explain children's overall level of satisfaction with their friendships. Analysis indicates that this explanatory power varied considerably between countries. In three countries – the UK, South Korea and Poland – children's responses to these two

statements explain more than half the variation in their satisfaction with friendships; and in most other countries they explained more than a third. However, they explained only 13% of the variation in satisfaction with friendships in Nepal and only around a quarter in South Africa and Colombia. This difference suggests that an area for further research is to explore the ingredients that contribute to children’s satisfaction with their friendships and how these might vary in different contexts.

This was not an aspect of life for which there were particularly substantial variations by gender or age group. In general, girls and boys did not tend to differ in terms of their satisfaction with friendships. Only in two countries – Nepal and Ethiopia – did girls feel more satisfied (by around 0.4 points out of 10) with this aspect of life than boys. There was evidence of significant age-related declines in satisfaction in some countries. However, these age decreases were less pronounced for friendships than for many other aspects of life.

9.3 Classmates

Satisfaction with classmates was an aspect of life for which children in Ethiopia, Nepal and South Korea scored relatively highly (Table 9.3). Turkey, Colombia, Estonia, Germany and Israel on the other hand had low relative scores. While in almost all countries, mean satisfaction scores with classmates were lower

Table 9.3 Summary statistics for satisfaction with classmates

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.31	6	+5	0.293	13
Ethiopia	8.23	7	+6	0.267	9
Algeria	8.12	10	0	0.326	17
S Africa	7.71	18	-2	0.363	18
Colombia	8.13	9	-4	0.310	16
Romania	8.59	2	-1	0.229	5
Turkey	8.21	8	-4	0.310	15
Israel	8.10	12	-3	0.308	14
Malta	8.47	3	+2	0.226	3
Spain	8.41	5	+2	0.229	4
Italy	8.11	11	-1	0.256	6
Poland	8.09	13	-1	0.267	8
Estonia	7.78	17	-3	0.292	12
Germany	7.78	16	-3	0.271	10
UK	7.97	15	-1	0.282	11
S Korea	8.06	14	+5	0.263	7
Finland	8.44	4	+1	0.200	1
Norway	8.74	1	+3	0.203	2

Age group: 10 and 12 years old

than mean satisfaction with friends (as might be expected), the gap between the two scores was much smaller in these countries than in others. In fact in Ethiopia, satisfaction with these two aspects of life was the same (8.23 out of 10) whereas, for example, in Germany the gap was particularly large (9.08 for satisfaction with friends and 7.78 for satisfaction with classmates). Nevertheless there were also similarities in mean scores with Norway being ranked highest and South Africa in the lowest two countries for these aspects.

This is also an aspect of children's lives which illustrates the value of considering both mean scores and inequalities when exploring cross-national variations in subjective well-being. South Korea has a low mean score (ranked 14th) but ranks much higher at seventh for inequalities in satisfaction with classmates. A similar pattern can be observed in several other countries – Germany, Italy, the UK, Estonia and Poland. Children in these countries are comparatively dissatisfied with their classmates but more equally so than would be expected from the mean scores. On the other hand, Nepal, Turkey and Colombia are in the top half of the rankings for mean scores but in the bottom half for equality in satisfaction (i.e. greater inequality). This is an area where future research could helpfully explore the reasons for these patterns. It may also be helpful to utilise the fact that the data is clustered within schools to investigate possible school-level effects for this aspect of children's lives.

In terms of gender differences, girls were more satisfied than boys with their classmates in Nepal and Ethiopia, while the opposite was true in many other countries including significantly so in South Korea, South Africa, Norway, Turkey, the UK and Malta. There was also a tendency in most countries for satisfaction to be lower among children aged 12 years old than those aged 10 years old.

9.4 Negative Peer Experiences at School

As reviewed in the introduction, whether and how often children experience bullying has been found to be associated with levels of subjective well-being in a range of high-income countries. Two questions were included in the Children's Worlds survey about the extent to which children were hit by other children at school and were left out by classmates. The word 'bullying' was not used in the questionnaires as it did not have a straightforward translation in some languages. The percentage of children who said that they had had each of these experiences at school in the last month are shown in Table 9.4. Both of these experiences were uncommon among children in South Korea where only 16% of children had been hit by other children at school in the last month and 6% had been left out by classmates. In addition to these very low levels of incidence in South Korea, fewer than 30% of children had been hit in Italy, Finland and Algeria; while fewer than 30% had been left out by classmates in Ethiopia, Finland, Israel and Germany. Being hit by other children at school was most common in Turkey (55%) and being excluded by other children was most common in the UK (54%). As can be seen from the rankings in the table there was not always a clear link between the relative frequency of the two types of

Table 9.4 Summary statistics for negative peer experiences at school

Country	Hit		Left out	
	%	Rank	%	Rank
Nepal	46	15	50	17
Ethiopia	34	6	26	2
Algeria	29	4	34	8
S Africa	49	17	43	14
Colombia	34	7	43	12
Romania	40	10	45	15
Turkey	55	18	31	7
Israel	44	12	26	4
Malta	44	13	48	16
Spain	41	11	37	11
Italy	17	2	37	10
Poland	35	8	30	6
Estonia	49	16	43	13
Germany	36	9	29	5
UK	44	14	54	18
S Korea	16	1	6	1
Finland	20	3	26	3
Norway	31	5	37	9

Age group: 8, 10 and 12 years old. The ‘%’ column for each indicator shows the percentage of children who had had this experience at least once in the past month and the ‘Rank’ column orders countries from lowest to highest on the basis of these percentages. The question asked ‘How often, if at all, in the last month have you been hit by other children in your school’ and ‘... left out by other children in your class’. Response options were ‘Never’, ‘Once’, ‘2–3 times’, ‘More than 3 times’. The latter three categories have been combined in the table above

experiences across countries. Turkey was ranked 18th (highest frequency) for children being hit at school but seventh for children being left out; while Italy had the second lowest frequency for children being hit but was ranked 10th for children being left out.

In all 18 countries, boys were more likely to be hit by other children at school than girls, and the incidence of this behaviour reduced across the age groups in all countries except Turkey, South Africa and Romania. Children who had high levels of deprivation were also more likely to be hit than children with low levels in 13 out of 18 countries. Patterns for being left out by other children were a little different. In Spain, the UK, Norway, Malta and Italy this was significantly more likely to be experienced by girls than boys while the opposite was the case in Colombia. For this behaviour also there were age-related declines in most countries. Deprivation was less of a factor in predicting variations in being left out by other children although it was still associated with a significantly higher risk in nine out of the 18 countries. In summary, boys were more likely to be hit than girls, both these experiences tended to decrease with age, and deprivation was associated with a higher risk of being hit and being left out at school in many countries.

9.5 Discussion

Peer relationships are a central aspect of children's experiences of childhood. The findings discussed in this chapter illustrate the diversity of these experiences across and within the 18 countries participating in this survey. There are interesting patterns between countries in children's satisfaction with this aspect of their lives, with South Korea ranking higher here than for many other aspects covered in the survey and Colombia and Romania ranking lower. There were also quite substantial variations in the extent of negative peer experiences at school (being hit and being excluded by other children) which are in line with previous cross-national studies.

Within countries, there was only limited evidence of gender differences in satisfaction with friends and classmates. There was evidence of age-related decreases in satisfaction with classmates in many countries. There were more substantial age and gender variations within countries for negative peer experiences. Additionally, in many of the countries in the survey, across a wide range of economic contexts, children who had high levels of deprivation (compared to other children in the same country) were more likely to be hit and to be socially excluded by other children at school. These associations between material deprivation and aspect of peer relationships may also have longer-term negative consequences. Longitudinal research in New Zealand suggests that the social connectedness in adolescence is a more important predictor of adult well-being than is educational attainment (Olsson et al. 2012). A number of studies in the UK and the US discussed in the introduction have also demonstrated the potentially long-term repercussions of experiences of being bullied as a child which have been associated with a range of negative outcomes later in life. There is a need to explore how generalisable these patterns are to a wider range of contexts. Some further analysis in relation to negative peer experiences is presented in Chaps. 10 and 14.

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Chapter 10

School

This chapter explores children's views and feelings about their life at school – including whether they like going to school, how safe they feel, their relationships with teachers, the things that they learn and how they are doing with schoolwork. It provides evidence of some striking differences in children's feelings about school life in different parts of the world. It also shows that this is an aspect of children's lives where there are important variations according to both gender and age group. Analysis is presented of the links between children's feelings of safety at school and two other factors – the negative peer experiences discussed in the previous chapter and children's views of the quality of their relationships with teachers. The analysis shows that all of these factors are linked and this suggests that initiatives to reduce negative peer experiences or bullying and improve the quality of child-teacher relationships could both potentially enhance children's feelings of safety at school.

10.1 Introduction

Children in the age group covered by the Children's Worlds survey spend substantial amounts of time at school. As shown in more detail in Chap. 5, children in 11 OECD countries included in the survey receive between around 630 and 960 compulsory hours of education per year in primary school and between around 810 and 1060 compulsory hours per year in secondary school. In view of this, it is not surprising that children's experiences of school have an impact on their sense of well-being. However, historically, this was not fully recognised by educational researchers until the 1970s (García Bacete et al. 2014). Soutter, Gilmore and O'Steen (2011) and Huebner et al. (2014) review the substantial amount of more recent research that has been conducted on links between school and children's well-being. Associations have been found between children's subjective well-being and a number of school-related factors including relationship with teachers, relationships with peers, parental involvement in schooling, teaching practices, safety, and so on.

However, Huebner et al. argue that there is still a relative lack of attention on student's current well-being within many educational systems and that there is a 'possible disproportionate emphasis on future outcomes' (ibid., p. 798). Additionally, as is true of research on children's subjective well-being more generally, there are several limitations of this evidence base including a reliance on cross-sectional studies and a concentration of much of the research in wealthier countries.

The review by Huebner et al. primarily focuses on individual variations. Important evidence has also emerged recently about international variations in children's subjective well-being at school from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey (HBSC) and the Programme for International Student Assessment Study (PISA). The most recent wave of the HBSC survey included questions about how much children liked school and also the extent to which they felt pressured by school work. For both questions there were substantial variations between countries and also by age and gender in many countries (Inchley et al. 2016). The proportion of children who liked school a lot at the age of 11 varied from around 16% in Estonia and Finland to around 80% in Albania. Girls tended to like school more than boys, especially in the youngest age group in the survey (11 years old) and there was widespread evidence of substantially lower proportions of children liking going to school at 13 and 15 years of age. By the age of 15 years old around 45% of children across the sample of countries (51% of girls and 39% of boys) reported feeling pressured by schoolwork. There were variations here from 18 to 19% of children in Ukraine feeling pressured to 65% of boys and 83% of girls in Malta. Inchley et al. report that there was mostly no pattern of variation in liking going to school or feeling pressured at school according to a measure of family affluence.

The 2012 wave of the PISA survey included a question about feeling happy at school. Country-level results (OECD 2014) show that the percentage of children aged 15 years old in each country who agreed or agreed strongly that they felt happy at school ranged from just over 60% in South Korea to well over 90% in Indonesia. There was little evidence of a relationship between a country's ranking in terms of student academic performance and its ranking in terms of children's happiness at school. For example, countries such as South Korea, Estonia and Finland were highly-ranked on performance (all being in the top 12 countries) but were all in the bottom five countries for children's happiness at school. Findings from the 2015 wave of the survey, just published (OECD 2017) at the time of writing, show deteriorating time trends in children's sense of belonging at school across OECD countries. There was strong evidence that socio-economic status predicted within-country variation in sense of belonging at school. In 65 out of 69 countries, more economically advantaged students had a significantly higher level of belonging than disadvantaged students. There were also some significant and contrasting gender variations, with boys having higher sense of belonging than girls in 28 countries, while girls had higher sense of belonging than boys in 14 countries.

The increasing emphasis in the PISA reports on children's subjective well-being in addition to their academic performance reflects the growing interest discussed by García Bacete et al. in children's well-being at school and its connections both with

Table 10.1 Typical school transitions between age groups in the survey in each country

Type of transition	Countries
No transition	Colombia, Ethiopia, Finland, Israel, Nepal, Norway, South Africa
Between 8 and 10	Germany
Change stages within school between 10 and 12	Estonia, Poland
Change school between 10 and 12	Algeria, Italy, Malta, Romania, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, UK

children's broader well-being and their well-becoming. The material presented in this chapter complements some of the findings emerging from the PISA study focusing on a younger age range and including a different range of countries.

One contextual factor that may be important to consider in interpreting the findings presented in this chapter is the age at which children make school transitions in each country. Progressing from one stage of schooling to the next may involve moving to a larger school, possibly further away from home, and also an increased level of work and expectations. Details of typical transition between age groups in the survey are summarised in Table 10.1. In Estonia and Poland, although children stay in the same schools across this age range there is a substantial change in the nature of teaching between the ages of 10 and 12 years old.

10.2 Overview

The survey asked children six questions about their satisfaction with life as a student, their school experience, classmates, teachers, the things they had learned and their school marks. There were also four agreement questions about liking school, feeling treated fairly by teachers, feeling that teachers listened, and safety at school; and two questions about the frequency of negative peer experiences at school. The question about satisfaction with classmates and the two frequency questions have already been discussed in Chap. 9 and therefore will not be covered in detail again here, although some brief discussion of the associations between these questions and the other questions about school will be included where relevant.

School was an aspect of life for which children's views were in sharp contrast across countries. Table 10.2 provides summary statistics for the core indicator (see Chap. 3) on this aspect of life which was the average of children's satisfaction with their 'school experience' and 'life as a student'. Children in Romania, Algeria and Colombia had mean satisfaction scores above nine out of ten on this indicator, while children in Germany scored below eight out of ten on average. The relative scores indicate that this was an aspect of life that, in comparative terms, children felt particularly positively about in Algeria, Nepal, Ethiopia and South Africa. The positive views about school in this group of countries is one of the key themes in this chapter.

Table 10.2 Summary statistics for satisfaction with school and liking going to school

Country	Mean			Equality		% liked school	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank	Value (%)	Rank
Nepal	8.89	5	+7	0.189	6	63	5
Ethiopia	8.68	8	+7	0.183	4	82	1
Algeria	9.15	2	+8	0.164	2	81	2
S Africa	8.59	9	+4	0.234	11	63	6
Colombia	9.02	3	+1	0.187	5	65	4
Romania	9.18	1	+1	0.153	1	61	7
Turkey	9.00	4	+1	0.201	9	66	3
Israel	8.45	11	-4	0.260	18	38	12
Malta	8.82	6	+1	0.196	8	50	8
Spain	8.28	12	-4	0.226	10	40	11
Italy	8.23	14	-4	0.235	12	24	18
Poland	8.16	15	-5	0.258	16	37	13
Estonia	8.16	16	-3	0.259	17	34	15
Germany	7.96	18	-6	0.253	14	26	17
UK	8.26	13	-2	0.256	15	33	16
S Korea	8.09	17	0	0.251	13	43	10
Finland	8.57	10	-2	0.182	3	34	14
Norway	8.81	7	0	0.193	7	45	9

The percentages shown in the penultimate column are of children who 'totally agree' with the statement 'I like going to school'. Age groups: 10 and 12 years old for satisfaction with school; 8, 10 and 12 years old for liking going to school

In contrast this is an aspect of life which children felt particularly negatively about in Germany, Poland, Italy, Israel and Spain – countries which all had relative scores of minus four percent or less.

Many of the rankings for equalities in satisfaction with school were similar to the means although Finland, Ethiopia, Germany and South Korea ranked higher for equality of satisfaction than mean satisfaction while Turkey ranked five places lower and Israel had the highest levels of inequality for this aspect of life, while being ranked 11th for mean satisfaction. It may be interesting to explore inequalities in satisfaction with school in connection with diversity of educational provision in different countries (for example differences between children in private and public schools, where relevant).

Further clarity about these patterns is provided by some of the other questions asked about school. When asked to respond to the statement 'I like going to school' over 80% of children in Ethiopia and Algeria said they totally agreed compared with fewer than 30% in Italy and Germany. Around 17% of children in Israel, and more than 10% in Italy, Poland, the UK, Estonia and Germany, said that they did not agree with this statement at all. It is notable that, in this age group also, some of the countries that do particularly well in terms of measures of educational attainment in the PISA study discussed in the introduction to this chapter, such as South Korea, Finland and Estonia are not ones where children particularly liked going to school.

The six countries with the highest percentages of children who liked going to school were all outside Europe and the six countries with the lowest percentages were all within Europe. This is a pattern that would be worth exploring in more detail.

10.3 Teachers

The reviews discussed earlier by García Bacete et al. (2014) and Huebner et al. (2014) both emphasise the importance of positive relationships with teachers for children's subjective well-being at school. In the Children's Worlds survey children were asked about their satisfaction with teachers and also about the extent to which they agreed that their teachers listened to them and treated them fairly. Results are summarised in Table 10.3. Children in Algeria had the highest mean satisfaction scores with teachers and Romania and Turkey also had mean scores above nine out of ten. Mean satisfaction with teachers was lowest (below eight out of ten) in Poland, the UK and Germany. Algeria also ranked highest for both agreement questions about being listened to and treated fairly while the countries where children had the lowest levels of agreement for these two questions were Germany and Italy. On the other hand, there was some evidence of different patterns in children's responses to these two questions. For example, children in Romania and Colombia tended to

Table 10.3 Summary statistics for children's views of teachers

Country	Mean satisfaction		Teachers treat fairly		Teachers listen	
	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.96	4	53	14	45	15
Ethiopia	8.71	8	58	8	58	4
Algeria	9.16	1	69	1	68	1
S Africa	8.36	11	53	11	55	5
Colombia	8.60	9	66	2	51	9
Romania	9.15	2	65	3	52	8
Turkey	9.14	3	59	6	61	2
Israel	8.25	13	56	10	50	10
Malta	8.89	6	64	4	60	3
Spain	8.41	10	58	7	52	7
Italy	8.25	14	45	17	33	18
Poland	7.73	18	57	9	48	12
Estonia	8.18	15	53	13	41	16
Germany	7.93	16	40	18	41	17
UK	7.80	17	50	15	48	11
S Korea	8.31	12	49	16	46	14
Finland	8.83	7	53	12	48	13
Norway	8.92	5	61	5	55	6

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old for satisfaction with teachers; 8, 10 and 12 years old for other two questions

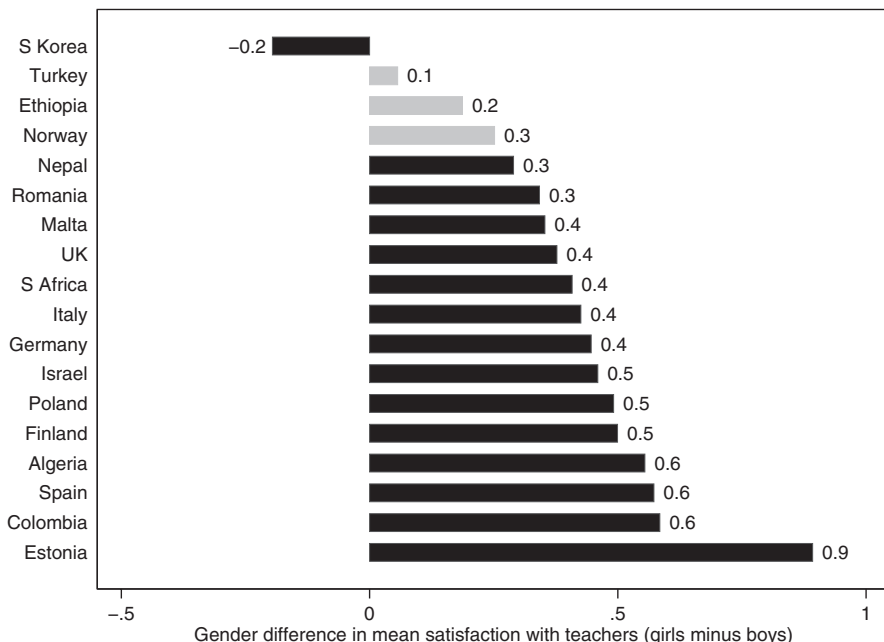


Fig. 10.1 Gender differences in mean satisfaction with teachers Bars show girls’ mean scores minus boys’ mean scores. Bars in light grey indicate that the difference is not statistically significant

agree more strongly that they were treated fairly (ranked second and third respectively) than that they were listened to (ranked 9th and 8th respectively). These kinds of variations suggest that specific question wordings can make quite a big difference to the way children respond to these types of questions about relationships and support the idea of using multi-item measures. It also suggests that being treated fairly and being listened to may be very different concepts as far as children are concerned.

In general, girls tended to be more positive about all the aspects of school life discussed in this chapter (although not with classmates as discussed in Chap. 9). In particular, girls were significantly more satisfied with teachers than boys in 14 out of the 18 countries, as illustrated in Fig. 10.1.

10.4 Learning and School Work

There were also two satisfaction questions about the things that children learned at school and about their school marks. Children in Romania and Algeria were most satisfied with the things that they learned at school (both mean satisfaction scores were above 9.4 out of 10) while children in South Korea were the least satisfied (8.2

out of 10). Children in South Korea were also the least satisfied with their school marks while children in Nepal were the most satisfied. It is notable that two of the countries with particularly high academic performance ratings on PISA – South Korea and Estonia – were among the three lowest-ranked countries for satisfaction with school marks. This raises questions about whether children in high-achieving countries might feel less satisfied with their academic attainment due to levels of expectation. It may be useful to complement these types of questions with one about how much children feel under pressure at school as used in the HBSC study discussed earlier.

10.5 Safety at School

Children's feelings of safety at school are very important for their subjective well-being. Ben-Arieh, McDonnell and Attar-Schwartz (2009), reporting on a study on this issue in the US, find that teachers tend to rate safety within schools more positively than pupils do. They argue that schools staff should place some priority on ensuring that the school is a safe environment for children. In the Children's Worlds survey, children were asked to say how much they agreed with the statement 'I feel safe at school'. Between 2% (in Norway) and just under 8% (in Ethiopia) of children in each country answered 'not at all'. Algeria and Turkey had the highest percentages of total agreement for this question; Italy, Germany and South Korea had the lowest.

There were some significant gender differences in feelings of safety at school, with girls tending to feel a little more safe than boys in almost all countries. The gap was largest in Spain. There were more substantial age differences as can be seen in Table 10.4. Children aged 12 years old were less likely to feel totally safe at school than children aged eight years old in all countries except Nepal and this pattern was statistically significant in most countries. The differences in feeling safe between these two age groups were above 20% in Spain, Estonia, Italy, Poland, the UK and South Korea. While it is not possible to draw firm conclusions from this sample of countries, these six countries are all ones where children typically make some form of educational transition in this age range. It is also interesting to juxtapose this finding of decreasing feelings of safety at school among older children with the fact that the proportion of children having negative peer experiences also tended to decrease with age in many countries. These two patterns seem to be working in opposite directions and suggest that there is much more to children's feelings of safety at school than only their experiences of being hit and socially excluded by peers.

Some statistical testing was done to explore the extent to which children's experiences of being hit and left out by other children at school and their views about teachers were associated with their feelings of safety. In all countries, children's views about being listened to and treated fairly by teachers were stronger predictors of their feelings of safety at school than were the frequency with which they had

Table 10.4 Percentage of children totally agreeing that they feel safe at school by gender and age

Country	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	8 years old (%)	10 years old (%)	12 years old (%)	Total (%)
Nepal	50	53	45	51	58	51
Ethiopia	47	53	50	54	46	50
Algeria	70	75	78	77	63	73
S Africa	63	68	72	67	58	66
Colombia	67	71	79	71	59	69
Romania	65	66	73	69	55	65
Turkey	69	70	75	71	62	70
Israel	59	66	68	58	60	62
Malta	63	63	67	62	60	63
Spain	59	68	72	70	49	63
Italy	45	48	58	47	36	47
Poland	62	66	75	64	53	64
Estonia	54	60	67	59	44	57
Germany	46	50	55	52	37	48
UK	61	64	71	69	49	63
S Korea	50	48	57	56	35	49
Finland	61	67	68	64	60	64
Norway	70	69	73	67	67	69

negative experiences of peers. Because different questions were asked about peers and teachers this does not demonstrate that experiences of teachers were more important influences on feelings about safety than experiences of peers. However it does highlight the potentially important role that approaches to teaching might play in fostering children's feelings of being safe at school. Some of the findings on safety at home, school and in the local area are discussed in more detail in Chap. 12.

10.6 Variations by Age and Gender

An important feature of children's views about this aspect of their lives is the extent to which they vary according to age group and gender. In most countries children's satisfaction with all aspects of school life tended to decrease significantly between the ages of 10 and 12 years old, although there were some exceptions to this general pattern, particularly in Ethiopia and Nepal. This pattern is highlighted over the full age range of the survey in an analysis by Kutsar (2017) of the first 16 countries to complete the survey. She found that the proportion of children who totally agreed that they liked school decreased with age in all countries except Ethiopia and Nepal. She also found that girls tend to like going to school more than boys but that the gender gap narrows somewhat in a number of countries between the ages of 8 and 12. These patterns are illustrated for all 18 countries in the survey in Fig. 10.2. Some

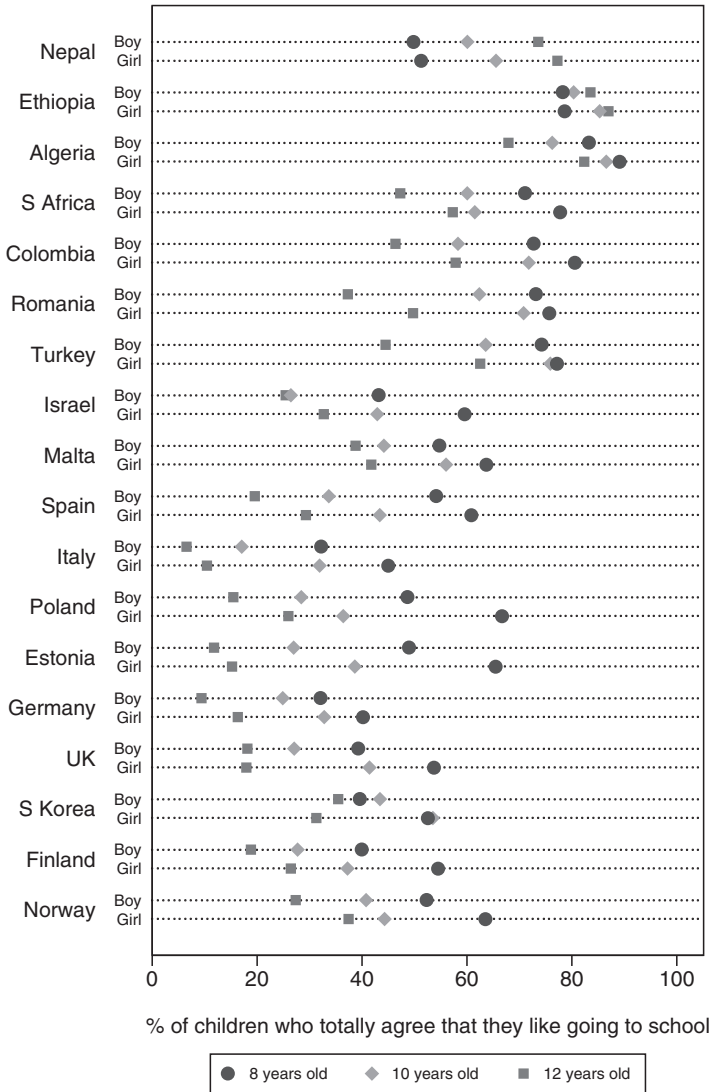


Fig. 10.2 Percentage of children totally agreeing that they like going to school by gender and age group

of the notable patterns are the particularly large drops in liking school for both genders in Estonia and Poland; the much larger drop for girls from the ages of 10 to 12 years old than boys in South Korea; the larger drop for boys than girls in Turkey.

Kutsar also analyses the extent to which five variables – feeling safe at school, feeling that teachers listen, feeling that teachers are fair, feeling that friends are nice and not being left out by classmates – predict children’s feelings about liking school. Although the patterns vary somewhat from one country to another, safety at school

tends to emerge as the most important predictor in most countries. The analysis also indicates varying relative importance of the two teacher variables in different countries.

10.7 Discussion

The findings presented here indicate substantial differences in children's schools-based subjective well-being both between and within countries. In terms of variations between countries, the patterns of satisfaction are quite different for this aspect of children's lives to the patterns for overall well-being or for most other aspects. The most striking findings are about the extent to which children like going to school. The percentage of children totally agreeing that they like going to school ranged from over 80% of 8-year-olds in Ethiopia and Algeria to fewer than 10% of 12-year-olds in Italy. Children in most of the countries outside Europe included in the survey tended to like going to school much more than children in most countries within Europe. This points to a potential direction for future research to understand more about the reasons that children's views about school vary so much across different countries.

Turning to variations in children's feelings about school within countries there was a general picture that girls tended to have more positive views than boys, particularly in terms of relationships with teachers. There were also quite substantial age variations with older children being much less positive about school than younger children. This pattern covers not only general feelings of satisfaction about school but also aspects such as feeling safe at school. There were large drops in children's feelings of safety in many countries across the 8 years old to 12 years old age range. It is important to consider what factors might affect children's feelings of safety and what measures might be taken to address this issue. In terms of information available in the Children's Worlds survey, both negative experiences of peers and quality of relationships with teachers predicted feelings of safety. The latter finding suggests that there is work that could be done on the general school climate and teacher-pupil relationships that could substantially improve children's well-being at school.

Research on this topic still appears to be under-developed. Two important areas for further research are the links between children's schools-based subjective well-being and their academic attainment; and the extent of links between experiences at school and overall subjective well-being. While the focus in this chapter has been on comparing children between and within countries, there is also considerable potential to utilize the fact that children are clustered within schools in surveys like Children's Worlds. Multi-level modelling approaches could provide important insights into how subjective well-being varies within and between schools, and the extent to which the school that a child goes to has a bearing on their overall well-being. This kind of insight, in turn, could be put to practical use in considering the role of schools in promoting children's well-being.

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Chapter 11

Local Area

This chapter explores children's views about the local area or neighbourhood where they live. The area near a child's home can be an important environment for leisure activities and for socialising with friends. The survey asked children about their overall satisfaction with their local area and also some more specific questions about local facilities, local people and about feelings of safety in the local area. The chapter looks at variations between countries in children's evaluations of the area in general and of these three aspects of facilities, people and safety; and also at variations within countries according to children's age and gender. It also presents analysis about how strongly each of these three aspects relate to children's overall satisfaction with their local area and how these patterns vary between countries. The chapter paints a picture of considerable diversity in children's experiences of this aspect of their lives which require a deeper understanding rooted in the context in each country. Finally, there is a brief discussion of some published analysis from the survey that compares children's views of the local area in urban and rural locations in four countries.

11.1 Introduction

As a distal influence on children's lives the local area is unlikely to be as strong a determinant of their well-being as more proximal factors such as relationships with family and with friends that have been considered in previous chapters. However aspects of the local area such as safety, local amenities, social problems and general friendliness may be important contributors to children's sense of well-being as they grow up (Jutras and Lepage 2006). This is supported by analysis of the pilot wave of the Children's Worlds survey (Lee and Yoo 2015) which found that neighbourhood factors did explain some of the variation in children's life satisfaction in 11 countries, even after controlling for demographics and family and school factors. There has been increasing research interest over recent years in neighbourhood

influences on children's well-being (in a broad sense). A number of studies have suggested that the neighbourhood where children grow up has some link to their mental health, although there are inconsistent results in whether this link remains after taking account of other more proximal factors (e.g. Flouri et al. 2010; Lee and Kwon 2015).

One of the complexities of this research topic is to disentangle the effects of the local area from the effects of individual and family characteristics which may differ across localities. Two recent studies have used multi-level modelling to address this issue. Oberle, Schonerte-Reichel and Zumbo (2011) found that neighbourhood support did contribute, along with a range of family and school factors, to predicting the life satisfaction of a sample of children (mean age of 11 years and 6 months) in Canada. In New Zealand, Aminzadeh et al. (2013) found evidence of an effect of neighbourhood social capital on adolescents' self-reported well-being. Other studies (e.g. Adams and Savahl 2016 in South Africa; Ben-Arieh and Shimoni 2014 in Israel) have drawn attention to the importance of children's feelings of safety in their neighbourhood for their overall sense of well-being.

The Children's Worlds questionnaires included a section on children's views of their local area. One challenge with this section was to be clear about, and find the right words to explain, what the 'local area' referred to as this provide a difficult concept and phrase to translate into different languages and contexts. This is a commonly-encountered problem in research on this topic (Coulton and Spilsbury 2014). The intention in the set of questions was to ask about an area relatively near the child's home (within walking distance) where they might regularly spend time. It is important to acknowledge that this may be a fuzzy concept and could have quite different meanings for example in a highly rural environment compared to an inner-city one.

As with other aspects of life, children were asked about their level of satisfaction with the area where they lived in general and this is used as the core indicator for this domain. They were also asked several other satisfaction questions about people, facilities and services in their area, although not all these questions were asked in all countries; and two agreement questions about their feelings of safety and views about the availability of places for them to play and have a good time. This chapter focuses on the general satisfaction question and on three questions that were asked in all countries about people in the local area, safety and places to play.

11.2 Overview

Mean scores for satisfaction with the local area in general ranged from 7.8 out of ten in South Africa and Germany to 9.4 out of ten in Norway (Table 11.1). Norway also had the lowest levels of inequalities in satisfaction and a high relative score (+6%) which indicates that children felt particularly positive about this aspect of life even taking into account their typically high levels of satisfaction across most of the domains. Finland and Romania also had positive relative scores and were ranked

Table 11.1 Summary statistics for satisfaction with the local area

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.44	11	+2	0.287	14
Ethiopia	8.02	15	-1	0.301	15
Algeria	8.23	14	-3	0.350	17
S Africa	7.78	18	-6	0.413	18
Colombia	8.95	4	+1	0.241	7
Romania	9.27	2	+2	0.179	2
Turkey	8.88	5	0	0.253	9
Israel	8.82	6	+1	0.262	11
Malta	8.59	9	-1	0.250	8
Spain	8.69	8	+1	0.227	4
Italy	8.39	13	-2	0.238	5
Poland	8.70	7	+2	0.238	6
Estonia	8.53	10	+2	0.255	10
Germany	7.82	17	-7	0.319	16
UK	8.43	12	0	0.263	12
S Korea	8.00	16	0	0.271	13
Finland	8.98	3	+3	0.180	3
Norway	9.36	1	+6	0.153	1

Age group: 10 and 12 years old

next after Norway for the two summary measures. Two countries had high negative relative scores for this aspect of life – Germany and South Africa. South Africa also had the highest levels of inequality with this aspect of life. Possible reasons for these patterns will be discussed below.

11.3 People, Safety and Facilities

Table 11.2 provides summary statistics for children's views of three different aspects of the local area – people in the area, feelings of safety and the availability of places to play. Finland, Romania and Norway had comparatively high levels of satisfaction with people in the local area and the score for South Africa (7.2) was comparatively low. The columns for facilities and safety show the percentage of children who totally agreed with the statement and, in brackets, the percentage who did not agree at all. Around two-thirds of children in Norway, Colombia and Poland totally agreed that there were enough places to play and have a good time in their local area; but around a quarter (24%) of children in Algeria, and between 10 and 20% in Romania, Ethiopia, Malta, South Africa, Turkey and Italy did not agree at all. There were also some particular striking variations for the statement about feeling safe in the local area. In particular, 25% of children in South Africa did not agree with this statement

Table 11.2 Summary statistics for children's views of aspects of the local area

Country	People		Places to play		Safety	
	Mean	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Nepal	8.14	7	35 (7)	16	43 (5)	12
Ethiopia	7.89	13	36 (16)	15	39 (13)	15
Algeria	8.10	8	44 (24)	12	55 (11)	8
S Africa	7.23	18	50 (15)	9	35 (25)	16
Colombia	8.25	6	63 (6)	3	55 (7)	7
Romania	8.63	2	38 (19)	14	54 (7)	9
Turkey	8.00	11	50 (14)	10	42 (14)	13
Israel	8.27	5	58 (7)	6	60 (7)	3
Malta	7.87	14	41 (16)	13	42 (11)	14
Spain	8.42	4	59 (5)	5	58 (3)	4
Italy	7.81	15	33 (12)	17	28 (8)	17
Poland	8.09	9	64 (3)	2	56 (4)	6
Estonia	8.03	10	60 (6)	4	57 (4)	5
Germany	7.54	17	51 (6)	8	47 (5)	10
UK	7.93	12	47 (7)	11	44 (5)	11
S Korea	7.79	16	31 (7)	18	19 (8)	18
Finland	8.65	1	52 (4)	7	62 (1)	2
Norway	8.58	3	66 (2)	1	70 (1)	1

Age group: 10 and 12 years old for satisfaction with people in the local area; 8, 10 and 12 years old for the other two questions. For 'Places to play' and 'Safety' the first statistic shown refers to the percentage of children who totally agreed with the statement and the statistic in brackets is the percentage of children who did not agree with it at all. Rankings are based on the first statistic. Statement wordings were 'I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in' and 'In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time'

at all, compared to only around 1% to 2% in Finland and Norway. The underlying factors explaining these patterns would require detailed contextualisation to fully understand. For example, in the initial comparative report on this survey, Rees and Main (2015) suggest that one of the reasons for the particularly high rating for local facilities in Poland were recent national government initiatives to improve sports infrastructure and also modernise playgrounds for children. In terms of South Africa, Adams and Savahl (2016) note high and escalating rates of crime and violence and argue that this is a significant factor in explaining children's concerns about safety.

Looking across the three aspects, some countries had relatively similar rankings. Norway, Israel and Spain were ranked in the top third of countries for all three aspects while Ethiopia, Malta, Italy and South Korea were in the bottom third for all three. In some other countries there was much more diversity in rankings. For example, children in Poland ranked much higher for local places to play than for people or safety; while the opposite was true in Algeria. South Africa ranked particularly low for local people and local safety. Germany had a notably lower ranking for satisfaction with local people than for the questions about facilities and safety.

These patterns raise interesting issues about the diversity of children's experiences of the local area in different countries and also questions about the relative importance of each aspect. For example, does the low ranking of Germany for local people explain children's relatively low satisfaction with the local area in general as discussed above? What might be the aspects of the local area that lead children in Romania to rate their local areas highly even though they rated safety and play facilities less positively? To explore these questions some additional analysis was conducted¹ to estimate the relative importance of each of the three aspects of people, safety and facilities for children's overall satisfaction with the local area.

The results of this analysis show that in many countries the three different aspects explained fairly similar shares of the variation. However, in Germany satisfaction with local people was much the strongest predictor of overall satisfaction with the local area. This aspect also explained more than half the variation in Nepal, Ethiopia and Turkey. On the other hand, safety explained over 40% of total variation in Romania and Algeria, but was relatively unimportant in Ethiopia; while local play facilities were a particularly important predictor (50%) in Norway. This analysis therefore provides some insights as to the factors that children in specific countries are concerned about when evaluating their local area². Alongside these detailed patterns, the three aspects in combination were much more successful in predicting variation in overall satisfaction with the local area in some countries such as Germany than in other such as Nepal, Romania and Algeria. Further research might elucidate what other aspects of the quality of the local area about which it would be relevant to ask children in future research.

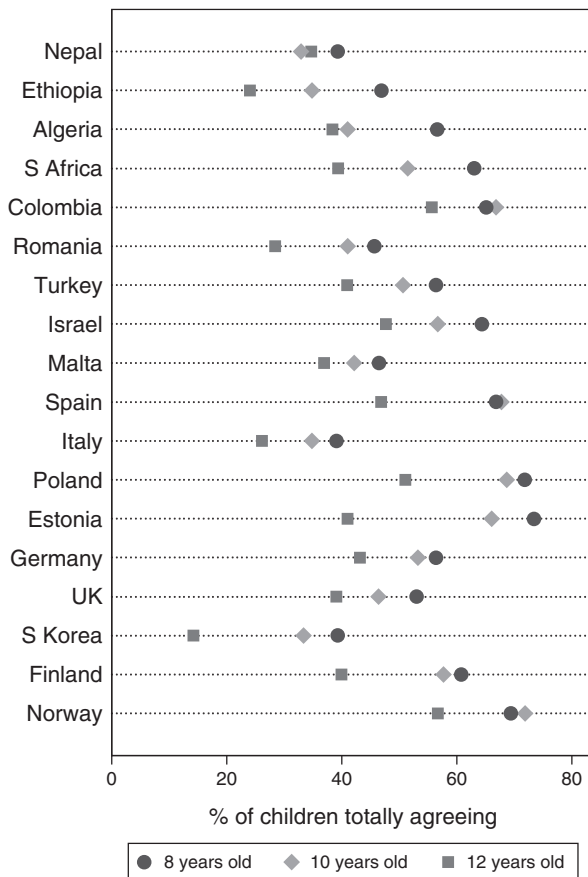
11.4 Variations by Age and Gender

There was evidence of gender variations in children's views about their local area in some countries. For example, girls felt less safe in their local area in six out of the 18 countries – Algeria, South Korea, Norway, Poland, South Africa and Italy. However these gender differences were mostly not that substantial. There was more evidence of age variations, particularly in terms of views about local facilities to play and have a good time. In many countries children in the older age groups surveyed were much less likely to express positive views about this aspect of their local area than younger children. These age-related variations are illustrated in Fig. 11.1. There was a particularly large drop in agreement from 73% of children aged 8 years old to 41% of children aged 12 years old in Estonia, and large drops of around 25

¹Linear regression analysis was run for each country and the Lindeman-Merenda-Gold method of calculating relative importance of independent variables (Lindeman et al. 1980) was used, utilising the *relaimpo* package in R (Grömping 2007).

²Note that it is possible that the importance of local people is over-estimated in this analysis as the variable was asked using the same 11-point scale as the dependent variable, whereas the other two independent variables used a five-point agreement scale.

Fig. 11.1 Percentage of children totally agreeing with the statement ‘In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time’ by country and age group



percentage points also in Ethiopia, South Korea and South Africa. In total there were significant age-related declines in this respect in most countries.

11.5 Variations Between Rural and Urban Areas

Some of the countries in the Children’s Worlds survey divided their sampling strategy between urban and rural areas. This makes it possible to compare children’s experiences of their local area in these different contexts. Rees et al. (2017) undertake these types of comparisons for four countries – Argentina, Romania, South Africa, South Korea. Argentina is not included in general in this report as the sample obtained there was not large enough to meet the criteria for full inclusion in the data set. However the survey was stratified between urban and rural areas and so was relevant to include in this particular analysis. A key finding from this article of relevance here is that there were different rural/urban patterns in children’s views of

their local area in different countries. For example, children tended to feel safer in rural areas than urban areas in Argentina and Romania; safer in urban rather than rural areas in South Korea; and there was no significant difference in South Africa. This suggests that children's differing experiences of rural and urban environments are not universal and need to be understood within particular contexts.

11.6 Discussion

The above descriptive account has highlighted some important variations in children's experiences of their local area across countries. It is clear that children's experiences and views of this aspect of their lives are quite diverse. This is a topic where more sophisticated analytical techniques such as multi-level modelling would be valuable and could provide deeper insights. For example, as will be shown in Chap. 14, children's satisfaction with their local area tended to be one of the aspects of life most strongly associated at an individual level with material deprivation. Future research might utilise the clustered nature of the Children's Worlds data to explore this association more fully.

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Chapter 12

Health, Body Image, Safety and Freedom

This chapter covers a range of important topics covered in the surveys. The first two of these topics are about children's views of themselves – namely their health and their body image. The other two topics are more psychological and cross-cutting in nature and relate to freedom and safety. One of the striking findings presented in this chapter relates to particularly substantial variations in children's satisfaction with their body image between countries and between females and males within some countries. Issues of freedom and safety have been found to be important dimensions of children's well-being in a number of previous studies in individual countries and this is one of the first studies to have gathered data on these aspects across such a diversity of contexts. The findings on safety, in particular, create a complex picture with children's evaluations of their safety varying across the different environments of home, school and local area in different ways in different countries. The patterns raise interesting questions about whether it makes sense to think about children's feelings of safety in the abstract or whether these feelings are more context-specific.

12.1 Introduction

The first topic covered in this chapter is children's views about their health. Information on self-rated health in 42 European and North American countries is available for children aged 11, 13 and 15 years old in the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study (Inchley et al. 2016). Most children in all countries rated their health as good as good or excellent. Among the 11-years-old age group, the percentage of children who rated their health as fair or poor ranged from around 2% for boys and girls in Macedonia to 13% of boys and 22% of girls in Moldova. Children's ratings of their health tended to become less positive across this age range with more than 30% of girls and up to 20% of boys rating their health as fair or poor in some countries at the age of 15. Girls had significantly lower

ratings than boys in most countries at 13 and 15 years old, but only in a few countries was there a significant gender difference at 11 years old.

The second topic is about children's satisfaction with their body image, which is calculated by averaging children's responses to the questions about body and appearance for the reasons explained in Chap. 3. The HBSC study also has a question about how children perceived their body (from 'much too thin' to 'much too fat'). For this question there was evidence of children being more likely to feel they are too fat as they grew older and also of gender patterns with girls being significantly more likely than boys to think they are too fat at the age of 15 years old in all 42 countries. There was also evidence that the gender gap increased across this age range in most countries. This evidence of an increasing gender gap with age has also been identified in UK research on children's satisfaction with their appearance (Pople and Rees 2016). There is a substantial research literature on body image, including many studies of children. Children as young as 3 years of age can show body dissatisfaction (Tremblay et al. 2011) and young children are able to perceive their body image accurately (Tremblay and Limbos 2009). Of relevance to this chapter, Yu (2016) found indications of a link between less autonomy and greater body dissatisfaction in a study of young people in South Korea. Within the broader literature on body image, there is evidence of differences in children's views within countries according to their culture or ethnicity (e.g. George and Franko 2010; Xanthopoulos et al. 2011) which raises important considerations within the context of international comparative research. This is particularly relevant to the Children's Worlds because there is a relative lack of studies of children's views of body image in low- and middle-income countries (Pedro et al. 2016). There has been a growing interest, in this research field, in the concept of positive body image. It is argued that this is distinct from negative body image (Tylka and Wood-Barcalow 2015), in a similar way to the distinctions between positive and negative approaches to well-being discussed in Chap. 3. Tylka and Wood-Barcalow report studies of positive body image among adolescent populations in Sweden and minority populations in the US and Canada. The questions asked in the Children's Worlds survey about satisfaction with body and appearance may tap in to some of these ideas about positive body image.

The third topic covered in the chapter is children's satisfaction with the freedom they have. The concept of autonomy is identified as an important aspect of psychological well-being by key theorists in this field (Ryff 1989; Ryan and Deci 2000) as discussed in Chap. 3. While this concept has been criticised as being centred around Western ideas of individualism well-being, Devine, Camfield and Gough (2008) argues that this is not the case, citing research in Bangladesh that illustrates the potential for ideas of autonomy to co-exist with collectivist ideas about interdependence. The question in the survey was intended to explore this concept further with children, but the word 'freedom' rather than 'autonomy' was chosen as being simpler to translate and more accessible for children.

Finally, the chapter discusses children's feelings about safety. Some findings from the Children's Worlds study about safety in different environments, along with previous research, have already been discussed in Chaps. 7, 10 and 11. This chapter

draws together that material along with a question about overall satisfaction with safety and looks at the relationships between feelings of safety in particular environments and children's overall satisfaction with their safety.

12.2 Health

In relation to the range of questions asked about satisfaction with different aspects of life in the surveys of children aged 10 and 12 years old, health was an aspect of life with which children tended to feel relatively satisfied (Table 12.1). The lowest mean score was just under 8.4 out of 10 in South Korea and the highest was 9.6 out of 10 in Romania. Romania also had the highest level of equality in children's satisfaction with health and South Africa had the highest level of inequality. This was an aspect of life where children in Norway tended to be relatively less satisfied (taking into account their fairly high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of life). Children in Ethiopia and Italy had the highest relative scores suggesting that children in these countries were comparatively satisfied with this aspect of life.

There were few notable or substantial variations in children's satisfaction with health according to their gender or age group. As with all the other core satisfaction indicators considered in previous chapters there was evidence of lower satisfaction

Table 12.1 Summary statistics for satisfaction with health

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.64	17	-2	0.251	17
Ethiopia	8.85	13	+3	0.216	12
Algeria	9.05	9	+1	0.219	13
S Africa	8.80	14	+1	0.254	18
Colombia	9.53	2	+1	0.150	2
Romania	9.59	1	0	0.122	1
Turkey	9.37	3	0	0.181	9
Israel	9.30	4	+1	0.178	7
Malta	9.19	7	0	0.176	6
Spain	9.27	5	+2	0.156	4
Italy	9.25	6	+3	0.158	5
Poland	8.95	12	-1	0.204	11
Estonia	8.78	15	-1	0.222	14
Germany	8.98	11	+1	0.190	10
UK	8.78	16	-1	0.230	15
S Korea	8.36	18	-2	0.242	16
Finland	9.10	8	-2	0.153	3
Norway	8.99	10	-4	0.181	8

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

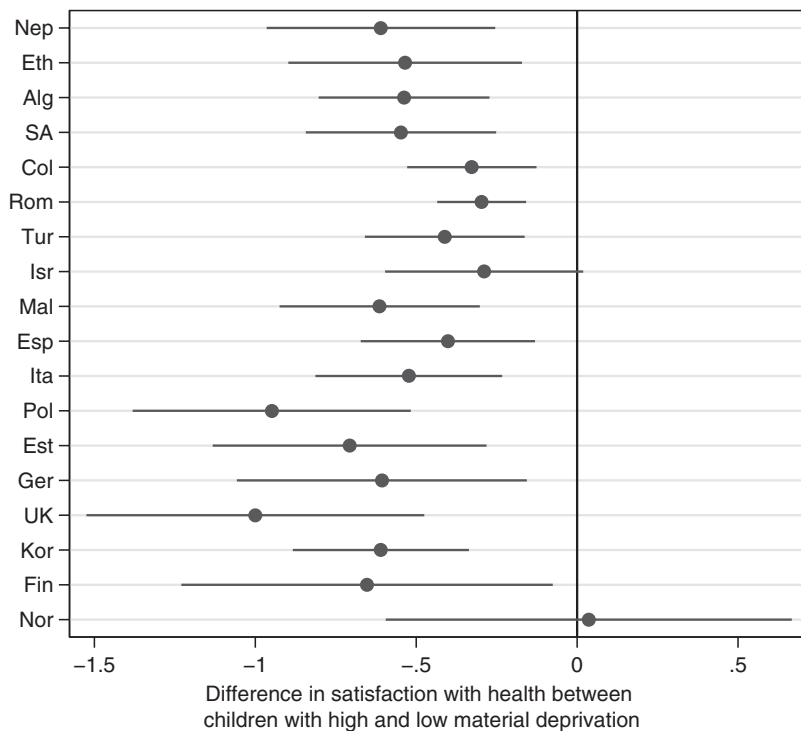


Fig. 12.1 Association between material deprivation and satisfaction with health, controlling for age group and gender

among children who were experiencing high material deprivation compared to low deprivation within a country. This pattern was statistically significant for 16 countries, the exceptions being Israel and Norway. A few of these differences were quite substantial, children in the UK with high deprivation had mean satisfaction with health about one point lower on a ten-point scale than children with low deprivation, and the gap in Poland was more than 0.9 points (Fig. 12.1). Thus, in general, within countries, poorer children are less satisfied with their health.

12.3 Body Image

Children's feelings about their appearance and their bodies provided some of the most striking findings across the different aspects of life covered in the survey (Table 12.2). The range of mean satisfaction scores between countries was relatively large – from 7.3 out of 10 in South Korea to 9.4 out of 10 in Colombia. Other countries having mean scores above nine out of ten on this aspect of life were Romania and Israel. In addition to South Korea, children in the UK scored, on average, below

Table 12.2 Summary statistics for satisfaction with body image

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.23	15	-1	0.255	12
Ethiopia	8.69	8	+7	0.187	3
Algeria	8.92	5	+5	0.198	5
S Africa	8.78	7	+6	0.232	11
Colombia	9.41	1	+6	0.147	2
Romania	9.33	2	+3	0.143	1
Turkey	8.97	4	+1	0.226	8
Israel	9.17	3	+5	0.189	4
Malta	8.83	6	+1	0.208	6
Spain	8.64	9	0	0.219	7
Italy	8.34	12	-2	0.227	9
Poland	8.39	11	-2	0.289	16
Estonia	8.23	14	-2	0.279	14
Germany	8.10	16	-4	0.280	15
UK	7.85	17	-6	0.330	18
S Korea	7.33	18	-9	0.322	17
Finland	8.44	10	-4	0.229	10
Norway	8.31	13	-6	0.270	13

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

eight out of ten for satisfaction with their body image. The range of relative scores emphasise the variation between countries for this aspect of life. South Korea, the UK, Norway, Germany and Finland all had strong negative relative scores indicating that this was an aspect of life for which children in those countries were particularly dissatisfied. In contrast, satisfaction with body image was relatively positive in Ethiopia, Colombia, South Africa, Algeria and Israel. These patterns suggest a geographic and/or economic pattern to variations in children's well-being in this area of their lives. In addition to the two questions that make up this indicator, children were asked about their satisfaction with their self-confidence and patterns for this question were quite similar to those described for body image.

There are also some notable gender and age patterns for children's satisfaction with their body and appearance. Girls were less satisfied with their body/appearance than boys in the majority of countries including almost all of the countries in Europe (Fig. 12.2). In many countries children aged 12 years old were also significantly less satisfied than children aged 10 years old. In fact in four countries – Poland, the UK, South Korea and Norway – there was a gender pattern to age variations in satisfaction with body image. In these countries, girls and boys had relatively similar levels of satisfaction at the age of 10 years old but at the age of 12 years old girls' mean scores were much lower than boys'.

The patterns identified in the Children's Worlds survey add to existing evidence about variations in children's views of their body image across countries. First, this is an aspect of life that children within Europe, and also in South Korea, tend to

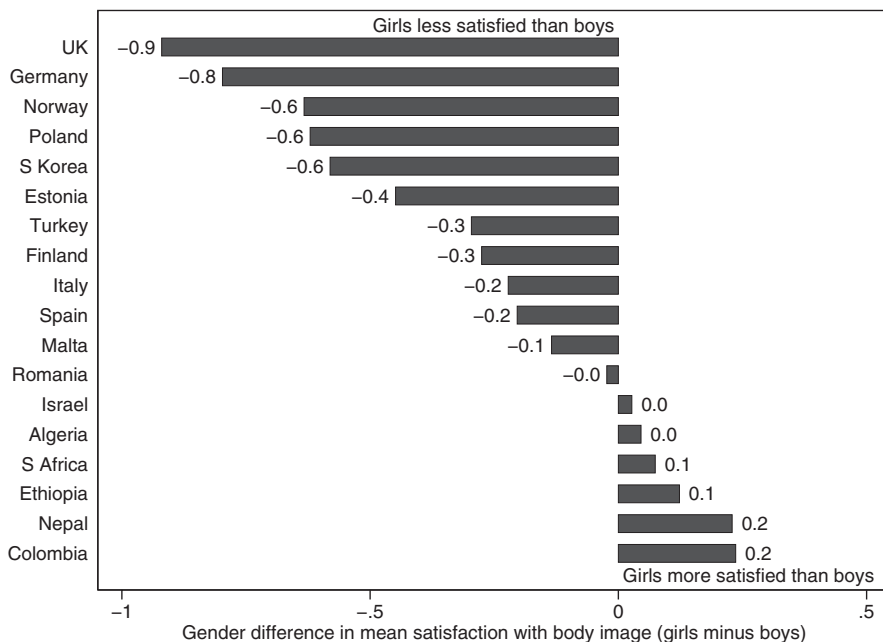


Fig. 12.2 Gender differences in mean satisfaction with body image

evaluate much less positively than in other countries in the survey. This applies both in absolute terms (comparing mean satisfaction scores) and in terms of how this aspect of life rates compared to other aspects (relative scores). Additionally, they provide an important broad comparative perspective on age and gender patterns. The finding, primarily within Europe, that girls in particularly becoming increasingly less satisfied with their body image as they grow older is not replicated in many countries in the survey outside Europe, at least up to the age of 12 years old. This provides clear evidence that these patterns are not universal and raises important questions about the underlying causes at play in the countries where they do occur. This particular finding is an illustration of the value of taking a comparative cross-cultural approach to understanding within-country variations in children's subjective well-being.

12.4 Freedom

Children were asked how satisfied they were with the freedom they had. This is quite an abstract concept and it was not specified whether children should consider, for example, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of action, freedom of movement, or other related topics. Future research might explore these

Table 12.3 Summary statistics for satisfaction with freedom

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	7.80	17	-5	0.358	18
Ethiopia	7.79	18	-3	0.324	15
Algeria	8.07	15	-4	0.333	17
S Africa	8.20	13	0	0.328	16
Colombia	8.88	5	+1	0.242	9
Romania	9.22	1	+2	0.181	1
Turkey	9.04	2	+2	0.234	7
Israel	8.90	4	+3	0.227	4
Malta	8.52	10	-2	0.250	10
Spain	8.29	12	-3	0.265	11
Italy	8.60	9	+2	0.231	5
Poland	8.65	8	+2	0.234	8
Estonia	8.19	14	-2	0.282	12
Germany	8.67	7	+4	0.232	6
UK	8.42	11	+1	0.282	13
S Korea	7.84	16	-2	0.305	14
Finland	8.76	6	+1	0.182	2
Norway	9.00	3	+3	0.192	3

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

different components of freedom in more detail. Countries where children scored high for this aspect of life were Romania, Turkey and Norway, while children in Ethiopia, Nepal and South Korea had the lowest mean satisfaction scores (Table 12.3). In relative terms this is an aspect of life that children felt particularly positive about in Germany, Norway and Israel and comparatively negative about in Nepal, Algeria, Ethiopia and Spain. It would be interesting to explore contextual reasons for these variations. There was a fair degree of consistency between rankings for equality of satisfaction and for mean satisfaction. However as for many other aspects of life, Turkey ranked lower for equality (7th) than for mean scores (2nd) while Finland ranked higher (2nd and 6th respectively).

Children's satisfaction with their freedom decreased significantly with age in 10 countries. The countries with the largest age differences between the ages of 10 and 12 years old were South Korea (a mean of 8.3 out of 10 for children aged 10 and 7.3 for children aged 12); Turkey (9.5 and 8.6 respectively) and Poland (9.0 and 8.3). Other differences were of modest size. The only country with a significant gender difference in satisfaction with freedom was South Korea where girls' mean satisfaction was 7.7 out of 10 compared to 8.0 for boys.

12.5 Safety

In addition to the questions about safety at home, at school and in their local area that were discussed in previous chapters, children were also asked how satisfied they were with their safety in general (Table 12.4). As for many aspects of the life, children in Romania, Turkey and Colombia had high mean scores while children in South Korea, Ethiopia and South Africa ranked lowest. Inequality in satisfaction with overall safety was particularly high in South Africa.

It is informative to look at patterns of responses to this question along with the three more specific questions about safety discussed earlier. Table 12.5 shows country rankings for each of the three questions. For some countries such as Ethiopia, South Korea, Norway and Finland the rankings for all three specific aspects of safety were fairly consistent with the ranking for overall satisfaction with safety. For other countries there was much more variation. Children in Algeria were ranked highest for safety in school but much lower for home and local area. The pattern of rankings in Turkey resembled that in Algeria. In Israel children ranked much lower (12th) for safety at school than for safety at home (2nd), their local area (3rd) or their ranking for overall satisfaction (9th); and this type of pattern was also evident in Estonia where children ranked 13th for safety at school compared to fourth and fifth for safety at home and in the local area. In Nepal, Ethiopia, Algeria and South Africa children were roughly equally likely to totally agree that they felt safe at

Table 12.4 Summary statistics for satisfaction with safety

Country	Mean			Equality	
	Value	Rank	Relative (%)	Value	Rank
Nepal	8.62	15	0	0.250	16
Ethiopia	8.26	17	-2	0.277	17
Algeria	9.04	7	3	0.207	12
S Africa	8.42	16	-2	0.311	18
Colombia	9.23	3	0	0.192	8
Romania	9.46	1	0	0.147	2
Turkey	9.38	2	2	0.173	4
Israel	8.92	9	-2	0.217	13
Malta	9.07	6	0	0.188	6
Spain	8.89	10	0	0.191	7
Italy	8.81	11	0	0.182	5
Poland	8.99	8	1	0.205	11
Estonia	8.75	13	1	0.203	10
Germany	8.75	12	0	0.195	9
UK	8.71	14	0	0.228	14
S Korea	8.09	18	-3	0.246	15
Finland	9.22	4	1	0.130	1
Norway	9.11	5	-1	0.163	3

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

Table 12.5 Percentage of children totally agreeing that they felt safe at home, at school and in their local area

Country	Home		School		Local area	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Nepal	52	17	51	14	43	12
Ethiopia	49	18	50	15	39	15
Algeria	71	12	73	1	55	8
S Africa	66	14	66	5	35	16
Colombia	79	5	69	3	55	7
Romania	73	11	65	6	54	9
Turkey	76	8	70	2	42	13
Israel	80	2	62	12	60	3
Malta	70	13	63	10	42	14
Spain	77	7	63	9	58	4
Italy	56	15	47	18	28	17
Poland	89	1	64	8	56	6
Estonia	79	4	57	13	57	5
Germany	74	10	48	17	47	10
UK	75	9	63	11	44	11
S Korea	56	16	49	16	19	18
Finland	77	6	64	7	62	2
Norway	80	3	69	4	70	1

Age groups: 8, 10 and 12 years old. The ‘%’ column shows the percentage of children who totally agreed that they felt safe in each environment and the ‘Rank’ column shows the rankings of countries on the basis of these percentages

home and school, and much less likely to agree that they felt safe in the local area. Turkey, Malta and South Korea were relatively similar to this in that there were quite small differences between home and school and much lower percentages for feeling safe in the local area. On the other hand there was a group of five countries – Norway, Finland, Germany, Estonia and Israel – where children felt safest at home and roughly equally safe at school and in their local area. In the remaining six countries children felt safest at home, then at school and then in their local area with clear differences between all three. Comparisons of these kinds have the potential to be informative in terms of the environments in different countries where children feel particular safe or unsafe.

There remains a question about the relationship between feeling safe in different environments and how these feelings relate to overall satisfaction with safety. Looking first at the issue of the relationships between the three questions in Table 12.5, statistical tests do not suggest a high degree of consistency in children’s responses to the three questions.¹ This casts doubt over whether talking about children’s sense of safety in the abstract across the different environments where they spend time is meaningful at all. A second piece of analysis looked at the extent to which children’s answers to these three questions predicted their satisfaction with

¹Cronbach’s alpha for the set of three items was below 0.6 in all countries.

safety overall in each country. The three questions predicted over 40% of the variation in satisfaction with safety in South Korea, Norway and Finland; and over 30% in Estonia, Germany, the UK and Poland. However they predicted less than 10% of the variation in satisfaction with safety in Romania and Colombia, and only a little more (below 15%) in Nepal, Turkey, Ethiopia and South Africa. The explanatory power in the latter seven countries is quite disappointing if one assumes that all these questions are tapping into the same concept. It raises the question of which aspects of children's lives influence their overall feelings of safety, beyond the extent to which they feel safe at home, at school and in their local area. This clearly requires further research. At this stage, it is not clear what the question about satisfaction with safety in the abstract is capturing.

12.6 Discussion

The material in this chapter identifies a number of potential directions for future research. One particular issue for further exploration are the reasons for the substantial gender differences in satisfaction with body image in high-income countries, particularly in northern Europe and in South Korea. A second area is to explore more fully the concept of autonomy or freedom and what this means to children in this age range. A third topic is to gain a greater understanding of how children think about safety both in relation to particular environments and situations in their lives and also in an abstract sense.

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Chapter 13

Variations in Children's Well-Being Between Countries

The previous seven chapters have presented findings on children's evaluations of their life as a whole and different aspects of their lives. This is the first of two chapters that draws together and provides a broad overview of these findings. The focus in this chapter is on differences and similarities between countries, while the subsequent chapter looks at variations between children within countries. The chapter continues the theme of previous chapters in comparing countries in three different ways – using mean satisfaction scores, relative scores and a measure of inequality in satisfaction. It then goes on to look at the extent to which means and inequalities in children's satisfaction with different aspects of life at a country level are associated with measures of national wealth and income inequality.

13.1 Mean Satisfaction Scores

Figure 13.1 provides a visual summary of the mean satisfaction scores for each aspect of life across all countries and also the spread of mean scores across countries. The largest variation in mean scores across countries was for satisfaction with possessions with a range of 2.4 point out of 10 from Ethiopia (7.2) to Romania (9.6). Satisfaction with body image also had a large range from 7.3 in South Korea to 9.4 in Colombia. The ranges of mean scores for satisfaction with home, family and friends on the other hand were smaller, each being around one point on the 10-point scale. One of the challenges for international comparative research on child well-being is to be able to explain the sources of these variations.

Table 13.1 provides an additional perspective by collating the country rankings of mean satisfaction scores for the 12 core aspects of life considered in the previous chapters. There are limitations to relying on rankings as they do not provide an indication of the gaps between adjacent countries in the ranking, which can be of variable size. However, it is a convenient means of gaining a broad overview of the patterns. The mean scores have already been fully presented earlier in the book.

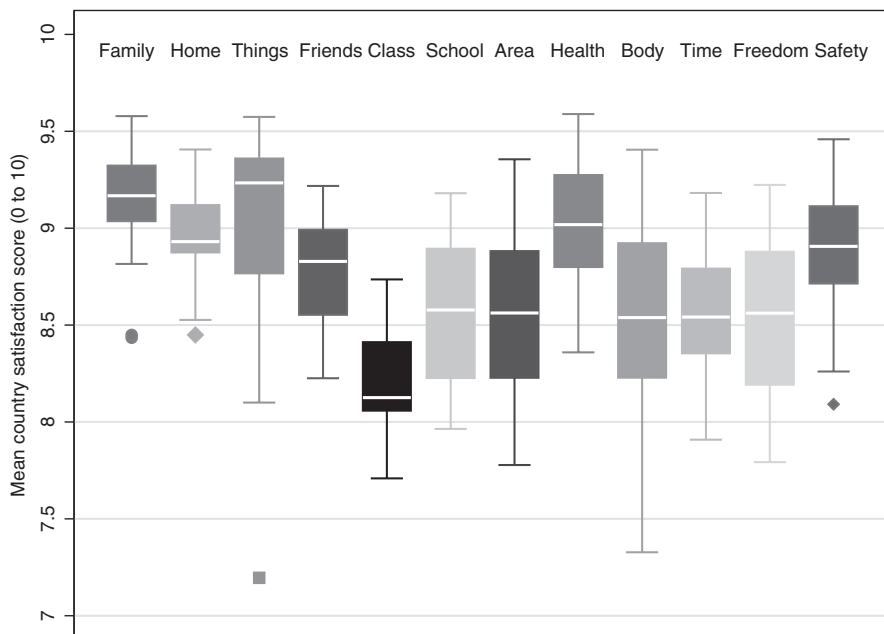


Fig. 13.1 Box plot of scores across countries for satisfaction with different aspects of life

Although there is a lot of detail to be absorbed in this table, there are some fairly consistent patterns. Five countries tend to rank quite highly across most of the 12 aspects of life. The first three of these are Colombia, Romania and Turkey which are the highest ranking countries for positive affect and eudaimonic well-being and also in the top five countries for life satisfaction (Chap. 6). Colombia is in the mid-range of the rankings for relationships with family and peers, but ranks highly for the majority of aspects. Romania is only ranked outside the top six countries for one aspect (friendships) and Turkey for two (possessions and classmates). The other two countries that tend to rank highly are Norway and Finland. However these two countries are closer to the mid-range of the rankings for school, body image and health. These two countries ranked higher for life satisfaction than for positive affect or eudaimonic well-being.

South Korea ranks in the bottom six countries for all 12 aspects of life – its highest ranking is 14th for satisfaction with friends and classmates – and for the three measures of overall self-reported well-being. The UK, Estonia, Ethiopia, Nepal and South Africa also tend to rank low for most aspects of life. The latter three countries did tend to have higher rankings in some areas – particularly school, classmates and/or body image. There is a much bigger contrast in some countries. For example, Algeria ranked second for satisfaction with school and 17th for satisfaction with possessions, while being in the top half of the rankings for all three measures of overall well-being.

Table 13.1 Between-country rankings for satisfaction with different aspects of life

Country	Family	Home	Things	Friends	Class-mates	School	Local area	Body image	Health	Time use	Freedom	Safety
Nepal	17	17	14	13	6	5	11	15	17	16	17	15
Ethiopia	18	18	18	18	7	8	15	8	13	17	18	17
Algeria	5	14	17	16	10	2	14	5	9	15	15	7
SAfrica	16	16	15	17	18	9	18	7	14	14	13	16
Colombia	6	7	3	11	9	3	4	1	2	2	5	3
Romania	2	2	1	7	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
Turkey	1	1	10	6	8	4	5	4	3	3	2	2
Israel	4	6	4	9	12	11	6	3	4	6	4	9
Malta	8	9	7	5	3	6	9	6	7	5	10	6
Spain	11	11	8	4	5	12	8	9	5	9	12	10
Italy	10	10	6	10	11	14	13	12	6	12	9	11
Poland	12	4	9	15	13	15	7	11	12	7	8	8
Estonia	9	13	13	12	17	16	10	14	15	11	14	13
Germany	13	8	11	3	16	18	17	16	11	10	7	12
UK	14	12	12	8	15	13	12	17	16	13	11	14
SKorea	15	15	16	14	14	17	16	18	18	18	16	18
Finland	7	5	5	2	4	10	3	10	8	4	6	4
Norway	3	3	2	1	1	7	1	13	10	8	3	5

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

This tabulation of rankings also helps to clarify some of the more general patterns in the data. Romania had the highest ranking for six of the 12 aspects and the remaining top rankings were shared between Norway (three), Turkey (two) and Colombia (one). Similarly the lowest scores for each aspect were shared between four countries – Ethiopia (five), South Korea (four), South Africa (two) and Germany (one). Since some countries tend to rank highly across most or all aspects and some countries tend to rank low, there may be some concerns about whether these patterns are wholly or partly attributable to cultural response differences as discussed in Chap. 3. In view of this possibility, the potential of the relative scores presented throughout this book in identifying key messages that are potentially of value for practical and policy purposes in each country will be discussed further shortly.

As a way of introducing the value of relative scores, another way of viewing the mean satisfaction scores reveals patterns that are less apparent from the discussion of individual aspects of life in the previous chapters. This is to look at which aspects of life children tend to rank highest and lowest in each country (rather than across countries as in the table above). Table 13.2 presents these rankings. In many countries the highest ranked categories tend to be satisfaction with possessions (nine countries) and with family (five countries). The overall pattern for satisfaction with possessions puts the low within-country rankings for this aspect of life in Ethiopia (12th out of 12) and Algeria (11th) into context and this type of comparison is the idea behind the calculation of relative scores which are discussed below and which take into account both the rating of a particular aspect of life within a country and the general rating for this aspect across countries.

Satisfaction with classmates was one of the three lowest ranked aspects of life in 16 out of the 18 countries. Freedom was another aspect of life that had a relatively low ranking in many countries. However, satisfaction with school and body image were aspects where there was much wider variation – school ranked from first in Nepal to 12th in Spain and body image ranked from second in Ethiopia to 12th in South Korea, the UK and Norway. It can be seen for example that the high ranking of satisfaction with school in Nepal, Algeria and Ethiopia contrasts with relatively low rankings for this aspect of life in most other countries. So, these three countries can be regarded as having a high relative score for children's satisfaction with school. This approach eliminates some of the concerns about whether the absolute value of mean satisfaction scores are comparable across countries, and identifies positive and negative aspects in each country.

13.2 Relative Scores

The calculation method for the relative scores was provided in Chap. 3. The features of these scores are: (a) they indicate, in the form of a percentage, the extent to which a specific mean score a specific country varies from what would be expected from the average mean satisfaction scores for the country across the aspects of life and the average mean satisfaction scores for the aspect of life across countries; (b) a

Table 13.2 Within-country rankings of mean satisfaction with different aspects of life

Country	Family	Home	Things	Friends	Class-mates	School	Local area	Body image	Health	Time use	Freedom	Safety
Nepal	7	6	2	5	10	1	8	11	3	9	12	4
Ethiopia	5	4	12	9	8	3	10	2	1	6	11	7
Algeria	1	6	11	7	10	2	9	5	3	8	12	4
S Africa	1	5	4	8	12	6	11	3	2	9	10	7
Colombia	4	6	2	11	12	7	9	3	1	8	10	5
Romania	3	5	2	11	12	10	7	6	1	9	8	4
Turkey	1	2	5	9	12	7	11	8	4	10	6	3
Israel	2	5	1	8	12	11	9	4	3	10	7	6
Malta	2	6	1	5	12	8	10	7	3	9	11	4
Spain	3	5	1	4	10	12	7	8	2	9	11	6
Italy	3	4	1	5	12	11	9	10	2	8	7	6
Poland	3	2	1	9	12	11	7	10	5	6	8	4
Estonia	1	3	2	6	12	11	7	9	4	8	10	5
Germany	2	4	1	3	12	10	11	9	5	8	7	6
UK	2	3	1	4	11	10	7	12	5	9	8	6
S Korea	1	2	4	3	8	6	9	12	5	10	11	7
Finland	2	5	1	4	12	10	7	11	6	8	9	3
Norway	2	5	1	4	10	9	3	12	8	11	7	6

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

positive percentage indicates that children in the country score relatively positively for this aspect of life, while a negative percentage indicates the opposite; (c) the relative scores for each country average to zero; (d) the relative scores for each aspect of life average to zero.

Using these scores, Table 13.3 provides a summary of up to three aspects of life where children in each country tended to score comparatively high or low. Aspects of life shown without brackets are those for which relative scores were 3% above and 3% below expected scores respectively. In cases where countries did not have enough aspects of life that met one of these criterion, aspects of life where the relative scores were 2% above or below the expected scores are shown in brackets. This approach can provide some indications of potential priorities for improving children's lives in each country. It also highlights some interesting contrasts between countries. For example, Nepal and Estonia have opposite patterns for school and classmates (high relative scores in Nepal and low relative scores in Estonia) and for family (low in Nepal and high in Estonia) indicating sharply contrasting evaluations of life by children in these two countries.

Overall, by using typical response patterns across a range of countries, relative scores probably provide a more balanced view than absolute mean scores about the aspects of life with which children are particularly satisfied in each country. On the other hand, they do have drawbacks. Because they are dependent on the pattern of scores across countries in the sample and the aspects of life being considered they will change somewhat when either of these changes. For example, if a number of new countries were introduced to the sample which had particularly low scores for satisfaction with the local area, then this might not still be the aspect of life with the lowest relative score in South Africa and Germany. This is an issue with a small sample of countries but would become less critical as the range and size of the sample increased.

13.3 Inequalities in Satisfaction

Another way of looking at variations in subjective well-being which is pursued throughout this book is the extent of inequalities between children within countries. Statistics on inequalities have been included in each of the tables of core indicators in preceding chapters. Table 13.4 shows a summary country ranking for inequalities based on the average of the inequality statistic for all 12 core aspects of life. As a point of comparison it also shows the country ranking for the average of the mean satisfaction scores across the same aspects of life for each subjective well-being indicator. A number of countries have broadly similar rankings for means and equalities. Romania has the highest mean of the 18 countries and also the lowest inequality. However, Spain and South Korea rank four places higher for equality of satisfaction than mean satisfaction, and Finland and Italy three places higher. Turkey ranked six places lower for equality of satisfaction than mean satisfaction, Algeria four places lower, and Colombia and Israel three places lower. These patterns are

Table 13.3 High and low relative satisfaction scores for each country

Country	High	Low
Nepal	School Classmates	Freedom Family
Ethiopia	Body image School Classmates	Things Freedom
Algeria	School Self Family	Things Freedom
South Africa	Body image School	Local area
Colombia	Body image	Friends Classmates
Romania	Body image	Friends
Turkey	(Freedom) (Safety)	Classmates
Israel	Body image Freedom	School Classmates
Malta	(Classmates)	(Home) (Freedom)
Spain	(Things) (Classmates)	School Freedom
Italy	Things Health	School
Poland	Things	School
Estonia	Family	School Classmates
Germany	Friends Things Freedom	Local area School Body image
UK	Things Friends	Body image
South Korea	Classmates Friends Family	Body image Safety
Finland	Local area	Body image
Norway	Local area Classmates	Body image Health

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

Table 13.4 Country rankings for average inequality and average mean satisfaction across 12 aspects of life

Country	Inequality of satisfaction		Mean satisfaction	
	Average	Rank	Average	Rank
Nepal	0.269	16	8.53	15
Ethiopia	0.274	17	8.29	17
Algeria	0.263	15	8.66	11
S Africa	0.296	18	8.47	16
Colombia	0.208	6	9.09	3
Romania	0.165	1	9.29	1
Turkey	0.214	8	9.10	2
Israel	0.223	9	8.92	6
Malta	0.208	5	8.89	7
Spain	0.207	4	8.77	8
Italy	0.209	7	8.68	10
Poland	0.225	10	8.72	9
Estonia	0.238	12	8.54	14
Germany	0.226	11	8.57	12
UK	0.246	13	8.56	13
S Korea	0.254	14	8.20	18
Finland	0.166	2	8.93	5
Norway	0.182	3	9.00	4

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old. The table shows the average inequality in satisfaction (coefficient of variation) and average mean satisfaction in each country across 12 aspects of life – family, home, possessions, friends, classmates, school, local area, time use, body image, health, freedom and safety. The rankings for inequalities are from the most equal (1) to the most unequal (18) country. The rankings for means are from the highest (1) to the lowest (18)

similar to those noted in Chap. 6 regarding means and inequalities in overall subjective well-being. Thus considering mean satisfaction or inequality in satisfaction does provide two different perspectives on how children's well-being compares between countries.

The factors that cause mean satisfaction scores to differ might best be understood by comparisons of macro country-level indicators, such as national wealth, between countries. This issue is considered further in the final section of this chapter. The factors that cause inequalities within countries might be understood partly by macro indicators of inequalities but also by understanding the factors within countries that are associated with some children having lower or higher subjective well-being than others. Some analysis on this topic is presented in Chap. 14.

13.4 Absolute Means, Relative Means or Inequalities?

These three different ways of comparing children's subjective well-being with different aspects of their life across countries raises the question of which one is most useful. This is very much a matter of perspective. First, one might be concerned about children's low satisfaction with their classmates compared to other aspects of their lives in a particular country, even though it is clear that this is a fairly common phenomenon across many countries. In this case the absolute mean is the most relevant statistic. Alternatively, one might be concerned about children's low satisfaction with body image in a particular country because it is clear that this is not a universal phenomenon. In this case the relative score becomes more useful. Finally, one might be less concerned with how satisfied children are, on average, on a scale from zero to ten than with whether there are big differences in children's satisfaction, in which case a measure of inequality is the most useful.

To provide a summary of the implications of these different possibilities, Table 13.5 lists the aspect of life with the highest absolute mean scores, the highest relative mean score and the highest inequality in satisfaction for each country. For seven countries, one would arrive at the same conclusions about which aspect of life is of most concern whichever measure one looks at. On the other hand in three countries – Algeria, Malta and Poland – each measure identifies a different aspect. In general, classmates appears as an issue in more countries using absolute means than the other two measures. The local area is highlighted for South Africa and Germany in terms of low relative mean scores and high levels of inequality and also for Algeria in terms of inequalities.

13.5 Explaining Variations Between Countries

One of the key questions raised by the substantial variations that have been identified in children's satisfaction with different aspects of their lives between countries is to understand what causes them. This is a little-explored aspect of children's subjective well-being. This section will look at some possible explanations for these variations in terms both of means and inequalities. As in Chap. 6, this exploration is based on the assumption that subjective well-being scores are comparable across countries, and therefore ignores the possibility of cultural response differences. As discussed in Chap. 3 it is not possible to be sure at this stage whether this is the case or not. However, this has been an assumption in international comparisons of adult subjective well-being and some evidence which casts doubt on the strength of the effect of cultural response differences was presented in Chap. 6 where it was shown that there was little association between the mean child life satisfaction and the mean adult life satisfaction in a country. If there were substantial and deeply embedded cultural response differences then they would be expected to apply both to adults and children within the same country and this should lead to at least some

Table 13.5 Lowest ranking aspects of life within each country based on three different measures

Country	Lowest absolute mean	Lowest relative mean	Highest inequality
Nepal	Freedom	Freedom	Freedom
Ethiopia	Things	Things	Things
Algeria	Freedom	Things	Area
S Africa	Classmates	Area	Area
Colombia	Classmates	Friends	Classmates
Romania	Classmates	Friends	Classmates
Turkey	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates
Israel	Classmates	School	Classmates
Malta	Classmates	Home	Area
Spain	School	School	Freedom
Italy	Classmates	School	Classmates
Poland	Classmates	School	Self
Estonia	Classmates	Classmates	Classmates
Germany	Classmates	Area	Area
UK	Self	Self	Self
S Korea	Self	Self	Self
Finland	Classmates	Self	Self
Norway	Self	Self	Self

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old

evidence of association between mean life satisfaction scores for children and adults.

Table 13.6 shows associations between indicators of per capita national wealth and income inequalities within countries with both mean satisfaction with each aspect of life and inequalities in satisfaction. The correlations for income inequalities only apply to 15 of the 18 countries as data on this indicator was not available for three countries – Algeria, Malta and South Korea. The table only shows the figures for correlations that were statistically significant with 95% confidence. Other cells are blank. There were no significant correlations between means and inequalities in satisfaction with school, health or body image and either of the national economic indicators. Correlations for the other nine aspects of life are discussed first in relation to mean satisfaction and then in relation to inequalities in satisfaction.

The table shows some surprising results. It might be expected that satisfaction with an aspect such as health would be associated with economic prosperity, as objective health indicators are generally more positive in wealthier countries. It is also might be expected that satisfaction with personal relationships would not be so strongly associated with economic factors. However, in this sample of 18 countries the opposite appears to be the case. The correlation between mean satisfaction with friends and national wealth was the strongest while that between mean satisfaction with health and national wealth was very weak and not statistically significant. While this is an intriguing pattern, caution is needed in reading too much into it. The

Table 13.6 Correlations of national wealth per capita and inequalities in wealth with means and inequalities of satisfaction with different aspects of life

	Mean satisfaction		Inequality of satisfaction	
	Log GNI per capita	Gini coefficient	Log GNI per capita	Gini coefficient
Family	0.69		-0.71	
Home	0.60		-0.75	0.56
Possessions	0.71		-0.80	
Friends	0.72		-0.75	0.73
Classmates		-0.53		0.82
School				
Local area				0.63
Health				
Body image				
Time use			-0.50	0.54
Freedom	0.55		-0.66	
Safety			-0.57	0.57

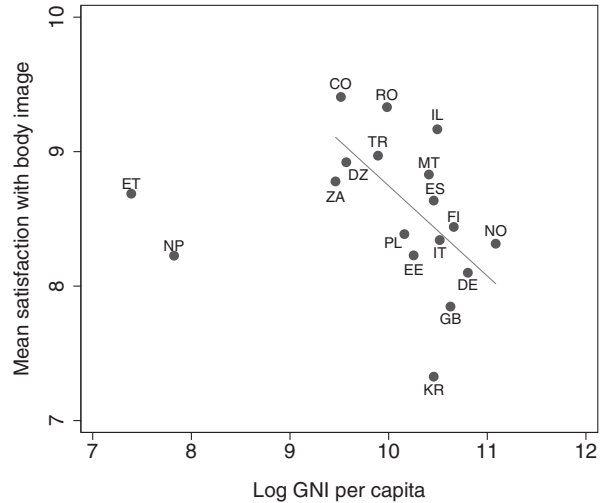
Age groups: 10 and 12 years old. The table only shows correlation coefficients for those associations where the p-value was less than 0.05 – indicating 95% confidence in a significant correlation

sample of countries is small and national wealth could be acting as a proxy for some other variable that is more logically linked with the quality of children's friendships such as the availability of mobile phones and internet access; the availability of places where children can meet and spend time together; or levels of freedom that children have to spend time on friendships. Unfortunately with only 18 countries it is not possible to take account of more than one of these explanatory variables at the same time to test out their relative importance in explaining variations in children's satisfaction with friendships between countries. Additionally, one or two outlying countries can have a substantial impact on the correlations. For example, in view of the findings presented in Chap. 12 it is surprising to see that there is no significant association between national wealth and mean country satisfaction with body image. However as is illustrated by the line fit for 16 countries in Fig. 13.2, the picture would be very different if Ethiopia and Nepal are not included.

In total, children tended to have higher mean satisfaction with family, home, possessions, friends and freedom in wealthier countries. There was only one significant association between the measure of income inequality and mean satisfaction scores. This was that children in countries with greater income equality tended to have higher satisfaction with their classmates.

Looking at the last two columns in Table 13.6 it can be seen that there was significantly less inequality in satisfaction with a number of aspects of life – family, home, possessions, friends, time use, freedom and safety – in wealthier countries. Perhaps more pertinently there was also a relationship between income inequalities and satisfaction with six aspects of life. Surprisingly, satisfaction with possessions was not one of these aspects. It might be expected that there would be greater inequality in children's satisfaction with possessions in countries with greater

Fig. 13.2 Scatterplot of log GNI per capita with mean satisfaction with body image. The *plot* shows how Ethiopia and Nepal are outliers. The *line* shows the best fit for the other 16 countries. The correlation coefficient between the two variables for these 16 countries was -0.575 ($p = 0.020$), compared to -0.213 ($p = 0.396$) for the 18 countries



income inequality. However it is possible that children's satisfaction with this aspect of life are more influenced by comparisons with their peer groups than the national picture. The association between income inequality and inequality in satisfaction with the home environment makes intuitive sense but the reasons for some of the other relationships here are less clear.

In summary, at this stage, it is far from clear what factors can explain the variations between countries in how children evaluate their lives as a whole or specific aspects of them. In addition to economic measures it may worth exploring other hypotheses were explored in relation to particular aspects of life. For example, satisfaction with safety may be more linked with macro indicators such as levels of crime. This is an important direction for future research, particularly as subjective well-being data from children becomes increasingly available across a wide range of countries.

13.6 Discussion

The synthesis presented in this chapter, utilising three different ways of viewing children's evaluations of different aspects of life and comparing these across countries, illustrates how one will draw somewhat different conclusions from subjective well-being data depending on the comparative indicator selected. In the literature on children's subjective well-being, and subjective well-being more generally, there has been a tendency to focus primarily on mean satisfaction scores. However there is a developing interest in the measurement of inequalities as well as mean levels of subjective well-being. For example, the World Happiness Report, initiated in 2012, began by ranking countries by mean adult life satisfaction. In 2016 the report also

introduced measures of inequality in life satisfaction (Helliwell et al. 2016). In relation to children's well-being a recent UNICEF Report Card (UNICEF Office of Research 2016) focused exclusively on inequalities in well-being across four dimensions including subjective well-being. An approach focused on inequalities may have more political and practical appeal than one focused on mean scores. Arguing that it is important to increase mean life satisfaction can seem a rather abstract idea, particularly as there are unresolved question marks about the extent of comparability of mean scores between countries and also the extent of individual adaptation (the 'set point' theory of subjective well-being) over time. A concern for inequalities of life satisfaction or happiness, however, may be seen as a more practically important goal to improve the general quality of life within a particular society.

The final section of the chapter presented some analysis of the relationship between two macro indicators – national wealth and income inequality – and means and inequalities of children's satisfaction with 12 different aspects of their lives. The results were somewhat surprising – for example, children in wealthier countries tended to be more satisfied than children in poorer countries with their friendships, but there was no difference in satisfaction with health. This analysis remains tentative due to the small number of countries involved, and future waves of the survey with larger numbers of countries will shed more light on this issue.

This chapter has focused on exploring variations in children's subjective well-being between individual countries, but it is also possible to look at groupings of countries. Two recent analyses of the Children's Worlds data have taken this approach. Kosher and Ben-Arieh (2017) grouped countries according to the dominant religion in the country while Uyan-Semerci et al. (2017) formed three groups based on different welfare contexts. Both studies found significant differences in subjective well-being between groups, although both also acknowledge the limitations imposed by the current sample of countries. As child subjective well-being data becomes available for a larger number of countries the potential for firm conclusions from this analysis will be substantially enhanced.

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Chapter 14

Variations in Children's Well-Being Within Countries

This chapter focuses on variations in individual children's subjective well-being within countries and looks at some factors that might potentially explain them. It takes a comparative approach through looking at similarities and differences in patterns of associations across countries. One source of potential variation is demographic characteristics such as age and gender. Variations according to children's age group and gender have already been discussed in Chaps. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. A brief synthesis of the findings is presented. The chapter then goes on to look at two factors that are potentially amenable to change through policy or practice interventions – material deprivation and negative peer experiences. These are both factors that have been found to be associated with children's overall sense of well-being in some studies in specific countries. The analysis presented shows that the strength of association between these factors and children's life satisfaction varies from country to country. The chapter concludes with a brief look at the subjective well-being of children in specific circumstances – children not born in the country of the survey and children not living with their family – analysis of this kind may highlight particular sub-groups of the child population where targeted interventions could help to improve children's experienced quality of life.

14.1 Introduction

Research studies in individual countries have begun to piece together a picture of the factors most strongly associated with individual variations in children's subjective well-being. It is beyond the remit of this book to review this large body of evidence. An excellent review of many studies is provided by Huebner, Antaramian and Heffner (2012) who summarise findings from a range of studies identifying significant associations with children's subjective well-being of factors within the family, social relationships, school and education, health, community engagement, behaviours, emotional well-being and spirituality/religiosity. Many more studies

have been published since that review and new areas of research have been explored such as, to take one example, the links between personality and well-being in childhood in several countries (Goswami 2014; Suldo et al. 2014; Moreira et al. 2015; Weber and Huebner 2015; Xie et al. 2016).

However, two key weaknesses of the current body of research are (a) that they rely mostly on analysis of cross-sectional data so that directions of potential causality can not be explored; and (b) that most of the research has been in high-income countries in North America and Europe. Patterns that are observed in these countries are not necessarily generalisable to countries that have different cultural and/or economic characteristics. The Children's Worlds study, being a cross-sectional survey cannot address the first of these weaknesses, but it clearly has the potential to contribute towards addressing the second.

Wave 2 of the Children's Worlds study was primarily aimed at gaining a comprehensive description of children's lives and well-being and how these vary between and within countries, rather than with generating data that could provide evidence of the underlying reasons for these variations. However, information was gathered on two factors which have been found to have significant associations with children's subjective well-being, at least in some countries, in previous research studies. These factors are children's material deprivation and children's negative peer experiences.

As well as these two factors, the chapter will briefly look at evidence of variations in subjective well-being for particular sub-groups of the population – children who were not born in the country of the survey and children not living with family and children living in particular types of household. While these are not factors that are directly amenable to change they may nevertheless be of interesting from a practical point of view because they can highlight specific circumstances where targeted intervention may be beneficial to enhance children's subjective well-being.

14.2 Variations by Age and Gender

This section briefly reviews evidence on age and gender variations already presented earlier in the book. There are two purposes to this. The first is to provide an overview of patterns across different aspects of life and present this in an accessible fashion. The second is that the analysis presented in the subsequent section takes account of age and gender variations so it is helpful to be clear about the extent of these variations as a foundation for that analysis.

Age variations Chapter 6 provided details of differences in children's overall self-reported well-being between the ages of 10 and 12 years old. There were significant decreases in children's life satisfaction and positive affect between these ages in the majority of countries. In view of these findings it is perhaps to be expected that there would also be substantial decreases between the ages of 10 and 12 years old in children's satisfaction with various specific aspects of their lives. There were statistically significant decreases in mean satisfaction in all 12 aspects of life in South

Korea, Germany and Poland; and for all but one aspect in Turkey. On the other hand there was only one significant age pattern in Israel; while in Nepal and Malta there were a few significant decreases for particular aspects but also two instances of age-related increases in satisfaction with family in Nepal and with the home in Malta.

The largest age-related decreases in satisfaction were for body image and school. In four countries – South Korea, Poland, the UK and Norway – mean satisfaction with body image for children aged 12 was over one point lower on a 10-point scale than for children age 10. For school there were age differences in mean satisfaction of over 0.7 on a 10-point scale in South Korea, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Spain and Estonia. There were also substantial age drops in a few countries for time use and freedom. On the other hand there was less evidence of age decreases in satisfaction with family – which were only statistically significant in four countries. Age patterns in satisfaction with friends also tended to be of modest size and did not reach a difference of 0.5 points on a 10-point scale in any country. Thus although the patterns here are broadly in line with the expectations from the findings on age patterns in overall subjective well-being discussed earlier, there is considerable diversity between countries and between different aspects of life and the overall picture is quite complex. It should be noted that because this is cross-sectional survey data it cannot conclusively demonstrate that any age-related patterns represent decreases for the same children over time. It is also possible that differences between age groups measured at the same point in time could be cohort effects.

Gender variations Substantial gender differences in overall well-being were relatively uncommon and occurred in total in eight countries for one or more measures. Where there were differences they were mostly in terms of boys having higher well-being than girls (see Chap. 6 for further details). Turning to satisfaction with different aspects of life among the children aged 10 and 12 years old in each country, there were some consistent patterns of differences within specific countries, and across countries for certain aspects of life. In South Korea, girls had lower mean satisfaction than boys for all 12 key aspects of life and these differences were statistically significant for nine of the 12 aspects. However the size of the differences was not always that much greater in South Korea than in other countries and one of the factors to bear in mind is that the survey sample was much the largest in South Korea. A larger sample size means that it is more likely that relatively small differences will reach a given threshold of statistical significance. In contrast, girls tended to have higher levels of satisfaction across almost all aspects of life in Nepal and Colombia, including five and four aspects of life respectively where the gender differences were statistically significant. The two aspects of life with the strongest evidence of gender differences were the same as for age variations – school and body image. In 11 countries girls were significantly more satisfied with their school life than boys (see Chap. 10). In South Korea the difference was in the opposite direction. For body image, girls were significantly less satisfied with this aspect of life than boys in nine countries and some of the gender gaps were quite large, particularly in some countries in the northern half of Europe (see Chap. 12). In addition to these two aspects of life the other aspects for which there were most gender dif-

ferences was satisfaction with classmates. Boys were significantly more satisfied with this aspect of life in five countries (South Africa, South Korea, the UK, Malta and Norway) while the opposite was the case in Nepal.

It may seem surprising that there are not more extensive and substantial gender differences in children's satisfaction with their lives. For example, Chap. 5 discussed some fairly substantial and systematic gender differences in children's participation in daily activities. Yet, there were only substantial gender differences in satisfaction with time use in two out of 18 countries (girls were more satisfied than boys in Nepal, and the opposite was the case in South Korea). One hypothesis is that children absorb societal expectations about gender roles and therefore their assessments of their sense of satisfaction may be adjusted to these expectations (Uyan-Semerci et al. 2017).

Nevertheless the findings on satisfaction with school and self provide important insights into girls' and boys' differing experiences of childhood. They also illustrate the value of exploring children's satisfaction with different aspects of their lives rather than just considering their overall well-being. For example, in Estonia there was no significant gender difference in children's overall well-being using any of the three measures discussed in Chap. 6. However, girls were much more satisfied with school and much less satisfied with their body image. An overall mean score across these aspects of life would conceal gender differences. This point also highlights one of the risks of constructing subjective well-being indexes through summing children's satisfaction with different domains, such as those included in the Children's Worlds survey based on work by Cummins and Lau (2005) and Huebner et al. (2011) which were discussed in Chap. 3. Such a practice may produce variable results regarding gender differences in subjective well-being (and, by extension, other important sub-group differences) depending on the choices made about which domains to include in the index.

Kaye-Tzadok, Kim and Main (2017) extend the evidence on gender differences using the data on children aged 12 years old across 16 countries, by looking at the relative influence of four aspects of life – self, family, peers and school – on low life satisfaction of girls and boys. They report that self, family and peers were stronger predictors of low life satisfaction for girls than boys, while school had a stronger influence for boys. This analysis was based on a pooled sample from the 16 countries, and could be developed further to test whether these patterns differ between countries.

There was also some evidence of different age trajectories in girls' and boys' subjective well-being, despite the restricted age range of the survey. In South Korea, between the ages of 10 and 12 there was a significant divergence in girls' and boys' satisfaction with all 12 aspects of life considered here. In all cases a gap developed with girls becoming less satisfied with their lives than boys. There were similar patterns for satisfaction with self (body and appearance) in several countries and these are illustrated in Chap. 12. There were a small number of other such patterns in the same direction in Italy (family, house, local area, time use and safety), Finland (time use and safety), the UK (classmates) and Poland (health). These patterns suggest that it would be interesting to extend this type of survey work to older age groups of children across a range of countries in order to gain a greater insight into the pos-

sibility of differing age-related patterns for girls and boys that have already been identified in some countries.

14.3 Material Deprivation and Children's Well-Being

Material deprivation has emerged as an important factor in understanding why some children are more happy or satisfied with their lives than others. From the earliest years of research on subjective well-being with adult populations (mostly in high-income countries) it was found that socio-economic factors did not explain large amounts of variation in people's sense of well-being, at least in high-income countries (e.g. Andrews and Withey 1976). These findings led to the search for other explanations for these variations. Initial research on children's subjective well-being tended to find similar results. For example, information about household income in the UK tends to explain smaller amounts of the variation in children's life satisfaction than in the life satisfaction of their parents (Pople and Rees 2016).

However, household income is only one measure of material circumstances, and in terms of children's experiences of life is rather a distant one. More recently, the development of child-reported material deprivation measures has led to findings of a stronger relationship between this economic measure and children's life satisfaction. An innovation in this respect was the Family Affluence Scale developed as part of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Study. The aim of this measure was to establish a way of measuring socio-economic differences through a set of questions that children could report themselves. This is a useful approach because children are unlikely to be able to report reliably on household income, for example. Findings from the most recent wave on the HBSC study (Inchley et al. 2016) indicate that, using this measure, there is a significant socio-economic gradient in children's life satisfaction in almost all (39 out of 41) of the countries participating in the study. As its name suggests the Family Affluence Scale measures family (or household) affluence through asking whether the family has a vehicle, a dishwasher, holidays abroad, and so on. A different approach to measuring material deprivation is to identify sets of items that children themselves own or have access to. This has the potential to more directly measure material deprivation from a child's perspective and direct experience. It also makes the child rather than the household the unit of analysis (and it is possible that deprivation could vary between children in the same household, for example on the basis of age, gender or for other reasons).

The development of the child-centred material deprivation measure in Wave 2 of the Children's Worlds survey has already been described in Chap. 3 which also provides information on earlier research within particular countries adopting a similar approach. So far there is relatively little published evidence regarding the associations between child-centred material deprivation and children's subjective well-being. However, a study in the UK estimated that such a measure explained at least 10% of the variation in the life satisfaction of children aged 10 to 15 in England (Main and Bradshaw 2012; Goswami 2014). An analysis of the data from the pilot

wave of the Children's Worlds survey also found evidence of a relationship between material deprivation and children's life satisfaction in eight countries (Sarriera et al. 2015). There were indications that the relationship was stronger in countries with higher levels of material deprivation although the small number of countries and non-probability sampling in some countries limits how conclusive these findings are.

Wave 2 of the Children's Worlds survey provides an opportunity to test whether these kinds of patterns of findings are replicated more widely. The analysis presented in this section is based on the simplified material deprivation measure that groups children into three categories with low, medium and high levels of material deprivation, and looks at the extent to which this measure of material deprivation explains variations in subjective well-being in each country. In Chap. 4 significant age and gender variations were identified in ownership of or access to some of the material deprivation items in some countries. In order to take account of these variations, age and gender are also included in the analysis and the explanatory power quoted for material deprivation refers to the additional contribution that it makes to explaining variation in children's subjective well-being controlling for age and gender differences.

Table 14.1 summarises the results of statistical testing for the relationships between the material deprivation score and the three measures of overall subjective well-being introduced in Chap. 6. For each country and measure of overall subjective well-being there are two columns of figures. The first column shows the difference in mean subjective well-being, on a scale from zero to 100 between children with low and high deprivation respectively. This gives an indication of the size of differences that are being discussed. This figure is only shown for countries and measures for which there was a statistically significant difference. The second column shows the percentage of variation in subjective well-being that was explained by the material deprivation measure, after taking age group and gender into account. Statistics are not given for the eudaimonic measure in Israel as the relevant questions were not asked in this country.

In 16 countries the material deprivation score predicted statistically significant variation in all three measures of overall subjective well-being. The exceptions were Finland where there was only a significant link with life satisfaction and Norway where material deprivation was not significantly associated with any of the three overall well-being variables. In most countries, positive affect tended to vary less according to material deprivation than did life satisfaction and eudaimonic well-being. That pattern might be theoretically expected as affective subjective well-being is viewed as being more likely to be affected by momentary circumstances and daily events than other components of self-reported well-being. However this pattern did not hold everywhere and, in particular, in Nepal, material deprivation explained more of the variation in positive affect than in eudaimonic well-being and life satisfaction respectively.

Material deprivation explained over 10% of the life satisfaction measure in Algeria and Ethiopia. In Ethiopia the difference in mean scores between a child with high and low deprivation was almost 19 points on a 100-point scale, and in Algeria

Table 14.1 Differences in satisfaction with aspects of life between children with high and low material deprivation in each country

Country	Life satisfaction		Positive affect		Eudaimonic	
	Gap	% explain (%)	Gap	% explain (%)	Gap	% explain (%)
Nepal	4.5	2	6.9	4	5.4	2
Ethiopia	18.8	11	11.1	7	10.5	6
Algeria	13.8	11	7.9	5	9.0	7
S Africa	8.5	3	5.6	2	7.4	4
Colombia	6.9	3	3.6	1	5.0	2
Romania	5.5	4	5.1	4	7.2	5
Turkey	8.2	4	6.5	3	8.5	5
Israel	9.6	4	8.2	4	na	
Malta	9.0	4	7.8	4	9.0	5
Spain	8.8	5	5.4	2	8.4	5
Italy	11.1	5	6.3	3	8.1	4
Poland	16.0	7	12.1	5	15.1	9
Estonia	11.6	5	7.5	3	8.3	3
Germany	12.2	3	9.1	3	16.2	9
UK	11.8	3	11.1	4	16.9	7
S Korea	9.4	2	7.6	2	6.8	1
Finland	9.7	2	ns		ns	
Norway	ns		ns		ns	

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old for life satisfaction and positive affect; 12 years old for eudaimonic well-being. The 'Gap' columns in the table show the gap on a 100-point scale in well-being between children with high material deprivation and children with low material deprivation, controlling for age and gender. The '% explain' columns show the proportion of variation in the well-being measure that was explained by deprivation (after controlling for age and gender). All differences shown were statistically significant with 99% confidence and were in the direction that children with high deprivation had lower satisfaction than children with low deprivation

it was almost 14 points. Ethiopia was also the country where material deprivation explained the largest amount of variation in positive affect. The gap between children with low and high deprivation was around 11 points on a 100-point scale. This gap was also more than 10 points in Poland and the UK. Deprivation explained the largest amount of variation in eudaimonic well-being in Germany and Poland with a gap in mean well-being scores between children with low and high deprivation of around 16 points and 15 points out of 100 respectively.

Overall there is evidence that children who are experiencing higher levels of material deprivation are less happy, less satisfied with their lives and have lower psychological well-being in all countries in the survey. However it is also apparent that deprivation has a different relationship with the three different measures of overall well-being. In Ethiopia and Algeria it was more strongly linked with life satisfaction than eudaimonic well-being, while the opposite was the case in Germany and the UK. The reasons for these differential patterns require further exploration.

Table 14.2 presents a summary of similar analysis for the 12 items relating to satisfaction with different aspects of life. Here, due to space considerations only the gap in mean satisfaction between the low and high deprivation groups is shown. Perhaps not surprisingly, deprivation had the largest explanatory power for satisfaction with possessions. In all countries this relationship was statistically significant. In two countries – Nepal and the UK – the material deprivation measure only predicted a small amount (less than 3%) of the variation in satisfaction with possessions. On the other hand, in three countries – Algeria, Ethiopia and Estonia – it predicted more than 10% of the variation. Nevertheless, even in these countries this still leaves the large majority of variation in how satisfied children feel with their possessions unexplained. There are a number of possible explanations for this. One possibility is that the list of items does not do a good job of capturing what children feel is important, and this may be more the case in some countries than others. A second possibility is that children's satisfaction with the things they have is not determined primarily by the number of items so much as comparisons with children around them. Such social comparisons have been shown to be important determinants of subjective well-being in adult populations (e.g. Cheung and Lucas 2016). This is an area that requires further research in relation to children.

The two other aspects of life for which material deprivation tended to explain the second largest variation were children's satisfaction with their home and with their local area. This makes some logical sense as children living in poorer families may experience, on average, greater deprivation and also poorer housing conditions, and these things are also likely to be connected to the general quality of area where they live. Children's material deprivation explained more than 5% of the variation in their satisfaction with the home where they lived in Ethiopia, Estonia, Poland, Spain and Germany. Some of the differences in satisfaction for this aspect of life are quite sizeable. For example, in Ethiopia, children in the high deprivation group had average satisfaction with their homes around 1.6 points lower on the 10-point scale; and in Estonia and Poland the gap was around 1.2 to 1.3 points out of 10. In South Africa, the difference in children's satisfaction with their local area was almost 1.4 points out of 10 between the low and high deprivation groups.

At the other end of the spectrum, material deprivation tended to explain little of the variation in children's satisfaction with their classmates or their health. The finding about classmates is notable because, as shown in Chap. 13, this tended to be the aspect of life for which there were the largest inequalities in satisfaction within countries. It does not seem that levels of deprivation can account for these inequalities, although it is still possible that material inequalities within groups of children within the same school may be an important factor.

The table also provides some indication of how important deprivation tended to be in understanding variations in satisfaction with different aspects of life in each country. Overall it tended to make the biggest difference in Ethiopia, Estonia and Poland; and apparently made relatively little difference in Nepal, Finland and Norway. The latter two countries had the lowest rates of material deprivation, with over three-quarters of children in each country not lacking any of the eight items and thus there is relatively little scope for identifying differences in material

Table 14.2 Differences in satisfaction with aspects of life between children with high and low material deprivation in each country

Country	Family	Home	Possessions	Friends	Classmates	School	Local area	Body image	Health	Time use	Freedom	Safety
Nepal	0.4	0.8	0.7	0.4				0.4	0.6			0.8
Ethiopia	1.4	1.6	3.1	1.3	0.7	1.1	1.3	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.2	0.7
Algeria	0.3	0.9	2.4	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.6
S Africa	0.6	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.4		1.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.8
Colombia	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4		0.3	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.8	0.5
Romania	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Turkey	0.3	0.6	1.1	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.6
Israel	0.6	0.8	0.9			0.7	0.7	0.4		0.9	0.9	0.8
Malta	0.7	0.7	0.9		0.4	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.4	1.1	0.5
Spain	0.5	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.7	1.0	0.6
Italy	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.7	1.0	0.7
Poland	1.2	1.2	0.9	1.1	0.7	1.3	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.5	1.1
Estonia	0.9	1.3	1.4	0.7	0.7	0.5	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.9
Germany	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	0.9	0.6	0.7	1.0	0.9
UK	0.8	1.2	0.7	0.5	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.5	1.0
S Korea	0.8	1.0	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.8
Finland	0.9	1.0	0.7									
Norway	0.5	0.9	0.8						0.7		1.1	

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old. The figures in the table show the gap on a 10-point scale in satisfaction between children with high material deprivation and children with low material deprivation, controlling for age and gender. All differences shown were statistically significant with 99% confidence and were in the direction that children with high deprivation had lower satisfaction than children with low deprivation

deprivation using this list of items. The pattern in Nepal can not be explained in the same way as most children lacked at least four of the eight items. For whatever reason it does not seem that whether children in Nepal own or have access to the items asked about in the questionnaire makes very much difference either to their overall subjective well-being or their satisfaction with different aspects of their lives.

In summary, the findings presented in this section indicate that children's experience of material deprivation in terms of the extent to which they lack ownership of, or access to, particular items is significantly associated both with their overall subjective well-being and with their satisfaction with specific aspects of their lives – particularly their possessions and the home where they live. These findings are stronger in some countries than others. Work on developing appropriate measures of poverty and deprivation that can be reported by children themselves is still at an early stage. The measure used in this chapter is a very basic initial attempt in this respect. The fact that such a basic measure can nevertheless explain variation in children's subjective well-being is an important indication of the potential for research on this topic using more sophisticated measures.

At a practical level, the size of some of the gaps in subjective well-being within countries between children with high and low levels of deprivation indicates the important role that economic inequalities can play in children's experience of childhood. Future research could illuminate this topic further by exploring the impact of inequalities between children who have daily contact with one another, for example through attending the same school. It is plausible that children's comparisons with those directly around them could have a stronger effect on their subjective well-being than the extent of their deprivation within a national context.

The topic of material deprivation addressed here is only way of looking at disadvantage that children may experience. Two recent analyses of the Children's Worlds data have taken a broader view based on the concept of social exclusion. Crous and Bradshaw (2017) use various sets of questions within the survey data to construct a multi-dimensional picture of disadvantage which is an adaptation of the Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix. They identify seven sub-domains – material and economic resources; access to services; social resources; participation; health and well-being; housing and local environment; and social harm. They find that, while there is considerable overlap in terms of children who are excluded on each domain, material deprivation does not fully capture the idea of social exclusion. Gross-Manos (2017) operationalises the concept of social exclusion using a narrower set of indicators from the Children's Worlds data set made up of two dimensions – area and services; and school. A material resources measure is also developed consisting of items on material deprivation and also two evaluative items about satisfaction with possessions and frequency of worrying about family money (see Chap. 8). Gross-Manos reports that the social exclusion measures predicted much more of the variation in children's overall subjective well-being than did the measure of material resources. These two analyses therefore suggest the importance of developing multi-dimensional indicators of children's disadvantage that extend beyond narrow definitions of the material resources of the family or those available to the child.

14.4 Children's Negative Peer Experiences and Their Well-Being

Negative peer experiences are another factor that has emerged as important in the research on children's subjective well-being. Often these experiences are described as 'bullying' although this term is avoided here as there were some issues with translation of this term as discussed in Chap. 9. The questionnaires asked about two kinds of negative peer experiences at school – being hit by other children and being left out by classmates. More detail about these questions has already been provided in Chap. 9 which also reviews some of the previous literature on this topic.

Analysis of the association between negative peer experiences and subjective well-being in the first 16 countries involved in the Children's Worlds study has already been published (Bradshaw et al. 2017). The analysis in this section extends that analysis, taking a slightly different approach, for all 18 countries. As with the Bradshaw et al. article, the two questions about negative peer experiences are simplified into binary variables that indicate whether or not the child said that they had each experience within the last month. However in the above article these were then combined into a single variable with three categories indicating whether the children had had neither, one or both of these experiences. Here both types of experiences are used separately and this provides some additional insights into the relative association of both experiences with subjective well-being across countries. Initially in this section, only age and gender are taken into account as control variables in the model. In the next section, the joint influence of deprivation and negative peer experiences is explored, and comparisons are made about their relative association with children's subjective well-being in different countries.

Table 14.3 shows the results of statistical testing of the association between these two negative peer experiences and children's life satisfaction, taking account of age and gender and whether the child had had each of the two negative peer experiences. The extent to which negative experiences predicted children's subjective well-being varied widely between countries. In the UK, Poland and Finland, the two experiences explained over 13% of the variation in children's life satisfaction, after taking account of age and gender variations. In Nepal and Ethiopia they only explained around 1%. The table provides some additional detail about the extent to which each of the two experiences explained variation in life satisfaction. In most countries both did. However whether children had been hit by other children at school did not significantly predict their life satisfaction in Nepal, Ethiopia or Colombia; and whether they had been left out by classmates did not do so in Romania. In all countries except Romania and Norway, being left out by classmates was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction than being hit by other children at school. It should be noted that these findings do not take into account material deprivation which is introduced in the analysis in the next section. The patterns for the other two overall well-being measures are fairly similar in this case for most countries and are not shown here for brevity. The association between positive affect and negative peer experiences tended to be a little lower than for life satisfaction.

Table 14.3 Differences in satisfaction with aspects of life according to negative peer experiences at school in each country

Country	Hit	Excluded	% explain (%)
Nepal	ns	-3.5	1
Ethiopia	ns	-4.2	1
Algeria	-6.0	-5.7	4
S Africa	-5.5	-7.8	6
Colombia	ns	-3.7	2
Romania	-2.9	ns	2
Turkey	-3.3	-11.4	9
Israel	-6.3	-8.5	6
Malta	-6.3	-6.5	7
Spain	-4.1	-5.9	5
Italy	-8.8	-9.8	9
Poland	-6.1	-14.8	13
Estonia	-5.2	-6.8	6
Germany	-7.8	-10.7	10
UK	-9.7	-10.3	14
S Korea	-7.6	-12.0	3
Finland	-6.1	-9.9	13
Norway	-7.9	-6.6	10

Age groups: 8, 10 and 12 years old. The 'Hit' and 'Excluded' columns in the table show the gap on a 100-point scale in well-being between children who had had this experience in the past month and children who had not, controlling for age and gender. The '% explain' columns show the proportion of variation in the well-being measure that was explained by these experiences (after controlling for age and gender). All differences shown were statistically significant with 99% confidence and were in the direction that children who had a negative peer experience had lower life satisfaction than people who had not.

The associations between the two negative peer experiences and each of the 12 measures of satisfaction with different aspects of life were also explored. In most countries the strongest associations were with at least two of the following aspects – classmates (the strongest association in seven countries); school (the strongest association in five countries) and friends (the strongest association in four countries). These findings are logical and provide some evidence that children's evaluations of satisfaction with different aspects of life are meaningful. Satisfaction with appearance also tended to have a strong association with the negative experiences, including being the strongest in two countries. A plausible explanation for this is that one of the reasons children may be bullied is because of the way that they look and this can also affect their satisfaction with this aspect of life. This relationship also serves to highlight the point that there are potential bi-directional or more complex relationships between negative peer experiences and children's subjective well-being. While the analysis presented here has assumed that negative experiences influence subjective well-being, it is possible that the effect is in the opposite direction. For example children who feel unhappy could behave in ways that make them more likely to be left out by peers. There may also be other factors that affect both the

likelihood of negative peer experiences and children's subjective well-being – such as poverty.

14.5 Deprivation, Negative Peer Experiences and Well-Being

For the reasons just described it makes sense to look jointly at the influences of both material deprivation and negative peer experiences on children's subjective well-being. In addition this approach is informative in a comparative sense because it can shed some further light on the relative associations between the two factors and subjective well-being in different countries and contexts. Table 14.4 shows the added explanatory power (after accounting for age and gender) of each of these two factors separately and also in combination. The first two of these three columns of statistics are taken from Tables 14.1 and 14.3 respectively. It can be seen that material deprivation made a bigger contribution than negative peer experiences to predicting life satisfaction in five countries – Nepal, Ethiopia, Algeria, Colombia and Romania. These were five of the seven countries in the survey with the lowest national wealth per capita. In the other 11 countries, negative peer experiences

Table 14.4 Associations with life satisfaction of material deprivation, negative peer experiences at school and both in combination

Country	Deprivation (%)	Peer experiences (%)	Combined (%)
Nepal	1.6	1.0	2.3
Ethiopia	10.7	1.0	11.4
Algeria	10.9	4.0	13.7
S Africa	3.0	5.5	7.6
Colombia	3.4	1.6	4.7
Romania	4.3	1.6	5.9
Turkey	3.7	9.0	11.2
Israel	3.7	5.5	9.5
Malta	3.6	6.8	9.0
Spain	4.6	4.7	8.8
Italy	4.8	9.4	12.0
Poland	6.6	13.4	18.5
Estonia	4.6	6.0	9.1
Germany	3.4	9.7	12.6
UK	3.4	13.5	14.5
S Korea	2.3	2.9	5.0
Finland	1.7	13.2	14.1
Norway	na	10.1	na

Age groups: 10 and 12 years old. The 'Deprivation' and 'Peer experiences' columns show the separate effect of each of these on life satisfaction (taking account of age group and gender). These figures match those in Tables 14.1 and 14.3. The final column shows the combined effect of deprivation and peer experiences. This is less than the sum of the previous two columns

explained more of the variation than material deprivation. This finding provides a tentative indication that the relative strength of the factors that influence subjective well-being varies between countries and that there may be differences based on levels of economic prosperity. Children in poorer countries may be more affected by material deprivation than children in richer countries.

The other important point from this analysis is that, although it is often said that it is difficult to explain variations in children's subjective well-being, it can be seen from the fourth column in the table that the combined effect of gender, age, material deprivation and negative peer experiences explains more than 10% of the variation in children's life satisfaction in nine of the 18 countries and more than 5% in seven more. The two countries where the least variation was explained were Nepal and Colombia. This raises the further question of what other factors may be important influences on children's life satisfaction in those countries.

14.6 The Well-Being of Children in Specific Circumstances

Previous research within individual countries has shown that children in some specific circumstances – usually relatively unusual within the national context – have substantially lower mean subjective well-being than other children. Dinisman, Montserrat and Casas (2012) found that, in Spain, children living in public care had significantly lower subjective well-being in all respects than children living in two-parent families, although only in some respects in comparison with children living in one-parent families. Also in Spain, Llosada-Gistau, Montserrat and Casas (2015) report that children in residential care have lower subjective well-being than children in the general population; while Rees et al. (2010) find that children living in public care in the UK have significantly lower than average subjective well-being.

The Children's Worlds survey provides an opportunity to explore this issue a little further in relation to two minority sub-groups – children who were not born in the country of the survey and children who did not live with their family. As shown in Chap. 3, the proportion of children who were not born in the country of the survey varied considerably from less than 1% in several countries to over 14% in Spain. Although children who have moved into a country will be a diverse group with a wide range of different origins and histories many of these children may well face various challenges that could affect their subjective well-being – learning a new language, discrimination, and in some cases poverty. So it is important to undertake research which seeks to understand these children's experiences, particularly within the context of increasing levels of population migration between countries in many parts of the world due to conflict and economic pressures (UNICEF 2016).

In the five countries with the highest proportions in the survey of children not born in the country – Malta, Spain, Italy, the UK and Norway (see Chap. 4) statistical comparisons were made between the life satisfaction of these children and children who were born in the country. In four of these countries children who were not born in the country had significantly lower mean life satisfaction scores (by around

four to five points on a scale from 0 to 100) than children who were. The exception is Malta where the small difference was not statistically significant. However, this difference may be explained by other factors. One such factor is material deprivation as families who have recently migrated may tend to have less money than the national average. Chapter 4 reported that this was the case in all five of the countries with the highest proportions of children born outside the country. In view of this pattern, the association between being born in the country and life satisfaction was tested controlling for material deprivation as well as age and gender. The gap in life satisfaction between the two groups of children reduced in all countries and only remained statistically significant in Norway. Thus it appears that the lower life satisfaction of children not born in the country in Spain, Italy and the UK can at least partly be attributed to them having higher than average levels of material deprivation. This analysis is limited by the variables available for analysis and so this conclusion can only be tentative.

The second sub-group that it is possible to look at is children not living with their family. There were relatively small numbers of these children in the survey samples. However, statistical tests were run for the six countries with the highest numbers of these children – Ethiopia, Algeria, South Africa, Colombia, Romania and Germany. In all of the selected countries children in this sub-group had lower mean life satisfaction scores than other children although the difference was only statistically significant in three of the six countries – Ethiopia, Germany and South Africa. In the latter two countries the difference in mean life satisfaction was more than 14 points on a 100-point scale. Again, analysis was done taking account of age, gender and material deprivation. For these three countries this did not have much effect on the life satisfaction gaps which were still around 7, 12 and 15 points in Ethiopia, Germany and South Africa respectively. Although this analysis covers only a few countries and relatively small samples of children it provides some further evidence that children living in particular circumstances can be much less satisfied with life than the average child in the country, but that it is important also to take account other contextual factors in children's lives such as difference in family's economic positions.

14.7 Discussion

In summary this chapter has considered a number of factors that may explain variations in children's subjective well-being within countries – age, gender, material deprivation, negative peer experiences, moving countries, and not living with family. In each case there is some evidence of significant variations in life satisfaction in a range of countries. These findings, based on the limited number of factors that are available in the current data set, illustrate that, to a certain extent, it is possible to explain why some children have much higher or lower subjective well-being than others. Additionally the comparative perspective taken in this chapter is useful in that it can shed light on the varying extent to which different factors play a part in

explaining variations in children's subjective well-being in different countries. The overall conclusion is that there is considerable potential to extend this approach in future international comparative research to provide important new insights.

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Chapter 15

Discussion and Conclusions

This final chapter of the book provides a summary of key overall findings from the second wave of the Children's Worlds survey in terms of three broad themes – the diversity of children's circumstances; variations in well-being between countries; and variations in well-being within countries. It also discusses the strengths and limitations of the evidence. It then goes on to discuss some of the practical and policy implications of these findings, and concludes by identifying potential directions for future international comparative research on children's lives and well-being.

15.1 The Diversity of Children's Circumstances

Chapters 4 and 5 provide a unique perspective on the diversity of children's circumstances and daily lives across a set of countries with a wide range of geographical, economic and cultural settings. This kind of descriptive information can make an important contribution to understanding childhood globally and also provides a context within which to understand children's responses to questions about how they feel about their lives.

Children's living circumstances varied considerably across the 18 countries with substantial variations in factors such as whether or not there were grandparents present in the home; whether children lived with their father; and also evidence of other phenomena in some countries such as children spending their time moving between two homes after parental separation. Similarly children's material circumstances varied hugely, with the percentage of children that had access to the internet at home ranging from 2% in Ethiopia to 97% in Norway.

There were also substantial differences in the way that children spent time in different countries. Homework was the most common daily activity in most countries, but the frequency of other activities varied considerably. For example, only 25% of children in South Korea helped around the house every day or almost every day

compared to 70% in Nepal. The frequency of different activities varied by age, even across the 4-year age span of this survey and some of these age-related patterns were unique to individual countries. However there were also similarities across countries and one area where this was the case was gender variations. Across a wide range of economic, geographic and cultural contexts there was a tendency for girls to spend more time than boys on helping around the house, homework and reading, while boys tended to spend more time playing sports or exercising. These patterns were very common irrespective of measures of adult gender equality in the country.

15.2 Variations in Children's Well-Being Between Countries

Variations between countries in children's well-being have been explored in the book through several different indicators – means, relative scores and inequalities – and through looking both at overall subjective well-being and at children's evaluations of particular aspects of life. Each of these approaches provides a different set of insights into between-country variations and this supports the idea that it is valuable to examine this issue from different perspectives.

Comparisons of countries' mean scores for three measures of overall self-reported well-being – life satisfaction, positive affect and psychological well-being – provide some interesting insights. Romania ranked highest for all three measures and South Korea ranked lowest. There was little evidence of a relationship between any of these measures and national wealth. This is in contrast with findings on international variations in adult subjective well-being which tend to show quite strong associations with economic prosperity. In fact, this study suggests that there is very little relationship between the average level of life satisfaction of adults in a country and the average level of life satisfaction of children aged 10–12 years old. This is a very important message from the research – that children's and adults' subjective well-being at a country level appear to be relatively independent. It suggests that the ingredients that constitute a good childhood are not necessarily the same as those that constitute a good adulthood. Romania, for example, is a country that tends to rank relatively poorly, at least in European terms, for adult life satisfaction. However children in Romania were, on average, the happiest and most satisfied with their lives in this survey. This emphasises a key overarching point that the topic of children's subjective well-being needs to be approached on its own terms rather than with the assumption that it is the same phenomenon as the subjective well-being of adults. Questions remain to be answered about why, in particular, children in Romania have high life satisfaction, although some tentative indications about this are provided by the survey and are discussed further below.

Looking at variations between countries in inequalities in overall well-being produces relatively similar rankings for many countries. However there are some notable differences. For example, Ethiopia and Estonia tended to rank higher for equality of well-being than mean well-being; Turkey and the UK tended to rank lower. These

differences raise an interesting question about what is the more important headline measure of overall well-being. Some people may be more inclined to prioritise high average well-being or happiness, while others may be more disposed to prioritise greater equality of well-being or happiness. Similar arguments apply to other fields such as whether increases in average wealth are more or less important than reductions in income inequality. While social research can not resolve these issues, the fact that there are different patterns and findings depending on whether one considers means or inequalities indicates that subjective well-being researchers should routinely report both statistics. There has been a tendency in reports on subjective well-being to focus on mean scores. The drawbacks of this approach are evident in the current study which places Turkey fifth out of 18 countries for mean life satisfaction and Spain ninth; but Spain fifth for equality of life satisfaction with Turkey ranked tenth. This point has begun to be recognised in recent work such as the World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al. 2016) which discusses inequalities in adult life satisfaction between countries; and work on child well-being inequalities by UNICEF Office of Research (2010, 2016).

A second overarching issue is which measure of overall self-reported well-being to adopt for international comparisons. Chapter 6 presents three different measures – positive affect, life satisfaction and psychological well-being. While there are reasonably strong associations between them, they did lead to some differences in countries' rankings. For example, Malta ranked fourth for mean psychological well-being, seventh for life satisfaction and tenth for positive affect. At this stage, not enough is known about how well each of these types of measures functions with children in the context of comparative research. Thus, for the time being, it would seem prudent to consider several different overall measures of subjective well-being until empirical studies provide greater clarity.

Measures of overall subjective well-being provide a useful summary indicator but conceal much of the detail of variations in how children feel about their lives. They are also rather abstract indicators and not easily transferrable into particular practical or political objectives. It is more concrete and tangible to think, for example, about how to improve children's subjective well-being at school than how to improve children's overall life satisfaction. Turning to variations between countries in children's satisfaction with particular aspects of their lives, Chaps. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 contains a lot of detail about comparisons across 12 different aspects. Some countries had similar rankings across all 12 aspects of life. Romania, which had the highest mean scores for the three overall well-being measures, was ranked first or second out of the 18 countries for 11 aspects of life (the exception was friendships). South Korea, which had the lowest mean overall well-being scores was ranked in the bottom five countries for all 12 aspects of life – with the highest rankings being 14th for satisfaction with friendships and classmates. But for most countries there was a greater range of rankings across different aspects of life. Algeria was ranked second for satisfaction with school but 17th for satisfaction with possessions. Norway ranked first for friends, classmates and the local area but 13th for self-image. Thus a great deal can be learned from comparisons of mean scores across countries.

An innovation in the Children's Worlds project is the calculation of relative scores which take into account, at the same time, patterns of scoring within each country and within each aspect of life. Scores above zero indicate a relatively positive aspect of life within a particular country and scores below zero indicate a relatively negative aspect of life. The distance from zero indicates the extent of relative positive or negative scores. By design, all countries have a balance of positive and negative relative scores. This addresses concerns about cultural response differences and enables the extraction of strengths and weaknesses in subjective well-being in each country which may be informative and useful for policy makers, for example. The largest relative scores for each country are summarised in Table 13.3.

Inequalities create a slightly different picture of variations between countries. South Korea ranks higher for equality of satisfaction in most domains than it does for average satisfaction. There is a similar pattern in Italy, Spain and Finland. On the other hand, Turkey tended to rank much lower for equality than mean scores, and this tendency was also notable in Algeria, Colombia and Israel. Thus there was much greater homogeneity of children's evaluations of their lives in some countries than others.

One possible explanation for the heterogeneity of children's satisfaction with various aspects of their lives in some countries is greater economic inequality. This was tested by looking at the association between inequality in life and domain satisfactions and income inequality based on the Gini coefficients. Unfortunately these coefficients were not available for three countries which reduces an already small sample and therefore the extent to which it is possible to make confident statements about this issue. There was only a weak association between inequalities in overall well-being and income inequality (Chap. 6), while there was some evidence of an association for inequalities in satisfaction with some aspects of life (such as classmates) but not others (such as health). These patterns are not easy to interpret and this is a topic where a greater sample of countries is required to draw clear conclusions.

15.3 Variations in Children's Well-Being Within Countries

While the findings presented above about variations in children's well-being between countries are an important part of the overall picture, there is far more variation within countries than between countries. There are many potential explanations for variations in well-being between individuals, and the literature on children's subjective well-being has explored associations with demographic and socio-economic factors; personality; life events; the quality of children's relationships and environments; and children's behaviours. It was only possible to cover a small number of these factors in the questionnaires for this wave of the project.

One key source of variation is children's age and gender. These factors are included in the analysis of each of Chaps. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 and some overarching messages are identified in Chap. 13. Previous research in single countries,

primarily within Europe has found evidence of decreasing subjective well-being with age, and some difference in the extent of this decrease for different life domains. The small amount of previous comparative research on this topic has suggested that there are some differences in age patterns across countries. The Children's Worlds data offers a valuable opportunity to explore this question further across a diverse range of countries. The questions on children's satisfaction enable comparison between two age groups – children around the ages of 10 and 12 years old respectively. Across this 2-year age span, overall well-being decreases substantially in some countries (e.g. South Korea and Turkey) and not at all in others (e.g. Israel, Romania and Malta). These patterns for these countries are also broadly reflected in satisfaction with different aspects of life. A view across the full 4-year age span covered by the survey is possible using the series of agreement-style questions which were presented in exactly the same way to all three age groups, covering family, friends, school and the local area.

A second important aspect of variation between children within countries is gender. This is also an aspect where a comparative cross-national approach can be highly informative – for example, where substantial gender differences are found in children's lives or well-being in one particular country it is valuable, and provides additional insights, to know whether these gender differences also apply in other countries. There was a mixed picture regarding gender differences in overall well-being. In eight countries there was no evidence of significant differences for any of the three measures of overall well-being and in most other countries there were only differences for one or two measures, although in South Korea boys had a higher well-being than girls on all three measures. However this picture of limited gender differences in overall well-being concealed a much richer and more interesting picture when children's satisfaction with particular aspects of life is considered. First, while patterns were consistent for South Korea here, with boys being more satisfied than girls across all aspects of life, there was also evidence of higher satisfaction with many aspects of life for girls than boys in Nepal and Colombia. There were particularly strong gender differences across countries for two aspects of life. Girls tended to be more satisfied with school than boys although the opposite was true in South Korea. Boys tended to be more satisfied with their body image than girls. These differences in body image were particularly strong in South Korea and countries in northern Europe. In these countries the differences were also larger at 12 years old than at 10 years old. On the other hand there was no evidence of significant gender differences in this respect in a number of non-European countries. This divergence of patterns provides some valuable insights. It demonstrates that the substantial gender differences in body image observed in countries such as the UK, Norway and Germany are not universal. This raises important questions about the reasons for these differences.

It is useful to know about patterns of subjective well-being according to demographic factors such as age and gender, but for policy and practical purposes it is also important to be able to identify factors associated with variations in subjective well-being that might be amenable to change. Chapter 14 looks at two such issues – children who are experiencing material deprivation and children who are having

negative experiences with peers at school. Both of these factors are shown to be linked with substantially lower levels of subjective well-being and the relative strength of the links varies between countries. Finally the same chapter also presents some findings about minority groups of children – those not living with their family and those who were not born in the country – which show that these children also tend to have lower-than-average well-being, although some of this may be attributable to poorer economic circumstances. The practical implications of these findings will be discussed later in the chapter.

15.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Evidence

Researching children's subjective well-being, particularly cross-nationally, is a challenging proposition. There are still unresolved debates in research on subjective well-being about making comparisons of subjective well-being between countries, particular across a diverse range of contexts. Additionally, when doing research with children, there are issues to address about lower age limits for gathering valid and reliable subjective data.

International comparative research on subjective well-being faces specific challenges about the extent to which it is meaningful to compare subjective indicators across countries, due to issues of concepts, language and possibly different cultural response patterns. This concern applies to subjective data from adults just as much as from children. Researchers have begun to respond to these issues, providing evidence to support the validity of these kinds of comparisons. This includes some work on the Children's Worlds data (Casas and Rees 2015; Casas 2016). A recently published analysis of the data has also concluded that cultural response differences do not explain all of the difference in mean subjective well-being between countries and that other factors such as freedom to make choices and feelings about self were more important in explaining these differences (Lee and Yoo 2017). Additionally, in this project, an approach is taken to use relative scores which effectively takes account of possible systematic higher or lower response tendencies across countries.

More specifically in relation to children, there are inevitably lower age limits on the types of questions that researchers can expect children to answer. It would not be sensible to ask a 1-year-old about their satisfaction with their life as a whole! On the other hand, there is evidence from studies in a number of countries that older children can provide answers to subjective questions in a way that meets various statistical criteria for reliability, validity and stability and can therefore be seen as meaningful in the same way as subjective data gathered from adults. However, beyond this general point, there is still work to be done to ensure that specific questions and sets of questions have meaning across different contexts and to establish younger age limits for different question types and content. For example, it may be that children can answer questions about their day-to-day moods and emotions at

younger ages than questions about their life satisfaction or psychological well-being.

While these are legitimate areas of concern, they do not mean that some of the messages from research with children should not be heard. The findings show, for example, that in all countries some children respond to the statement 'I feel safe at school' by saying that they do not agree at all. It is positive that these children are in a minority of between 2 and 8% depending on the country, but this will still add up to substantial numbers of children in the population as a whole who do not feel safe. It is dangerous to start from an assumption that this data is unreliable and not valid when the question is this straightforward and the responses are so clear. There are numerous other examples in this book, and in some of the other analysis that has so far been produced from this project, of consistent and systematic patterns in the data which can be explained and understood in terms of contextual issues within particular countries. These patterns give some confidence that while there are many conceptual and technical areas where improvements can be made, there are some important messages produced through this study that warrant careful consideration.

15.5 Practical and Policy Implications

So what are the implications of the material presented in this book for policy makers and organisations concerned with children's well-being, practitioners and agencies who work with children, parents and other family members, and for children themselves?

A very positive message from the study is that in all countries the large majority of children were happy on a day-to-day basis and satisfied with their life as a whole and with different aspects of it. Mean satisfaction scores were always well above the mid-point of five out of ten and the percentage with low satisfaction (that is a score below the mid-point) did not that often exceed 10% for any measure in any country. Notable exceptions to this are dissatisfaction with self-image which was as high as 13% in South Korea and the UK and above 10% in several other countries. Other aspects of life with more than 10% of children with low well-being were satisfaction with possessions in Ethiopia; with classmates in South Africa; with the local area in South Africa, Algeria and Germany; and with freedom in Nepal, Ethiopia and Algeria. The diversity of countries in the above lists is indicative of the diverse range of positive and negative evaluations between different countries across the different life domains covered by the survey.

Within this broadly positive picture, there are aspects for each country to feel relatively positive about as well as aspects where there is room of improvement. The relative scores included for core indicators in Chaps. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 and the summary of these in Chap. 13 can be a useful starting point for anyone within a particular country who wishes to understand how children's well-being might be

improved. The principle behind this table is to evaluate the scores within each country making use also of information from the other countries in the survey. For example, taken in isolation it might be interpreted negatively within the UK that classmates is the aspect of their lives with which children are second least satisfied (11th out of 12 aspects). However looking across countries the average ranking for this aspect of life is actually 11th, so the findings for the UK are not particularly unusual. On the other hand the finding that in South Korea and Ethiopia children rated this aspect eighth of out 12 actually provides a much more positive message than would have been apparent without international comparisons.

As well as summarising average tendencies in each country, this book has a specific focus on inequalities. Raising mean subjective well-being can seem a rather abstract aim, and reducing inequalities in well-being may be seen as a more attractive and meaningful proposition both for policy makers and for the general public. The findings indicate that there is much more equality of satisfaction in some countries than others and with some aspects of life than others. Chapter 13 also provides a summary of the aspects of life for which there is greatest inequality in each country. In some cases these aspects are the same as those for which mean scores and relative scores are lowest. However there are also some differences and it is perhaps useful for anyone concerned with improving children's quality of life to consider the messages from these different approaches in drawing conclusions about priorities for action.

The overall conclusion from the above is that for each country there are some aspects of life where there are positive messages about children's well-being and other aspects of life which might be seen as priorities for action either on the basis of relatively low average scores and/or relatively high levels of inequality of well-being. The fact that most of the variation in children's well-being is within rather than between countries provides plenty of source for encouragement that initiatives within countries might improve children's quality of life and experience of childhood.

Building on these broad indications of the aspects of life which might be prioritised in order to improve children's quality of life, this study offers indications of specific issues in children's lives that are linked to variations in their sense of well-being and that are amenable to change. Two such issues – material deprivation and negative peer experiences at school – are discussed in Chap. 14. The findings suggest that tackling these issues could potentially make a substantial difference to children's experience of childhood. In all countries one or both of these issues was significantly associated with children's overall well-being. In many countries the variations in well-being were very substantial. In a number of countries a child with low deprivation who had not recently been hit or left out by other children at school had life satisfaction more than 20 points higher on a 100-point scale of overall life satisfaction than children with high deprivation and who had recently had both negative peer experiences at school. These are substantial differences.

The findings also draw attention to the possibility of more targeted interventions aimed at specific sub-groups of children. In Chap. 14 evidence is presented that suggests that children in minority groups such those not living with family or those who

have migrated may have substantially lower than average well-being. These issues could be explored further with these and other minority sub-groups to identify the specific issues in these children's lives that most affect their well-being. This could lead to the identification of potential priority areas to improve these children's lives.

A further very important broad message from the research is that it is vital to listen to children's views as well as those of adults, in terms of well-being. Chapter 6 provides some striking new evidence that there is very little association between the countries where adults are most satisfied with life and the countries where children are most satisfied with life. There are two implications of this. The first is that it must not be assumed that our understanding of what promotes adults' sense of well-being will also promote that of children. It is essential that the question of what improves children's quality of life is approached with full consideration of the evidence on children's subjective well-being and the involvement of children themselves. The second implication that follows from this is that, if policy makers wish to use subjective well-being data to guide priorities for action and to inform policy then it is vital that they ensure that they include subjective well-being from children. If this does not happen then there is every possibility that policy actions could improve adults' quality of life while making little difference to children's quality of life or even making it worse.

15.6 Future Directions for Research

This final section will consider what has been learned from this work from a research perspective and what might be future directions for international comparative research on children's subjective well-being. Wave 2 of Children's Worlds is the largest study of its kind to cover such a diverse range of topics and countries. One of the fairly straightforward pieces of learning from this study is that it is possible to undertake surveys of broadly representative samples of children in a consistent way across diverse countries. Such work faces many challenges. In addition to the practicalities of funding, project management and co-ordination, there are issues regarding agreeing conceptual frameworks, finding common questionnaire content that is relevant across different countries, and translation. There is still much to be learned about and improved upon in relation to all these aspects but the success of the project in reaching well over 60,000 children and the interest that has been generated by some of the outcomes demonstrates that the challenges are not insurmountable.

One message from the project is the extent to which simple description in a comparative sense can be informative and useful. Some of the findings on different household arrangements, on frequency of daily activities and of material circumstances paint a rich picture of the nature of contemporary childhood, and of similarities and differences in this experience, around the world. Technically these comparisons are very simple. Information of this kind from children's perspectives is, however, relatively rare and it can contribute to broad understanding about chil-

dren's lives. This descriptive data will also take on a new importance if it is replicated over time. It is already valuable to know about the extent to which children's access to the internet varies across countries. Future research will be able to use this data as a baseline to track changes in this indicator, and the spread of technology, over time. Similarly, some of the data on children's household circumstances in high-income countries indicates that there are already substantial numbers of children living between two households. Researchers will be able to use this information to track demographic changes over time and also to monitor whether such trends spread to a wider range of countries in the future.

Another key area for future research is to address measurement issues in children's subjective well-being. Some progress has already been made with this in the current study. Analysis has demonstrated that it is possible to devise multi-item measures of particular concepts which have acceptable levels of functioning across different contexts. However, there are at least two important limitations to this work at present. The first is that the measures that have been developed are not yet generally adequate to make comparisons of mean scores across countries (Casas 2016), although they may be suitable across specific groups of countries (Savahl et al. 2017). Thus further development, testing and refinement of these measures is needed. Second, at this stage this work has primarily been restricted to measures of overall well-being. There is a need also to develop measures of children's well-being in specific aspects of their lives – such as the family – that are suitable for comparative international research. For example, as shown in Chap. 7, at present the questions asked in the survey about particular aspects of children's family lives explain quite different amounts of the variation in children's satisfaction with family life in different countries – with much stronger explanatory power in European countries than elsewhere.

This leads to an underlying issue of conceptualisation. Concepts of children's subjective well-being currently have two major weaknesses. The first is that to a great extent they have been derived from work originally done with adult populations. The second is that a lot of the development and testing of children's subjective well-being has been restricted to a relatively small group of countries, many of which have economic and cultural similarities. The challenge is therefore to develop and revise existing concepts so that they are more child-centred and more cross-culturally applicable. This goal requires a range of activity including the consideration of different views on well-being in different cultural contexts and more qualitative work with children in a diverse range of countries to gain a better and broader understanding of their ideas about well-being. Such activity can then feed into the development and testing of new measures to be included in future large-scale survey work.

This kind of careful consideration also needs to extend to the descriptive elements of survey questionnaires. For example, there were some notable gaps in the list of questions about children's daily activities in the Children's Worlds Wave 2 questionnaire, such as the lack of a question about children's involvement in work outside the home. It is very important for cross-national research to ensure that it considers even relatively factual questionnaire content from a range of perspectives

in order to ask the right questions. Again, discussions with children can inform this aspiration.

A core concern of work on subjective well-being is to understand variations in people's evaluations of their lives. In this wave of the Children's Worlds project, substantial progress has been made in being able to *describe* variations within and across countries. Perhaps the biggest challenge for research in this field is now to begin to be able to *explain* these variations.

One aspect of this challenge is to explain variations between countries. Why are children in Romania apparently so much happier and more satisfied with their lives than children in South Korea? Evidence presented in Chap. 6 has demonstrated that these cross-national patterns are very different to those seen in adult populations. As a result, we cannot rely on explanations of international variations in adult life satisfaction such as national wealth and levels of corruption to understand variation in children's life satisfaction. Initial analysis, considering a range of macro indicators, has succeeded in identifying some factors that are associated with mean scores for children's subjective well-being across countries, but more work is needed on this topic. Currently, this analysis has been limited by the number of countries for which data from children is available and improving this situation is certainly one of the requirements for being in a better position to answer the question above. However, it may also be necessary to think again about what might affect children's sense of well-being and to develop new hypotheses. In turn this may lead to requirements for different kinds of data, not only from children. For example, it is plausible to hypothesise that variation in adults' attitudes to, or expectations of, children between countries may explain variations in children's mean happiness or life satisfaction scores. Such data may exist or there may be a need to generate new data to help answer this question.

A second aspect of this challenge is to understand why children's subjective well-being varies within countries. The material presented in this book has demonstrated how a comparative perspective can be helpful in answering this question. First, it can provide a point of reference which can be used to understand the importance of findings within a country. Gender variations in one country can create a greater impetus for action if they are not generally replicated elsewhere. Second, comparative work across similar and dissimilar countries can provide greater confidence in results. For example, Chap. 14 presented a general, although tentative, picture that children's material deprivation was more strongly related to their life satisfaction in low-income countries than high-income countries. Useful research on the reason for variations in subjective well-being requires at least three things. The first is clear hypotheses. To some extent these can be generated theoretically but researchers might also generate hypotheses through discussions with practitioners such as teachers, with parents and with children themselves. The second requirement is the right kind of data. The survey described in this book did not contain sufficient information about the context of children's lives to explore many reasons for within-country variations. With good hypotheses and relevant data to test them, much can be learned about which factors are associated with variations in children's subjective well-being as has already been demonstrated by research in some

countries. However, a third and pressing requirement is longitudinal data which can enable researchers to go beyond the identification of associations and begin to explore the possible directions of causality between various factors and subjective well-being.

The introduction to this book discussed the development of interest in the concept of children's well-being and some of the shifts in this field over time identified by Ben-Arieh (2008). The study described in this book reflects some of those shifts – from negative to positive indicators, from objective to subjective indicators and from the household to the child as units of observation. It also represents two additional shifts – from a restricted focus on high-income countries to a broader and more diverse range of countries, and from a primary focus on adolescence to the inclusion of younger children. There is still much work to be done to stretch the limits of this field in terms of age ranges and also to ensure that all children are taken into account including those in highly marginalised sub-groups.

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