

Gender Inequalities in Children's Lives and Subjective Well-Being: An International Comparison

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Abstract

A number of studies have explored the link between gender inequality within different countries and gender differences in adult subjective well-being. However there has been little exploration of this issue in relation to children's subjective well-being. There is evidence of associations between gender inequality and gender differences in a number of objective indicators of child outcomes. However comparative analysis in relation to children's own perspectives on their lives has been limited due to the lack of available data.

This paper will present analysis from Children's Worlds – an international study of children's lives and well-being – which has so far been conducted with over 50,000 children aged 8 to 12 in a diverse set of 16 countries across four continents. It will explore the extent of gender differences within countries in relation to a range of self-reported indicators regarding children's overall subjective well-being and their evaluations of specific aspects of their lives – for example, safety in different environments, quality of relationships, feelings about self, freedom and choice, and expectations for the future. It will also explore gender differences in children's daily lives, including time spent on educational activities, leisure activities and family-focused activities (e.g. caring for others).

The paper will then go on to make cross-national comparisons between this evidence on overall subjective well-being, and gender differences in children's self-reports about their lives and indicators of overall societal gender inequality. It will provide important new evidence on the extent to which gender inequalities in societies are reflected in children's own experiences of childhood including (a) Do countries with greater gender equality have higher levels of children's subjective well-being? and (b) Is greater gender inequality at a societal level associated with greater gender inequality in children's experiences and subjective well-being?

Biography

Gwyther Rees is currently undertaking a doctorate at Cardiff University on the policy uses of children's evaluations of their lives. He is also an Honorary Research Fellow at the Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, through which he is involved in the Children's Worlds study – an international survey of children's lives and well-being. Gwyther was formerly Research Director at The Children's Society where he conducted and managed research on a range of social policy issues related to children, including child protection, young people running away from home, youth justice and children's subjective well-being.