

# Family Type Differences in Children's Satisfaction with People They Live With and Perceptions About Their (Step)parents Parenting Practices

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**Thematic importance:** Paper focuses on family type differences in children's satisfaction with people they live with and perceptions about their (step)parents parenting practices. Family type is a critical axis through which social inequality is reproduced.

**Introduction and objectives:** For children, primary source of subjective well-being is their family. With higher rates of divorce, re-partnering etc. family complexity is increasing in Europe, and these changes are experienced by a significant proportion of children. More evidence is needed in Europe how children's family type influences their family-related subjective well-being, and to what extent parenting practices are playing a role in this relationship. Thus, the aim is to study perceptions of children who live with two biological parents, with a biological and a stepparent or with a single parent about parenting practices of their (step)parents and satisfaction with people they live with. We explore the reflections of family complexity in children's perceptions and ask if living with two biological parents is least and living with biological and stepparent is most complex family environment for children in their own perspective.

**Method:** The analysis is based on the third wave of the International Study of Children's Well-Being harmonized dataset of 12-year-old children in Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Norway, Poland and Romania. Random sampling was used and a target sample size of at least 1000 children in at least 20 schools in three age groups – 8, 10 and 12 - was set. We focus on 12-year-old children, because they have experienced changes in living arrangements with higher probability than younger children. Children's family-related subjective well-being is measured with the question 'how satisfied are you with people you live with'. Children's appraisals of parenting practices follow the main principles of the UN CRC 3Ps: being cared ('provision'), listened to ('participation') and feeling safe ('protection'). This paper applies descriptive statistics and logistic regression as methods of analysis. We conducted country-pooled and country-specific analyses.

**Results:** The findings reveal a 'cascade of children's appraisals' by the family types - overall, living with two biological parents is least and in stepparent family most complex family environment for children reflected in their highest and lowest evaluations of parenting practices and family-related subjective well-being, respectively. The analyses showed that simple and complex family type differences in children's family-related subjective well-being are partially explained by parenting practices. The results were not so clear-cut based on country-specific analyses.

**Conclusions and implications:** The paper concludes that children can be flexible and adapt to changing family arrangements if parents can create caring and safe atmosphere where children feel being an active part. Our analysis indicated to the need for raising awareness in children's rights and improving parenting

skills especially in times of family transitions. Children need to be informed, their opinions to be listened to; they need to be cared and protected even during hard times overwhelmed with stress. We recommend further research to go beyond the household borders, ask children about the family as a network and learn about the interactions with the child's family-related subjective well-being.