

Mission impossible? Attempting to construct global, cross-country comparable, regular and child driven International Child Vulnerability-Resilience Index

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Abstract

Thematic importance: Child vulnerability measurement can contribute to the opportunities in an unequal world.

Introduction and objectives: Childhood has been associated with vulnerability for centuries. Child vulnerability has been considered more of a problem of Global South. However, Global North is also increasingly taken this issue into their agenda. E.g., in 2017, England started to do their annual childhood vulnerability reports, attempting to measure the number of vulnerable children in England. Indeed, prevention and early intervention to child vulnerability entails the need to assess the likelihood of future 'suffering'. Recently, composite child indicators based on objective/statistical data have been constructed. For example, a global objective indicator - the Child Vulnerability Index – have been constructed as a measure of how likely it is for children to be at risk in a particular country. However, children should not be seen as an 'object of concern'. Children's own views and perspectives on their life should be taken seriously when trying to measure their vulnerability. This need is even more explicit because of the existing evidence of the disconnect between children's own assessment of their "vulnerable" situation and that of professionals. Moreover, such an approach is aligned with the ideas of child indicators movement and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12. To the author's knowledge there is no global, cross-nationally comparable and regular subjective vulnerability measure based on children's data. The aim of the paper is to present conceptual framework of the new global, cross-nationally comparable and regular subjective vulnerability measure - International Child Resilience-Vulnerability Index (ICRVI) - and its operationalization.

Method: Literature search was conducted to get general overview about the most common (and not all possible) child (1) vulnerability or (2) resilience or (3) vulnerability and resilience factors. It helped to develop the conceptual framework of the ICRVI. Regarding operationalization, International Survey for Child Well-being (ISCWeB) as children-based, robust, regular and not a "WEIRD" (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies -based) dataset offers good basis to form such a truly global measure. For example, third wave of the survey included 35 countries with such diverse contexts as Namibia, Nepal and Norway.

Results: In ICRVI, at the individual level, child vulnerability and/or resilience include following sub-dimensions: child health, health behavior, personality, cognitive, psychological and social skills, self-betterment, outlook, identity, talents and interests. Direct environments are constituted by important relationships - with parents, teachers, schoolmates, peers and friends - in children's life and family and school as more frequent locations where they are living their everyday lives. Indirect environments are

local area and country/society. At the environmental level there are overlapping sub-dimensions present in different relationships and locations (e.g., support, care, safety and engagement), but there are also relationship/location specific sub-dimensions.

Conclusions and implications: the construction of ICRVI poses different challenges and questions, e.g., should only cross-nationally comparable factors be included? Are some sub-dimensions and/or vulnerability/resilience factors more important than others?