

The structure of children's subjective well-being

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Thematic relevance: The current study focused on testing the fit structure of an hierarchical structural (second-order) model of children's subjective well-being. This is an innovative approach to assessing the structure of children's subjective well-being, which has not been assessed previously in the empirical literature. A key contribution of the study is the extension of the generalizability of the hierarchical structural configuration of the subjective well-being to child samples, thereby providing a viable model to explore correlates and predictors of children's subjective well-being using the full conceptual model. Finally, we propound the tenability of a quadripartite hierarchical conceptual model of children's subjective well-being. The study therefore aligns to two conference themes, namely: *Innovations in research design and measurement on the focus of the Conference* and *Measurement issues related to child well-being and understanding children's lives*.

Theme/s: Innovations in research design and measurement on the focus of the Conference; Measurement issues related to child well-being and understanding children's lives

Subtheme: Subjective well-being

Abstract

Introduction and objectives: Research on children's quality of life and subjective well-being has advanced over the past decade largely as a result of developments in childhood theory, children's rights legislation, and the shift toward positive social science. However, in line with the uncertainty regarding the conceptualization of subjective well-being, the structural configuration of children's subjective well-being has not been considered in the literature. In the current study, we present and test a model of children's subjective well-being, which includes global (context-free items assessing overall and general well-being, without reference to a specific aspect of life) and specific (domain-based items assessing a specific aspect of life) cognitive components, and positive and negative affect. We further test the fit structure of a hierarchical structural (second-order) model of children's subjective well-being. Finally, we test the measurement invariance of the hierarchical model across age and gender.

Method: We use data from the third Wave of the Children's Worlds Survey. The data source includes a sample of 92,782 participants selected from 35 countries (girls = 49.7%) in two age groups (10- and 12-years-old).

Results: We found a good fit for the four-factor confirmatory factor model of children's subjective well-being. Correlations between the various latent factors were as anticipated – with positive correlations between the life satisfaction components and positive affect, and negative correlations with negative affect. We further found a good fit for the hierarchical structural model of children's subjective well-being. Finally, we found the tenability of measurement invariance across age and gender.

Conclusion and implications: The study extends the generalizability of the hierarchical structural configuration of the subjective well-being to child samples, and provides a viable model to explore correlates and predictors of children's subjective well-being using the full conceptual model. Finally, we propound the tenability of a quadripartite hierarchical conceptual model of children's subjective well-being.
