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Rights and overall life satisfaction of 10- and 12-year-old children in three countries

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Abstract

Previous research has shown that knowledge of the rights of the child and their perceptions about their own participation may contribute to children's subjective well-being (SWB), and that satisfaction with how adults listen to children and take what they say into account is highly related to children's SWB in many countries. Thus, the aims of this article are: (a) exploring the contribution to children's subjective well-being of several items related to their perceptions of their own participation rights in different contexts of their lives; (b) analysing whether or not the ways in which children are listened to and taken into account by adults are mediating the connection to SWB in these children's participation perceptions; and (c) analysing whether the relationships between these variables differ depending on the country, age group and gender. This article includes the third wave of the Children's Worlds dataset with 7,570 10- and 12-year-old participants (51% girls) from Brazil, Chile and Spain. There are nine rights-related items and a SWB scale (CW-SWBS) used in this analysis. The main results suggest that perceptions related to children's rights and the opportunities to participate in decisions affecting them in three different contexts (home, school and area where the child lives) significantly contributed to their SWB. Advancing the research into this matter can provide an opportunity to invest in psychosocial interventions that focus on improving children's well-being and empowering them through the knowledge of their rights and their role as agents of public policy changes.

Keywords Rights · Subjective well-being · Overall life satisfaction · Cross-country · Children's worlds

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1 Children's Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) specifies four fundamental and universal rights for children: the right to survival, the right to full development, the right to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation, and the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life (UNICEF, 1989). This article addresses the latter insofar as it is one of the most challenging rights defined by the UNCRC, the fulfilment of which is not guaranteed merely by a sufficient budget and adequate legislation favouring children.

It is by rethinking the current relationship between children and adults that further steps can be taken toward their active integration into family, social, cultural and daily life, and for which children's perceptions and evaluations on the issue turn out to be so important, particularly as to how this affects their life satisfaction. In-depth research that is preferably cross-cultural, such as the one presented here, is required in order to understand the extent to which this relationship changes. Also important is that children's right to participation introduced by the UNCRC opened the door to the post-modern notion of children as subjects, active participants and (co)constructors of their own knowledge (Broström, 2012) adopted in this article.

Levy (2018) considers children's participation not only a right on its own, but a pre-requisite for democratic societies, without which active citizenship and social justice have no place. This argument reinforces the importance of devoting research efforts to this topic. According to the mentioned authors, "Participation empowers children in their diverse situations to make decisions about the primary issues that affect their lives […] and the lives of others and the environment," (p. 52). Participation entails, therefore, having the opportunity to develop the necessary capacities and skills, which goes hand in hand with the need to have indicators to monitor the extent to which it is being promoted and respected cross-culturally. It is in this context that quantitative analyses such as the one developed in this article can make an important contribution to the topic, as this is aligned with the growing shift towards using quantitative measurement in the study of rights (Gran, 2017, cited in Sianko et al., 2021).

Although this has not been the most widespread trend (see Sianko et al., 2021 for an exception), the evaluation of participation should ideally consider that being listened to and taken into account in decisions may vary among children's main life contexts (home, school and the local area). The eco-systemic perspective has amply shown that development opportunities may not be the same in these various contexts and justifies this statement (Kelly, 2006). This consideration is particularly relevant when a cross-cultural perspective is adopted as variations in this respect may be even greater.

Thus, the eco-systemic approach leads to the expectation of key variations regarding children's right to participation in the same way as has already been observed concerning children's subjective well-being (SWB) (Reyes et al., 2019; Sarriera & Bedin, 2016; Sarriera, Bedin & Strelhow, 2020). Children's SWB refers to how they evaluate their lives both in general (satisfaction with life as a whole) and regarding life domains (satisfaction with adults in general, family, friends, leisure time, etc.). As long as it is a social aspiration with positive connotations, it has important conceptual connections with the concept of children's rights. Also, empirically, previ-

ous research has shown that knowledge of the rights of the child may contribute to children's SWB in some countries, but that the most important contributing factor is children's perception of whether or not adults in the country respect their rights (Casas, 2017a; Casas & González-Carrasco, 2018; Kutsar et al., 2017). Satisfaction with how adults listen to children and take what they say into account (Rees & Main, 2015) has also proven to be highly related to children's SWB in many countries (Casas, González-Carrasco & Luna, 2018; Kosher & Ben-Arieh, 2017; Rees, 2021).

In terms of the measurement of children's right to participation, two main different approaches have been defined; the variable versus the person-centred approach (Sianko et al., 2021). Although the latter helps to identify sub-groups of children in terms of their chances of exercising the right to participation, there is still a significant lack of knowledge about the relationship between children's SWB and their right to participation when it is being exercised in different contexts (home, school and the local area), with differing degrees (being listened to versus being part of decision-making) and in different countries.

There is even greater ignorance about the mediating relationships that may exist between different indicators of participation and of subjective well-being, which this article attempts to remedy. In this respect, Sianko et al. (2021) defend that there is still a need to explore the mechanisms through which the right to participate in decision-making in specific domains impacts children's SWB. The identification of proper measures that capture the multifaceted nature of both children's participation and children's rights is still pending.

To meet these challenges a distinct variable approach has been adopted here. It considers that perceptions of being listened to (Del Moral-Espín, Pérez García, & Gálvez Muñoz, 2017; Voltarelli, 2018) and perceptions of having opportunities to participate in decisions both affect children's satisfaction with how adults listen to them and take what they say into account (Corominas, González-Carrasco & Casas, 2020; Hunner-Kreisel & März, 2019) as well as what happens with participation in general (Balsells, Vaquero & Ciurana, 2019; Savahl, et al., 2019).

2 Background

The ISCWeB international project – also known as Children's Worlds: www.isciweb.org – collected three waves of data from different countries in the past. The Third Wave dataset of this project included nine items of interest for the analysis developed in this research for both 10- and 12-year-olds (10yo and 12yo hereinafter). These items refer to children's perceptions of being listened to and taken seriously by adults in different contexts, their perceptions of having opportunities to make decisions in different contexts, their knowledge of children's rights, and their satisfaction with how adults listen to them and take what they say into account in general. It also included the items of a SWB psychometric scale (the CW-SWBS). Casas and González-Carrasco (2021) have already pointed out the excellent fit and cross-country comparability of the five-item version of this scale (the CW-SWBS5). From the 35 countries participating in the third wave, three with a Latin based-language have been chosen (Brazil, Chile and Spain) as previous analyses carried out in the past

showed the comparability of different measures of SWB (Casas et al., 2015; Casas, 2017b; Casas et al., 2012a), an analysis that is intended for extension to participation indicators.

Because determinants of children's SWB are sensitive to age and gender (Batz & Tay, 2018; Bedin & Sarriera, 2015; Li, Yao, & Liu, 2021; Ramos-Díaz, Rodríguez-Fernández, & Antonio-Aguirre, 2017; Reyes et al., 2019), separate analyses of the relationship between variables will be carried out for the 10yo and the 12yo, and gender will be included in the models here analysed.

3 Aim

The aims of this article are three: (a) exploring the contribution of several items related to children's perceptions on their participation rights in different contexts of their lives to the subjective well-being of 10- and 12-year-old children in Brazil, Chile and Spain; (b) analysing whether how children are listened to and taken into account by adults is mediating the influence of SWB on the participation perceptions of these children; (c) analysing whether the relationships between all of these explored variables are different depending on the country, age group and gender.

Additionally, one hypothesis on how the mediation effects work will be reviewed, specifically how feeling listened to and taken into account and perceiving opportunities to participate in decisions in different contexts (i.e., home, school and the local area) contributes to satisfaction with how adults listen to children in general.

4 Method

4.1 Data

The data set used here is taken from the third wave of the International Survey of Children's Well-Being (ISCWeB). ISCWeB data were collected through group-administered questionnaires in the school setting with children aged 8, 10 and 12. Two different versions of the questionnaires were used; one for the 10- and 12-year-old age groups and a different one for the 8-year-old age group, which had fewer items and a different format. An international committee supervised the design of data collection to guarantee appropriate representativeness of the data for each region or country (Rees, Savahl, Lee, & Casas, 2020). More detail on the data collection procedure in each country can be obtained from the project webpage: www.isciweb.org.

Only data from the 10- and 12-year-old groups have been used in this study because the questionnaires employed used identical 0 to 10 scales for all psychometric scales, whereas a five-point emoticon scale was used in the questionnaires administered to 8-year-olds, thus requiring further separate analysis.

4.1.1 Data sets

Approval was obtained from the respective ethics committees in each country prior to conducting the survey (Rees et al., 2020). In the specific case at hand, the ethics committees of the universities of this article's authors gave authorization. The original questionnaires were written in English. In countries other than the United Kingdom, the questionnaires were translated into other languages. The translation process involved an initial translation from English, a translation of the resulting questionnaire back into English and then rewording in the event of any anomalies being found between the original and back-translated versions. Wherever possible, this took into account discussions with children and the knowledge of the local research teams. In addition to these measures related to translation issues, effort was made to ensure that the visual presentation of the questionnaire and labelling of responses (e.g. anchoring points for scales) were consistent in all countries, as variations in these aspects may result in variations in response patterns (Rees et al., 2020).

4.2 Measures

For both the 10- and 12-year-olds, the third wave ISCWeB questionnaires included the following items:

Three items on *perceptions of being listened and taken into account by adults in different contexts* and three items on *perceptions of having opportunities to participate in decisions* measured with a 0–4 scale on agreement/disagreement (from 'I do not agree at all' to 'I totally agree'). They also included one item on *satisfaction with how you are listened to by adults in general* measured on a 0–10 scale from 'Not at all satisfied' to 'Totally satisfied'. These seven items are presented in Table 2. Two items on *knowledge of rights* and *knowledge of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* with three response options of 'Yes', 'No' and 'Not sure' were included. In this study, only the options 'Yes' and 'No' were entered, meaning the sample size is smaller when these items are included, as detailed in Table 3.

The Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale The new CW-SWBS is an improved version of the context-free multi-item SWB scale used in the second wave. Improvements were made using advice from children in different countries who were asked to suggest new wordings where items did not work properly. This was more common in countries or regions where the spoken language is not Indo-European. This version had six items and the scores were on an 11-point scale (0–10) from 'I do not agree at all' to 'I totally agree'. Its psychometric properties were cross-country analysed by Casas and González-Carrasco (2021). They demonstrated that a five-item version, excluding one of the original items (*I like my life*), displayed better fit and cross-country comparability. Therefore, in the present study, this CW-SWBS5 version will be used. The wording of its items is detailed in Table 2.

4.3 Procedure

4.3.1 Data preparation

The data set used for this analysis was cleaned and prepared. This process included identifying and excluding cases with high proportions of missing data, and identifying and excluding cases with systematic response patterns. The latter point is of particular relevance to this article given that some authors, such as Cummins and Lau (2005), recommend excluding from the analysis respondents who score at the top or bottom of the scale for all items in the PWI-SC because constant extreme answers tend to be unreliable. There are problems with this approach, however, in that it automatically excludes anyone who expresses complete satisfaction with all aspects of their life covered by one instrument – and many children at these ages seem to be extremely satisfied with their lives, even if that does not mean they are satisfied with all aspects or dimensions in their life measured by other instruments. According to Rees and Main (2015), it is possible to adopt a broader approach when using Children's Worlds data sets because the questionnaire includes several different sets of items. Therefore, and following Rees and Main (2015), uniform response patterns were identified for five different sets of items in the data set, and cases were excluded if they exhibited such patterns for more than one of the five-item sets.

The sample used in this paper was subjected to a second cleaning process. Children not answering three or more items of the CW-SWBS were excluded from the analysis, while scores of those not answering one or two items were substituted employing multiple imputation using regression as implemented in the AMOS 25 software.

4.4 Sample

A representative sample of one region or large cities was obtained in each of the countries, as indicated in Table 1. After data cleaning, the final sample comprises 3,790 children from the 10-year-old group and 3,780 from the 12-year-old group.

Data collection was organized according to class groups at school, considering school year classrooms where the mean age was 10 or 12 years. The overall mean age of each age group was slightly above the selected age, and age distribution was not exactly the same in all the countries, as might be expected. This is because in Spain (Northern Hemisphere) children were at the start of the school year, and in Brazil and Chile (Southern Hemisphere) they were nearer the end of the school year.

Table 1 Sample by country, gender and age group

Country/region	10-year-old group				12-year-old group			
	Boys	Girls	Total	*Mean age*	Boys	Girls	Total	*Mean age*
Brazil (cities)	383	494	877	*10.32*	395	470	865	*12.32*
Chile (cities)	431	434	865	*10.47*	515	449	964	*12.49*
Spain (Catalonia)	998	1,050	2,048	*9.99*	989	962	1,951	*11.98*
TOTAL	1,812	1,978	3,790	*10.18*	1,899	1,881	3,780	*12.19*

4.5 Data analysis

First, descriptive statistics for all measures were presented. Then, using structural equation modelling (SEM), a model relating the nine children's rights-related items and gender to the CW-SWBS5 latent variable was designed and separately tested for each age group. The comparability of the data across the three countries was checked using Multi-group SEM (MGSEM). The AMOS 25 software with maximum likelihood estimation was used. As subjective/psychological well-being data usually deviates from normality, data were handled in SEM using the bootstrap method to compute standard errors.

The fit indices considered were the CFI (Comparative Fit Index), the RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) and the SRMR (Standardised Root Mean Square Residual). We assumed that results higher than 0.950 for the CFI and results below 0.050 for the RMSEA and the SRMR are excellent, following Arbuckle (2010) and Byrne (2010).

After the good fit and comparability of data were established, a new model was designed using the pooled sample, including the item '*Satisfaction with: How you are listened to by adults in general'* as a mediator between the rights-related items and the SWB indicator (the CW-SWBS5 latent variable). A model including both direct and mediated effects displayed a much better fit than the model only including mediated effects. This model including all the effects was tested using MGSEM with constrained loadings and intercepts to check for metric and scalar invariance. Metric invariance allows for a meaningful comparison of correlations and regressions, while scalar invariance allows for a meaningful comparison of the latent means (Coenders, Batista-Foguet, & Saris, 2005). When any constraint is added to a model, a change in any fit index of more than 0.01 is not considered acceptable (Cheng, 2007; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

Squared Multiple Correlation (SMC) was calculated with each model because they indicate how accurately each variable is predicted by the other variables in the model (Arbuckle, 2010; Byrne, 2010). Additionally, the remaining per cent variance is accounted for by its unique factor error. If error represented measurement error only, we could say that the estimated reliability of the variable is the value displayed for each SMC variable. Therefore, each SMC value is an estimate from the lower band of reliability relating to its variable (Arbuckle, 2010; Byrne, 2010).

5 Results

5.1 Descriptive results

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for seven of the items used in this research. Mean scores of all items for the 12-year-old group were lower than for the 10-year-old group for the three countries. The items about the local area display the lowest scores, and the largest drop from 10yo to 12yo is observed for the item '*In my local area, I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things'.* Scores of almost all

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for 12 of the items used in the data analysis

		Brazil		Chile		Spain		TOTAL	
Item	Statistic	10yo	12yo	10yo	12yo	10yo	12yo	10yo	12yo
My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account.	Mean	2.61	2.43	3.26	2.97	3.39	3.34	3.18	3.04
	sd	1.29	1.36	1.09	1.24	0.85	0.92	1.07	1.18
My parents and I make decisions about my life together.	Mean	2.66	2.30	2.98	2.68	3.08	3.04	2.96	2.78
	sd	1.42	1.47	1.25	1.33	1.11	1.13	1.23	1.30
My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account.	Mean	2.70	2.18	3.11	2.69	3.35	3.04	3.15	2.75
	sd	1.24	1.30	1.15	1.19	0.88	0.99	1.07	1.17
In my school, I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important.	Mean	2.94	2.51	3.17	2.80	3.33	3.20	3.20	2.94
	sd	1.27	1.32	1.12	1.19	0.91	0.94	1.06	1.14
Adults in my area listen to children and take them seriously.	Mean	1.99	1.53	2.80	2.11	2.62	2.48	2.51	2.17
	sd	1.44	1.32	1.30	1.37	1.24	1.14	1.34	1.30
In my local area, I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things.	Mean	1.96	1.27	2.55	1.91	2.69	2.53	2.49	2.08
	sd	1.52	1.37	1.45	1.49	1.27	1.18	1.41	1.41
Satisfaction with: how you are listened to by adults in general.	Mean	8.48	7.25	8.81	7.95	8.88	8.48	8.77	8.07
	sd	2.43	2.94	2.15	2.55	1.75	1.93	2.03	2.41
I enjoy my life (CW-SWBS5).	Mean	8.72	7.69	9.28	8.51	9.41	9.02	9.22	8.58
	sd	2.53	2.96	1.67	2.26	1.35	1.57	1.78	2.20
My life is going well (CW-SWBS5).	Mean	8.86	7.69	9.01	8.23	9.37	8.99	9.17	8.50
	sd	2.19	2.82	1.88	2.41	1.31	1.65	1.70	2.23
I have a good life (CW-SWBS5).	Mean	9.11	8.26	9.10	8.52	9.46	9.20	9.30	8.81
	sd	1.88	2.62	1.97	2.37	1.28	1.51	1.62	2.09
The things that happen in my life are excellent (CW-SWBS5).	Mean	7.95	6.92	8.35	7.46	8.35	7.76	8.26	7.49
	sd	2.59	2.95	2.47	2.84	1.88	2.12	2.21	2.55
I am happy with my life (CW-SWBS5).	Mean	9.06	7.92	9.11	8.28	9.48	9.10	9.30	8.62
	sd	2.09	2.92	2.03	2.77	1.36	1.78	1.73	2.41

Table 3 Answer to the two questions on knowledge about children's rights by country and age group

		10yo.				12yo.			
Item	Country	No	Not sure	Yes	Total	No	Not sure	Yes	Total
I know what rights children have.	Brazil	66	370	423	859	69	411	381	861
	Chile	46	179	611	836	36	254	668	958
	Spain	253	777	958	1988	164	733	1,029	1,926
	Total	**365**	**1,326**	**1,992**	**3,683**	**269**	**1,398**	**2,078**	**3,745**
I know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.	Brazil	288	374	195	857	274	404	184	862
	Chile	205	382	260	847	175	485	294	954
	Spain	573	678	747	1998	475	656	796	1,927
	Total	**1,066**	**1,434**	**1,202**	**3,702**	**924**	**1,545**	**1,274**	**3,743**

items are higher for children from Spain. The lowest scores are for Brazilian children, and the scores for the Chilean children are in the middle.

Table 3 shows the results for the two remaining items, namely knowledge about children's rights and the UN Convention. It is observed that about 54% of the 10yo children in the entire sample answered 'yes' to the 'I know what rights children have'

item, and 32% of them answered 'yes' to the item regarding the UN Convention. Considering the 12yo, it is observed that about 55% of the children in the entire sample answered 'yes' to the first item and about 34% to the second. Results also show that almost 30% of the sample answered 'no' to the item regarding the UN Convention.

Table 4 SEM Models including children's rights items related to a SWB indicator latent variable

Models		$\chi 2$	df	*p*-value	CFI	RMSEA (confidence interval)	SRMR
10 yo. 3 countries							
1	9 children's rights-related items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Pooled sample.	199.94	45	<0.001	0.992	0.030 (0.026-0.034)	-
2	9 children's rights-related items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Multi-group 3 countries unconstrained.	384.03	135	<0.001	0.987	0.022 (0.019-0.025)	-
3	7 children's rights-related items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Pooled sample.	191.93	37	<0.001	0.992	0.033 (0.029-0.038)	0.020
4	7 children's rights-related items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Multi-group 3 countries unconstrained.	349.81	111	<0.001	0.987	0.024 (0.021-0.027)	0.031
5	7 children's rights items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Multi-group constrained loadings.	411.49	119	<0.001	0.985	0.025 (0.023-0.028)	0.030
6	7 children's rights items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Multi-group constrained loadings & intercepts.	486.75	127	<0.001	0.981	0.027 (0.025-0.030)	0.029
12 yo. 3 countries							
7	9 children's rights-related items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Pooled sample.	182.67	45	<0.001	0.995	0.028 (0.024-0.033)	-
8	9 children's rights-related items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Multi-group 3 countries unconstrained.	381.61	135	<0.001	0.991	0.022 (0.019-0.025)	-
9	7 children's rights-related items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Pooled sample.	178.58	37	<0.001	0.995	0.032 (0.027-0.037)	0.013
10	7 children's rights-related items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Multi-group 3 countries unconstrained.	331.15	111	<0.001	0.992	0.023 (0.020-0.026)	0.016
11	7 children's rights items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Multi-group constrained loadings.	365.36	119	<0.001	0.991	0.023 (0.021-0.026)	0.015
12	7 children's rights items + gender related to CW-SWBS5. Multi-group constrained loadings & intercepts.	483.77	127	<0.001	0.987	0.027 (0.025-0.030)	0.016

5.2 SEM including the children's rights-related items and gender

A model correlating the nine rights-related items and gender to the CW-SWBS5 latent variable was separately tested for each age group (Models 1 for 10yo and 7 for 12yo in Table 4; Fig. 1). The fit was excellent for both models as well as for the same models analysed as multi-group by country (Models 2 and 8 in Table 4). However, these models showed no contribution of the two items on rights knowledge to the SWB indicator for either the pooled sample or the multi-group by country for any of the age groups with just one exception. In Chile the results are significant at $p < .01$ for the item "*I know what rights children have*" for the 12yo and at $p < .05$ for the item "*I know about the UN children's rights Convention*" for the 10yo. These two significant results seem to be spurious (e.g. due to the large sample size). As explained in the Instruments section, both items involve the problem of reducing the sample size and including missing values, making the SRMR impossible to calculate, so we repeated all analyses of the model without these two items and then continued without them.

Another item does not show a significant contribution to the latent variable using the pooled sample for both age groups ("*Adults in my area listen to children and take them seriously*"), although the multi-group sample results for Spain are significant at $p < .05$ for the 10yo. Despite these adverse results, we decided to keep this item in the models to allow for more accurate cross-country comparisons.

The models with seven rights-related items associated to the CW-SWBS5 latent variable also displayed excellent fit indexes for both age groups with the pooled sample (Models 3 and 9 in Table 4), as did the multi-group model (Models 4 and 10 in Table 4). The same models with constrained loadings (Models 5 and 11) and with

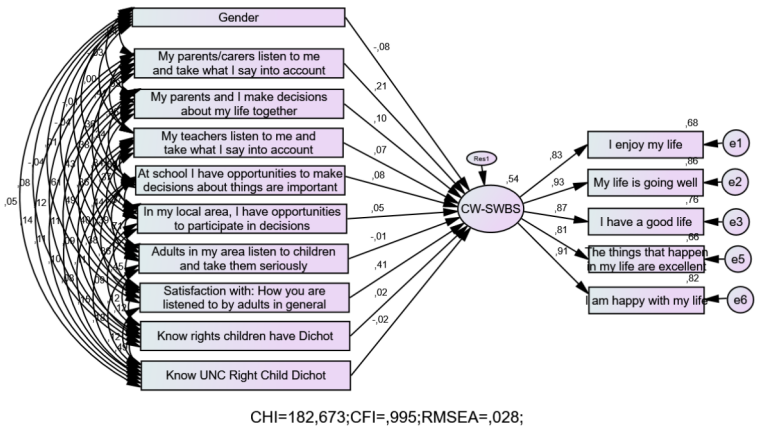

Fig. 1 Model relating items analysed in this study to a latent SWB variable, 12-year-olds, 3 countries pooled sample (Model 7 in Table 4)

constrained loadings and intercepts (Models 6 and 12) still showed excellent fit, and the decrease with each additional constraint was < 0.01, supporting metric and scalar invariance; i.e. comparability of all statistics among the scores for three countries is possible.

In Table A1 (supplementary materials) detailed results are offered for Model 6 and in Table A2 (supplementary materials) for Model 12 using bootstrapping. The most outstanding results are as follows:

Regression weights Gender displays significant and negative effects on the SWB indicator for the three countries and both age groups (except for Brazil in the 10yo), meaning girls present lower SWB. The largest standardized regression weights are observed for *Satisfaction with how you are listened to by adults in general* for the three countries and both age groups with a large difference compared to the other items. The second largest is *My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account* in the 12yo for the three countries, but this is different in each country for the 10yo.

Correlations for the 10yo are lower than for the older age group in most cases with a few exceptions. All correlations between the seven items analysed here are significant, except for gender in most cases. Gender does not display a significant correlation with *Adults in my area listen to children and take them seriously* for any country for the 10yo, but it is significant in Brazil and Spain for the 12yo. *Satisfaction with how you are listened to by adults in general* correlates significantly with gender only in Spain for the 10yo and only in Brazil for the 12yo. *In my local area, I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things* only significantly correlates with gender in Brazil for the two age groups.

At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important does not correlate with gender in any country for the two age groups, but it is significant in Spain for the 12yo. *My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account* displays a significant correlation with gender in Spain for the 10yo, and in Chile for the 12yo. *My parents and I make decisions about my life together* displays a significant correlation with gender only in Spain for the 10yo and in Brazil for the 12yo. Finally, *My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account* displays a significant correlation with gender in Chile only for the 10yo, but in Spain only for the 12yo.

The largest correlations observed in the three countries and both age groups are between *Adults in my area listen to children and take them seriously* and *In my local area, I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things* (from 0.554 to 0.737). The second largest is between *My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account* and *My parents and I make decisions about my life together* (from 0.406 to 0.698), although for the 10yo in Chile and Spain the second largest is between *My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account* and *At school, I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important* (from 0.422 to 0.609). There is no correlation higher than 0.737 indicating the possibly that there is no multicollinearity among items.

Mean estimates are the highest for Spain and the lowest for Brazil for all items and the two age groups. The highest mean estimates for the six agreement/disagreement items (0–4 scores) are for *My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account* in Chile and Spain in both age groups, whereas they are for *At school, I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important* in Brazil, also for both age groups. The lowest mean estimates are for *Adults in my area listen to*

Table 5 SEM Models including children's rights items and a mediating variable related to a SWB indicator latent variable

Models		χ2	df	*p*-value	CFI	RMSEA (confidence interval)	SRMR
10yo. 3 Countries							
1	6 items related to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Pooled sample.	551.62	44	p<.001	0.974	0.055 (0.051-0.059)	0.076
2	6 items related to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Multi-group by country. Unconstrained.	677.80	132	p<.001	0.971	0.033 (0.031-0.036)	0.078
3	6 items related to CW-SWBS5 and to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Pooled sample.	193.44	38	p<.001	0.992	0.033 (0.028-0.038)	0.020
4	6 items related to CW-SWBS5 and to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Multi-group by country. Unconstrained.	358.28	114	p<.001	0.987	0.024 (0.021-0.027)	0.031
5	6 items related to CW-SWBS5 and to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Multi-group by country. Constrained loadings.	419.85	122	p<.001	0.984	0.025 (0.023-0.028)	0.029
6	6 items related to CW-SWBS5 and to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Multi-group by country. Constrained loadings & intercepts.	495.21	130	p<.001	0.981	0.027 (0.025-0.030)	0.031
12yo. 3 Countries							
7	6 items related to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Pooled sample.	759.87	44	p<.001	0.976	0.066 (0.062-0.070)	0.079
8	6 items related to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Multi-group by country. Unconstrained.	833.17	132	p<.001	0.975	0.038 (0.035-0.040)	0.080
9	6 items related to CW-SWBS5 and to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Pooled sample.	181.27	38	p<.001	0.995	0.032 (0.027-0.036)	0.013
10	6 items related to CW-SWBS5 and to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Multi-group by country. Unconstrained.	336.56	114	p<.001	0.992	0.023 (0.020-0.026)	0.018
11	6 items related to CW-SWBS5 and to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Multi-group by country. Constrained loadings.	370.77	122	p<.001	0.991	0.023 (0.021-0.026)	0.018
12	6 items related to CW-SWBS5 and to 1 mediating satisfaction item. Multi-group by country. Constrained loadings & intercepts.	489.18	130	p<.001	0.987	0.027 (0.025-0.030)	0.018

children and take them seriously in Brazil and Spain for the 12yo and in Spain for the 10yo, while they are for *In my local area, I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things* in Brazil and Chile for the 10yo and in Chile for the 12yo.

The explained variance (measured through the SMC) of the latent variable (CW-SWBS) by the seven items analysed here is 29.8% in Spain, 32.9% in Brazil and 49.1% in Chile for the 10-year-old group, and 39.7% in Spain, 52.8 in Brazil and 61.9% in Chile for the 12-year-old group.

5.3 SEM with the satisfaction item as a mediator between the rights-related items and the SWB indicator

Next, a new model using the pooled sample and including the item on *Satisfaction with how you are listened to by adults in general* as mediating between the six rights-related items and the SWB indicator (the CW-SWBS5 latent variable) was tested. The fit of the models excluding direct effects of the six rights-related items on the latent variable (Models 1, 2, 7 and 8 in Table 5) was much worse than in the models including direct and mediated effects (Models 3–6 and 9–12 in Table 5; Fig. 2). In Tables 6 and 7, the results of Models 6 and 12 are detailed.

Both the effects on the SWB indicator and on *Satisfaction with how you are listened to by adults in general* of each of the six rights-related items here tested were significant at least in one country and age group. However, differences by country were rather large. *Adults in my area listen to children and take them seriously* only

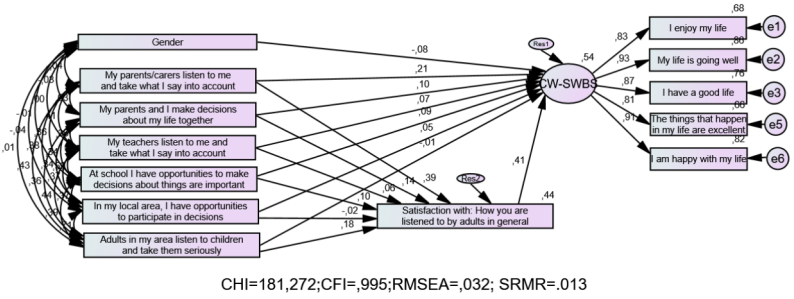

Fig. 2 Mediation model including one satisfaction item as a mediator between the six right-related items analysed in this study and a latent SWB variable. Direct and indirect effects, 12-year-olds, 3 countries pooled sample (Model 9 in Table 5)

displayed significant direct effects on the SWB indicator in Spain for the 10yo, but it displayed significant effects on the mediator variable for the three countries and the two age groups with the single exception of the 10yo in Brazil (Tables 6 and 7).

In my local area, I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things presented significant direct effects on the SWB indicator for Brazil and Chile, but in Spain for only the 12yo and not the 10yo. Its effects on the mediator variable were significant in Brazil and Spain for the 10yo and non-significant in the three countries for the 12yo.

At school, I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important displayed significant direct effects on the SWB indicator only in Chile for the 10yo and in Brazil and Spain for the 12yo, while its effects on the mediator variable were significant in all countries for the 10yo and in Chile and Spain for the 12yo.

My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account displayed significant direct effects on the SWB indicator only in Spain for the 10yo and in Brazil and Spain for the 12yo, while its effects on the mediator variable were significant in Brazil and Spain for the 10yo and only in Spain for the 12yo.

My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account displayed significant direct effects on the SWB indicator in Brazil and Spain, but not in Chile for the 10yo, and in all countries for the 12yo, while its effects on the mediator variable were significant in the three countries and for both age groups.

My parents and I make decisions about my life together displayed significant direct effects on the SWB indicator and on the mediator variable in the three countries and for both age groups.

The variance of the *Satisfaction with how you are listened to by adults in general* item explained by the six rights-related items (according to the SMC) was 24.8% in Brazil, 26% in Spain and 40.9% in Chile for the 10yo, and 37.3%, 37.8% and 53.4% respectively for the 12yo.

6 Discussion

Perceptions of having opportunities to participate in decisions and of adults listening to children and taking them into account are lowest in the context of the local area where the children live in all countries. The highest means are in the context of home for Spain and in the school context for some items and ages in Brazil and Chile. This result highlights the cultural diversity of existing dynamics between children and adults in different life contexts and shows practices and forms of relating in each country. It also gives concrete clues as to which contexts need more action and attention in each country. Specifically, in Brazil (Tables 2, 6 and 7), we are struck by how negative the responses of 12-year-old adolescents are because they do not feel listened to by adults or taken seriously (M = 1.53) compared to Chile (M = 2.11) and Spain (M = 2.48). Our Brazilian sample (n = 1,742) from the states of the South and the Southeast, with an estimated population of almost 50% of the Brazilian population, shows the feelings of adolescents regarding neglect by adults. This is characteristic of a country where the young people are generally excluded and where 'youthicide' is the main cause of death (Scherer & Nunes, 2018). It indicates the urgent need for

Table 6 Model 6 in Table 5. Standardised regression weights and SMC (Squared Multiple Correlations) with constrained loadings and intercepts for the 10-year-old group model by country. Bootstrap ML, 95% confidence intervals, resampling = 500

10yo.			Brazil				Chile				Spain			
			Estimate	**Lower**	**Upper**	***p***	**Estimate**	**Lower**	**Upper**	***p***	**Estimate**	**Lower**	**Upper**	***p***
Sat Listened Adults	←	Parents listen	0.245	0.161	0.309	0.008	0.334	0.241	0.418	0.005	0.337	0.278	0.398	0.003
Sat Listened Adults	←	Parents joint decisions	0.108	0.020	0.191	0.004	0.211	0.133	0.294	0.003	0.101	0.049	0.164	0.003
Sat Listened Adults	←	Teachers listen	0.085	0.007	0.172	0.033	0.021	−0.069	0.103	0.603	0.108	0.043	0.165	0.007
Sat Listened Adults	←	School decisions	0.161	0.076	0.246	0.003	0.089	−0.002	0.198	0.052	0.057	0.007	0.106	0.033
Sat Listened Adults	←	Local area decisions	0.081	0.000	0.158	0.049	0.020	−0.055	0.098	0.548	0.058	0.008	0.115	0.015
Sat Listened Adults	←	Local adults listen	0.051	−0.028	0.138	0.223	0.163	0.074	0.246	0.005	0.073	0.012	0.126	0.014
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Gender	−0.025	−0.085	0.034	0.435	−0.064	−0.117	−0.012	0.008	−0.044	−0.084	−0.001	0.042
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Parents listen	0.128	0.049	0.212	0.006	0.072	−0.011	0.168	0.101	0.107	0.043	0.174	0.004
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Parents joint decisions	0.154	0.074	0.226	0.004	0.096	0.009	0.176	0.029	0.091	0.028	0.140	0.008
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Teachers listen	0.043	−0.053	0.130	0.390	−0.051	−0.142	0.038	0.242	0.084	0.019	0.158	0.008
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Local area decisions	0.108	0.038	0.197	0.005	0.128	0.060	0.218	0.003	0.034	−0.015	0.090	0.195
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Local adults listen	−0.041	−0.120	0.026	0.299	0.013	−0.081	0.111	0.801	0.059	0.007	0.103	0.023
CWSWBS5 latent	←	School decisions	0.037	−0.040	0.127	0.410	0.154	0.063	0.236	0.007	0.058	0.000	0.115	0.051
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Sat Listened Adults	0.359	0.237	0.469	0.005	0.470	0.371	0.557	0.003	0.353	0.272	0.439	0.004
Enjoy life	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.614	0.531	0.679	0.005	0.830	0.788	0.868	0.002	0.751	0.673	0.804	0.005
Life going well	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.887	0.840	0.921	0.005	0.883	0.828	0.916	0.009	0.894	0.861	0.917	0.006
Have good life	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.886	0.849	0.916	0.006	0.778	0.721	0.836	0.003	0.837	0.780	0.893	0.003
Things life excellent	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.713	0.659	0.754	0.005	0.734	0.682	0.781	0.003	0.634	0.586	0.680	0.004

public, social and educational policies that eliminate inequalities and discrimination. In recent times in Chile, the evidence has shown the importance of the context of the local area where they live for the perception of threat experienced by children and adolescents and its effects on satisfaction with life and well-being. One study that used data collected in 16 countries from the second round of the ISCWeB survey showed that children experienced less adult supervision in the context of the local area where they live compared to home or school. This could generate a greater feeling of danger, negatively impacting their life satisfaction (Varela et al., 2020).

Concerning the first aim of this study, the direct contribution of six perceived rights-related items to the SWB latent variable (the CW-SWBS) for children aged 10 and 12 in Brazil, Chile and Spain was significant in most cases with few exceptions depending on the country. According to the ecological perspective of human development, interactions between children and adults are expected to vary between each specific context (home, school and the area where they live) insofar as different adults are involved and different dynamics established (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). It therefore comes as no surprise that important differences were observed in each perception depending on the context where the exercise of the participation rights was referred to (home, school or area where the child lives). This reinforces the need for research on participation from a contextualised perspective that integrates and highlights the different influences of the diverse ecological levels that children are part of. This same conclusion was reached by Perry-Hazan (2021) after a systematic review of different studies on children's rights. Therefore, we understand well-being as a fundamentally relational phenomenon where the experience of being well emerges interactively and is inscribed in a dynamic of community and relational exchange in the experience of meeting and relating to others. Cultural and social practices (including economic and environmental aspects) are always unique and particular to specific contexts, meaning they cannot be standardized (White & Blackmore, 2015). Thus, well-being is always configured in a particular moment and local context as a result of relationships with others and informs us of the particularities of these diverse contexts (White, 2017).

As expected, we observe country diversity regarding the influence on SWB of some perceptions related to children's right to be listened to and taken into account and the right to participate in decisions affecting them as well as some changes with age. Such diversity shows that childhood is not the same for all children (Hunner-Kreisel & März, 2019) given that it is shaped by different living conditions (both objective, such as health and social care facilities available for children or urban infrastructure conditions in neighbourhoods, quality of educational services, and subjective, such as children's perception of being cared for by professionals working in those services, or the safety experienced in schools or on the streets), even among countries that share some cultural background. Heterogeneity rather than homogeneity in participation is rightly to be expected. The findings demonstrate the cultural diversity and the dynamics existing between children and adults in the different contexts of family, school, and neighbourhood with disparate results by context in each country (Table 2). The contextual ecological perspective (Saforcada, 2020) provides us an analysis of the contextual effects on human beings. It can also assist in analysing the heterogeneous and homogeneous aspects that we might find in our data.

In this sense, based on adolescents' well-being research data, a Socio-Community Well-being model was proposed by Sarriera and Bedin (2016) that incorporates subjective well-being and well-being dimensions in different contexts (family, friends, community).

In relation to the second aim of this study, when *Satisfaction with how you are listened to by adults in general* is included in the models as a mediating variable, its direct contribution to SWB is higher than that of any of the other items studied in the three countries for both age groups, while the six children's rights related items have significant effects on this mediating variable with some exceptions depending on the country. These results constitute a step forward in responding to the challenge posed by Sianko et al. (2021), according to whom the mechanisms through which the right to participate in decision-making in specific domains (contexts) impacts children's SWB are still unknown. Hanson and Nieuwenhuys (2013 quoted in Evers, Vadeboncoeur, & Weber, 2015) defended the idea that *living rights* (the lived experience of these rights), *social justice* (shared normative beliefs that make rights appear as legitimate in the fight for their recognition) and *translations* (the divergence between beliefs and perspective on rights and their codification) are key elements in the understanding of children's rights from a contextualized perspective. The differences among the above-mentioned countries could be well explained using these three highly culturally sensitive mechanisms. Sianko et al. (2021) also call attention to the need for proper measuring instruments, be they quantitative such as psychometric scales or qualitative such as open or semi-structured questions, to capture the multifaceted nature of both children's participation and rights.

Our hypotheses received support from the data. Perceptions related to children's rights to being listened to and taken into account and of opportunities to participate in decisions affecting them in three everyday contexts (home, school and where the child lives) significantly contributed to both *Satisfaction with how you are listened to by adults in general* and SWB in both age groups, although the contribution levels notably differ by country. This indicates the importance of understanding and studying well-being while accounting for the weight that particular conditions have in each life context where children's lives take place.

Regarding the third aim of this study, the results show that some of the relationships between the variables we have analysed with our data are different depending on the country and age group. This highlights the importance of extending the same analysis carried out here to a wider range of ages and countries. It also suggests that actions to promote participation, like human rights education programs and rights-based organisational practices (Perry-Hazan, 2021) as well as the promotion of well-being and satisfaction with life, of which the Well-Being Promotion Program (Suldo, 2016) is one example, cannot be homogeneous to be successful; instead, always being adapted to suit each social and cultural context (even within each country) and each age group.

Results indicate that gender has a negative correlation with SWB, indicating that girls presented lower SWB than boys, which is supported by previous research (Bedin & Sarriera, 2015). Longitudinal studies have also shown that girls' decline of SWB levels at the beginning of adolescence seems to be more marked and presumably longer-lasting compared to that of boys (González-Carrasco et al., 2017a,

2017b). This probably means that a girl's homeostatic system regulating SWB levels is more sensitive to external variations. Hereinafter it is hypothesized that both biological (hormonal influence) and cultural factors (differences in social standards for boys and girls) underlie girls' greater sensitivity to external variations and explain these results.

It is important to take developmental issues at this age into account. This is a time when girls start their maturation before boys do, which may be linked to the way they assess their well-being. Also, the results presented an increase in the explained variance of the CW-SWBS for the items on rights and the mediating satisfaction variable for 10yo to 12yo, indicating that the model may better explain the SWB variance of older children. Recall that Kosher and Ben-Arieh (2017) suggest that younger children may have a poor understanding of the concept of rights, but that they may increase their awareness of the meaning of rights with adequate support. Thus, being listened to and taken into account by adults may be one way to improve children's well-being, especially during the transition from childhood to adolescence.

Furthermore, the Brazilian and Chilean samples display a higher mean age between 10 and 12 compared to the Spanish sample (Table 1), meaning that at least a part of the higher Spanish SWB scores may be due to a small age difference. Previous studies have shown that this age group is very sensitive when it comes to well-being (González-Carrasco et al., 2017a). This can also be observed in Table 2 in the items 'I am happy with my life' and 'I enjoy my life', especially at 12 years of age with averages lower than 1 point. The perceptions of adolescents in the context of Latin America and Europe differ in assessments of their happiness and well-being despite the adolescents being middle class and living in metropolitan regions. As Rees (2021) states when working with our data from Brazil, Chile and Spain, "The subjective well-being of children is sensitive to age, gender and the different contexts in which they live … especially due to cultural and economic differences," (p. 45).

Other findings in this study showed that about 50% of the children answered 'yes' to the item *I know what rights children have*, and 30% of them answered 'yes' to the item regarding the UN Convention for the three countries. The results additionally revealed that almost 30% of the sample answered 'no' to the item regarding the UN Convention. Previous studies with children from Spain (Casas et al., 2012b) and Brazil (Bedin & Sarriera, 2014) detected a low relationship between parents' and their children's well-being, which may indicate that the children might not be listened to or taken into account by their parents. This would corroborate the finding that few children are aware of the UN Convention and their rights in general, and children's rights are possibly not often discussed in the family.

On one hand, knowing that there are so many children who are unaware of their own rights is alarming. On the other hand, this result can be viewed as an opportunity to invest in psychosocial interventions focusing on improving children's well-being and empowering them through the knowledge of their rights and their role as agents of public policy changes (Sarriera & Bedin, 2017).

Table 7 Model 12 in Table 5. Standardised regression weights and SMC (Squared Multiple Correlations) with constrained loadings and intercepts for the 12-year-old group model by country. Bootstrap ML, 95% confidence intervals, resampling = 500

12yo.			Brazil				Chile				Spain			
			Estimate	**Lower**	**Upper**	***p***	**Estimate**	**Lower**	**Upper**	***p***	**Estimate**	**Lower**	**Upper**	***p***
Sat Listened Adults	←	Parents listen	0.384	0.295	0.447	0.009	0.430	0.339	0.499	0.006	0.347	0.281	0.401	0.005
Sat Listened Adults	←	Parents joint decisions	0.141	0.062	0.220	0.003	0.202	0.137	0.277	0.002	0.092	0.045	0.148	0.003
Sat Listened Adults	←	Teachers listen	0.020	−0.058	0.095	0.635	0.033	−0.040	0.106	0.326	0.110	0.049	0.179	0.004
Sat Listened Adults	←	School decisions	0.068	−0.004	0.134	0.066	0.116	0.055	0.180	0.005	0.112	0.058	0.166	0.003
Sat Listened Adults	←	Local area decisions	−0.014	−0.090	0.053	0.607	−0.048	−0.116	0.021	0.175	0.038	−0.017	0.100	0.166
Sat Listened Adults	←	Local adults listen	0.199	0.116	0.272	0.004	0.161	0.074	0.227	0.008	0.157	0.095	0.214	0.003
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Gender	−0.093	−0.143	−0.040	0.004	−0.073	−0.114	−0.030	0.006	−0.071	−0.110	−0.037	0.004
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Parents listen	0.180	0.109	0.266	0.002	0.219	0.144	0.296	0.005	0.195	0.138	0.256	0.003
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Parents joint decisions	0.102	0.028	0.172	0.009	0.091	0.017	0.170	0.026	0.086	0.031	0.138	0.009
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Teachers listen	0.118	0.069	0.186	0.002	0.032	−0.035	0.093	0.347	0.063	0.002	0.116	0.043
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Local area decisions	0.012	−0.050	0.075	0.722	0.027	−0.031	0.095	0.343	0.079	0.033	0.138	0.007
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Local adults listen	−0.036	−0.107	0.032	0.349	0.046	−0.032	0.116	0.199	−0.021	−0.083	0.024	0.339
CWSWBS5 latent	←	School decisions	0.089	0.023	0.158	0.004	0.057	−0.003	0.128	0.067	0.092	0.042	0.144	0.004
CWSWBS5 latent	←	Sat Listened Adults	0.446	0.361	0.524	0.005	0.465	0.392	0.556	0.002	0.350	0.263	0.431	0.004
Enjoy life	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.751	0.702	0.795	0.003	0.878	0.849	0.900	0.008	0.847	0.804	0.883	0.005
Life going well	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.924	0.896	0.946	0.005	0.924	0.901	0.939	0.007	0.919	0.898	0.934	0.004
Have good life	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.857	0.827	0.885	0.008	0.861	0.831	0.890	0.006	0.888	0.860	0.908	0.006
Things life excellent	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.843	0.819	0.872	0.004	0.829	0.796	0.857	0.005	0.738	0.691	0.769	0.005
Happy with my life	←	CWSWBS5 latent	0.909	0.887	0.926	0.007	0.902	0.881	0.918	0.011	0.889	0.869	0.909	0.003
Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC)		Sat Listened Adults	**0.378**	0.317	0.423	0.019	**0.534**	0.474	0.581	0.010	**0.373**	0.315	0.429	0.004
		CWSWBS latent	**0.526**	0.447	0.569	0.025	**0.619**	0.559	0.675	0.005	**0.397**	0.330	0.449	0.011

7 Conclusions

Our results demonstrate once again that children's SWB is sensitive to age, gender and the different contexts where they live. Perceived contexts in each country are very important to evaluate satisfaction with how children perceive being listened to by adults in general, while having parents who listen and take children's opinions into account is very important for that satisfaction and also for SWB. This reinforces the importance of considering local participation rather than general participation, which is in line with the *Revised European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life* of 2003 (Jarosz, 2016).

The importance of the effects of feeling listened to and taken into account on SWB increase from late childhood to early adolescence, which contrasts with the decreasing-age trend in SWB observed during this same life period (Casas & González-Carrasco, 2018; González-Carrasco et al., 2018; Shek & Liang, 2018).

To what extend an unmet desire to be listened to and being insufficiently able to participate in decision-making contributes to this decreasing trend deserves strong attention in future research. Advancing in the investigation of this matter can show us how being listened to and taken into account by adults, especially in the process of transition from childhood to adolescence, may be one way to neutralize or reduce the decline in well-being that occurs in this stage.

One important limitation is that the analysis carried out does not allow exploring diversity in participation; i.e., the identification of different participation profiles across various contexts (home, school and the local area) and countries. This could greatly complement the results observed here and help advance the development of more democratic and, therefore, more participatory societies.

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