Contextual Predictor's of Children's Subjective Well-being in Botswana

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Layani Makwinja

Dr. Lisa Newland

Dr Harry Freeman

Dr Mejai Bola Mike Avoseh

Background

- According to Deiner, Lucas, & Oishi, (2009, p. 187) "Subjective well-being is defined as a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life as a whole. These evaluations include emotional reactions to events as well as cognitive judgements of satisfaction and fulfilment"
- Subjective well-being is a crucial element to self-evaluation and key to the functioning of an individual in a holistic and self-worth manner
- Children however have been denied this pleasure
- Children's well-being has always been an objective experience given by adults in varied environments holding specialty roles adequate to assess children's well-being without needing to be questioned.
  - E.G:
    - Doctors (Health and medical well-being)
    - Teachers (Cognitive and mental well-being)
    - Parents (Psychosocial and Physical well-being)

Children's Worlds

- With a new found interest on Children's Subjective Well-being the Jacob's Foundation started a project in 2009 entitled: Children's Worlds.
- Project is an international, intercultural and multi-linguistic study which has taken part in over 20 countries.
- The study aims to collect solid and representative data on children's lives and daily activities, their time use and, in particular, their own perceptions and evaluations of their well-being.
- This data collected will be used to improve children's well-being by creating awareness among children, parents and communities to the everyday lives of children, their environment, their relationships with others, their beliefs and satisfaction.
- Children's worlds aims to influence opinion leaders, decision makers, professionals and the general public, both in the project countries and internationally.

Purpose of the Study

- It is essential to provide children with an environment in which they can fully blossom and attain their highest potential. Children require an atmosphere, in which they feel 'good' with their lives, can follow their own predispositions and are encouraged to bring out the best of themselves.

- One of the most important factors in assessing whether a particular environment is conducive to children attaining their best potential is to measure the perception of their own subjective sense of well-being.

- This is best done by asking children directly and by allowing them to give an assessment of their own well-being.

Why Botswana?

- Urban versus Rural

- The two most urban areas are the smallest geographically, the North East and South East Regions

- Majority of Botswana then remains Rural

- Population of 2 million people

- Batswana CHERISH their children

Botswana's great divide

- Botswana however has been affected by modernization, socially and economically.
- Botswana is very much so a collectivist culture still run by many of the traditions and values that were created by the forefathers.
- In an attempt to modernize and develop Botswana a strategic plan was created named Vision 2016 which states 7 pillars and goals the government is to achieve by 2016. these pillars are:
    - An Educated, Informed Nation
    - A Prosperous, Productive and Innovative Nation
    - A Compassionate, Just and Caring Nation
    - A Safe and Secure Nation
    - An Open, Democratic and Accountable Nation
    - A Moral and Tolerant Nation
    - A United and Proud Nation
- However, there was no particular focus on the child and children's well-being

Botswana cont'

- In 2009 the Children's Act was then created so as to enforce the Rights of children
- In traditional collectivist culture children are seen but not heard, and the well-being of the child is solely dependent on the culture and parental view not that of their own.
- Two interesting Rights which speak on parent child relationships, which are crucial for developmental outcomes, are a good indications that the country id bringing importance the needs of the child to the forefront: the two rights are:
  - Article 13: the 'Right to know and be cared for by parents'
  - Article 14 the 'Right to appropriate parental guidance'.
- An additional right which enforces the importance of the child's voice is:
  - Article 20: the 'Right to freedom of expression'

Botswana cont'

- Botswana has currently put itself in a good position to begin defending the child allowing children to express themselves.
- However this then creates a cultural clash with the traditional collectivist thinking. leaving parent's conflicted on how they are to raise their children
  - Do they keep the values and traditions they were raised with or
  - Do they conform to the new way of living which promotes individualistic culture values.
- This social divide is highly influenced by the economic divide which determines ones developmental outcomes and life path in Botswana is ones socioeconomic status (SES)
- This division is closely linked to the school system where financial wealth will determine the form and quality of education children will experience. Figure below illustrates the academic structure in Botswana based on number of private and state schools in the two urban region of the country.

Botswana cont'

Appendix B: Table 1 Primary School Ownership by Region 2013

Region	Public	%	Private	%	Total	%
North East	63	8.4	6	8.8	69	8.4
South East	48	6.4	22	32.4	70	8.5

- Therefore children in high and middle upper SES are more likely to attend private school while those in lower middle and low SES are to attend public school.
- There is a great difference in private and public education in Botswana, see Table one below .
- As research has shown:
  - "learners that are enrolled in private schools perform better that those enrolled in government schools do" (UNESCO - IBE, 2010, p. 24)
- This then brings up many question….

Research Questions

- Which contextual factors: home, family, life, school and peer relationships are related to children's SWB in Botswana (full sample, grades 5 and 7)?

- Which contextual factors; home, family, life, school and peer relationships are predictive of children's SWB in Botswana (full sample, grades 5 and 7)? and

- Which contextual factors are related to and predictive of children's SWB in Botswana's private schools?

- Which contextual factors are related to and predictive of children's SWB in Botswana's state schools

Contextual Indicator's

- What are these contextual indicators?
  - Individual factors
  - Home and family context
  - Life and neighborhood
  - School context
  - Peer relationships
    - All these contexts were used to look at child subjective wellbeing measures which are:
      - Self-concept
      - Mental health
      - Life satisfaction

Research Process

- Following the path of Newland et. al. who did a study in the American Mid-West region looking at subjective Well-being among rural American children this study will use their adapted Children's World survey, with minor changes, to collect the data.

- Following the same procedures this data was collected on school children within the education setting.

- I went to 9 schools (2 private and 7 state) and handed out a total of 1007 survey's which were completed by children in grades 5 and 7

- For ethical purposes the school sent out a letter to parents informing them of this research study.

- All teacher's required me to give the survey in English though a Setswana version was in hand, particularly for 5th grade students due to English instruction only starting in 5th grade.

Research journey

- Having spoken to schools prior to my departure I expected to interview children at 10 schools (4 private and 6 state schools)

- Realistically I got 2 private and 7 state schools
  - Bureaucracy and Fear

- Principals were hesitant and not as welcoming at first however teachers were very inviting once I was in the classroom.

Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics was used to describe the sample.
- To answer research questions 1-3 correlation and multiple regression analyses was used.
- In regression analyses, the full set of predictors was included; home and family, neighborhood, school, peer relations and children's SWB, and separate regressions will be done to predict life satisfaction, self-concept and mental health.
- Life was an initial predictor however both life indicators (life stress and family financial resources were removed due to low reliability)

Sampling Population

- 1012 surveys were handed out 1005 were successfully completed (7 spoilt) therefore 99% response rate
- 448 were 5th grades and 557 were 7th grade students
- 50.9% male and 49.1% female
- Aged between 8 and 16 across sample
- Students from 9 local schools in 5th and 7th grades
- 7 state students (88.4%) and 2 private (11.6%) – representatively larger than the national proportions
- 13-42 students in a class (30-45 state and 13-25/26 private) - Minimum 2 classes and maximum 4 classes
- 98.4% lived with family, 78% lived in one home
- 34.8% 5th grade and 19.7% 7th grade are commuting students (54.4%)
- 96.9% born in Botswana

Descriptive Statistics

- Across all three indicators of children's SWB, children reported high levels of life satisfaction, mental health and positive self-image
- Predictor variables, children reported high levels of parent involvement and positive family relationships, with neighbourhood quality showing more variability
- Children reported generally positive peer relationships

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Predictor and Outcome Variables for Children's SWB in Botswana

Variables	Possible Range	Actual Minimum	Actual Maximum	M	SD
Life Satisfaction	38.00	0.00	38.00	25.92	5.91
Mental Health	49.00	5.00	54.00	39.12	7.43
Self-image	40.00	0.00	40.00	34.81	6.74
Family Relationships	42.00	4.00	42.00	37.16	6.66
Parent Involvement	15.00	0.00	15.00	10.86	3.30
Neighborhood quality	52.00	0.00	52.00	30.85	9.51
Teacher Relationship	8.00	0.00	8.00	6.12	1.79
School Satisfaction	40.00	0.00	40.00	32.16	7.56
Peer Relationship	27.00	0.00	27.00	20.03	4.92

Question 1

- What contextual factors (home, family, school and peer relationship) are related to children's SWB in Botswana (full sample, grades 5 and 7)?

Table 5: Correlation between Contextual and Children's SWB Indicators

Variables	Children's Subjective Well-Being Indicators		
	Life Satisfaction	Mental Health	Self-image
Family Relationships	.44**	.36**	.34**
Parent Involvement	.36**	.29**	.24**
Neighborhood quality	.33**	.28**	.35**
Teacher Relationship	.22**	.20**	.21**
School Satisfaction	.33**	.34**	.45**
Peer Relationship	.33**	.33**	.30**

Note: **$p < .01$ N = 1005*

Question 2

- What contextual factors (home, family, school and peer relationship) are predictive of children's SWB in Botswana (full sample, grades 5 and 7)?

Table 6: Summary of Regression Analyses Predicting Children's SWB Indicators

Variables	Children's Subjective Well-Being Indicators								
	Life Satisfaction			Mental Health			Self-Image		
	B	*SE* B	*β*	B	*SE* B	*β*	B	*SE* B	*β*
Family Relationships	0.24	0.03	0.28***	0.23	0.04	0.21***	0.18	0.03	0.18***
Parent Involvement	0.30	0.05	0.17***	0.24	0.07	0.10***	0.09	0.06	0.05
Neighborhood quality	0.07	0.02	0.11***	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.09	0.02	0.13***
Teacher Relationship	0.21	0.09	0.07*	0.24	0.12	0.06	0.17	0.11	0.05
School Satisfaction	0.10	0.02	0.12***	0.16	0.03	0.17***	0.27	0.03	0.30***
Peer Relationship	0.12	0.04	0.19*	0.22	0.05	0.14***	0.10	0.04	0.07*

Note: *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. N = 1005

Question 3

- What contextual factors are related to and predictive of children's SWB in Botswana's state schools?

Table 7A: Contextual Factors Related to Children's SWB in Botswana's State Schools

Variables	Children's Subjective Well-Being Indicators		
	Life Satisfaction	Mental Health	Self-image
Family Relationships	.42**	.36**	.37**
Parent Involvement	.37**	.29**	.26**
Neighborhood quality	.34**	.29**	.35**
Teacher Relationship	.21**	.20**	.20**
School Satisfaction	.32**	.33**	.45**
Peer Relationship	.33**	.33**	.30**
** p < 0.01 N = 888			

Table 7B: Contextual Factors Predictive of Children's SWB in Botswana State Schools

	Children's Subjective Well-Being Indicators								
	Life Satisfaction			Mental Health			Self-Image		
Variables	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Family Relationships	0.21	0.03	0.24***	0.22	0.04	0.20***	0.18	0.03	0.19***
Parent Involvement	0.33	0.08	0.19***	0.24	0.08	0.11*	0.12	0.07	0.06
Neighborhood quality	0.07	0.02	0.12***	0.05	0.03	0.07	0.09	0.02	0.12***
Teacher Relationship	0.21	0.10	0.07*	0.13	0.12	0.07*	0.15	0.11	0.04
School Satisfaction	0.09	0.03	0.11**	0.03	0.03	0.16***	0.27	0.03	0.30***
Peer Relationship	0.12	0.04	0.10*	0.05	0.05	0.14***	0.09	0.04	0.07*
Note: *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001 N = 888									

Question 4

- What contextual factors are related to and predictive of children's SWB in Botswana's private schools?

Table 8A: Contextual Factors Related to Children's SWB in Botswana's Private Schools

Variables	Children's Subjective Well-Being Indicators		
	Life Satisfaction	Mental Health	Self-image
Family Relationships	.63**	.38**	.33**
Parent Involvement	.31**	.33**	.15**
Neighborhood quality	.33**	.30**	.34**
Teacher Relationship	.29**	.21*	.32**
School Satisfaction	.39**	.39**	.45**
Peer Relationship	.27**	.38**	.30**

Note: ** $p < .01$ *$p < .05$ N = 117

Table 8B: Contextual Factors Predictive of Children's SWB in Botswana's Private Schools

Variables	Children's Subjective Well-Being Indicators								
	Life Satisfaction			Mental Health			Self-Image		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Family Relationships	0.52	0.09	0.52***	0.28	0.12	0.23*	0.13	0.11	0.12
Parent Involvement	0.09	0.14	0.05	0.27	0.20	0.13	-0.16	0.18	-0.08
Neighborhood quality	0.06	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.16	0.08	0.19*
Teacher Relationship	-0.01	0.33	-0.00	-0.18	0.46	-0.04	0.57	0.42	0.12
School Satisfaction	0.14	0.08	0.15	0.22	0.10	0.20*	0.32	0.09	0.31**
Peer Relationship	0.14	0.12	0.09	0.38	0.17	0.21*	0.18	0.18	0.11

Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ N = 117

Conclusions

- Family relationships show strong relations and predictability across all children's SWB indicators. This is crucial information and supports the importance of family life for the optimal development of children.

- Parent involvement was predictive of life-satisfaction and mental health supporting previous research of the parent-child relationships and its value to a child's well-being.

- School satisfaction and self-image showed the strongest relationship for all samples and was consistently predictive across all three SWB indicators.

- Teacher relationships showed low relations with all SWB indicators, this is concerning due to the influence teachers are suggested to have on children based on previous literature.

- Peer relationships were consistently predictive for the mental health indicator across all sample groups.

- In private schools family relationships showed strong relations and predictability for life satisfaction

- State schools follow the same trends as the full sample whereas private schools do have differences. Sample size may be a factor, however, this does show to have some implication on the society structure and SES though not conclusive..

Strengths

- Use of self-reporting measures of children's subjective well-being

- Multiple children's SWB indicators measuring all areas of their lives (cognitive and emotional)

- Botswana population – raw and untapped populations

- Potential to collaborate with shareholders in in child welfare entities in Botswana due to the unique nature of the research

Weaknesses

- Sample size disproportionality: 117 (11.6%) of sample from private school

- Generalizability with the rest of Botswana due to research only being conducted in urban Botswana limiting ethnical influences and extreme economic differences.

- English comprehension

Future Directions

- Improved sample size numbers

- Look into teacher relationships and causes of low associations

- Look into commuting students and children in boarding schools in comparison with residential students.

- Incorporating measures that will assist in classifying societal differences (collectivist or individualistic)