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Article:	Children's Subjective Well-being in Pakistan
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Abstract

The article reports initial results of children's subjective wellbeing survey in Pakistan. The survey was carried out in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. A total of 3600 children, within the age group 8 to 12 years, took part in the survey. This research is a sequel of the International Survey of Children's Wellbeing (ISCWeB) dealing with children's perceptions regarding their wellbeing. It encompasses the views of children about their family, peer relation, safety, agency, economic conditions and education. Moreover, it investigated their level of satisfaction with themselves, thus focusing on their overall well-being. The researcher found that children are highly satisfied with their lives. Among the three age categories, the highest level of satisfaction was showed by the eight years old age group, within that girls have higher results in comparison with boys. However, the lowest results were seen among children of twelve years old. Furthermore, no significant differences were seen in the wellbeing of children based on the area they live in. Nonetheless, a slightly higher satisfaction was observed among the children living in rural areas.

Keywords: Children World, ISCWeB, Subjective Wellbeing, Children perception, Pakistan.

Introduction

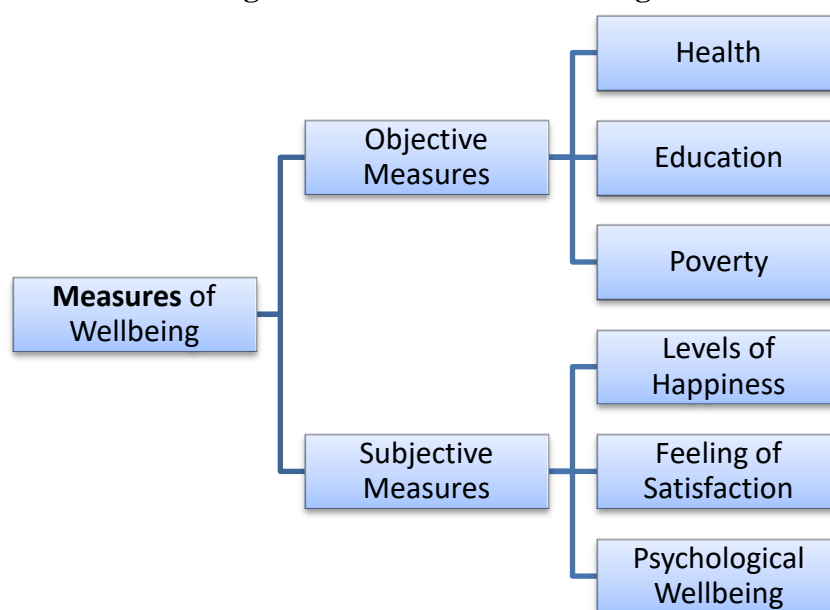
In decades of childhood studies in which psychology dominated the field, regarded children immature and irrational who are unable to provide valid data about their life. The reliability along with ethical concern of research studies, left devoid of children's opinions on childhood studies. Nevertheless, research on childhood evidenced that children are capable to share their insights and they can provide valid information about their lives (Huebner, 2004) therefore, they must be used as practical contributors instead of merely subjects of a study (Ben-Arieh, 2008).

Subjective wellbeing is the satisfaction of individuals with their life. Huebner et al. (2003) argued that "Life satisfaction is a person's general subjective assessment of the positivity of his/her life as a whole or with certain life domains" (p. 03). Positive subjective wellbeing in childhood leads to positive wellbeing in adulthood and vice versa (Bowlby, 1969; Ahmed & Zaman, 2019). Meanwhile, O'Connor and Scott (2007) discovered a strong relationship among parent-child relationship and child development.

Ben-Arieh (2008) emphasized that child wellbeing must be measured with the help of new domains instead of traditional ones. Generally, the children wellbeing is linked with financial dimension in less-developed areas. However, in rich countries the focus has expanded to non-material domains of a child's life. It has become necessary to change the paradigm from purely economic indicators to both economic and non-economic indicators and from the wellbeing of financially deprived children to the wellbeing of all children (Saith & Wazir, 2010).

Children wellbeing is a broader term. It differs from the concept of well becoming. Wellbeing is regarded as happiness in current life whereas well-becoming is the success and happiness gained in later life. Children wellbeing encapsulates children's financial circumstances, their rights, social relations and opportunities for growth (Ben-Arieh, 2004). Children subjective wellbeing is how they assess their own overall lives. The elements of subjective wellbeing are level of joy, satisfaction with life and feeling of flourishing (Ben-Arieh, 2000). Children wellbeing has both subjective and objective measures. Objective measure includes health, education and poverty whereas subjective measure encompasses levels of happiness, feeling of satisfaction, social and psychological wellbeing (Diener et al., 2002).

Figure 1 Measures of Wellbeing



Diener et al., (2002)

This article discussed major domains of the children's wellbeing in children's perspective, such as satisfaction with their families, friends, school experiences, their bodies, the things they have and the area they live in. First and most important part of children's life is their family. This social institution plays a vital role in the socialization of a child. Schor (1995) argued that subjective wellbeing of a child is directly related with his access to necessary physical, emotional and social needs. Insufficient childcare provided in the initial phases of a child's life leads to antisocial and offending behavior (Bowlby, 1969). Hence, parent-child attachment is essential for the satisfaction of children with their lives and the relationships going to develop in later life (Fattore et al., 2009, Zaman, 2014).

Secondly, peer group of children influence them as well. Peer relationship is important in order to seek social skills. These relationships are important to be successful in overall life. Manzoor et al. (2014) stated boys as compared to girls can express their emotions with peers easily and have strong social and peer relationships that enhance their subjective wellbeing (Manzoor et al. 2014).

Thirdly, school is a social institution that has a substantial part in the development of a child after family and friends. It helps to build positive wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing leads to higher academic grades and good academic performances lead to higher subjective wellbeing (Manzoor et al., 2014). The consequences of positive schooling on positive wellbeing are enthusiasm, high ambition, satisfaction with life, acceptance for change, hopefulness about future, academic motivation, self-control and optimism. Similarly, school develops social skills such as initiation, cheerfulness, cooperation, confidence, maturity, obedience, expressiveness and friendliness. It also develops positive behavior like sense of responsibility, self-sufficiency, discipline and hard work (Akram and Rana, 2013).

Khalid et al. (2018) found that Pakistani children despite of having high rates of depression and anxiety have high wellbeing. Moreover, different studies concluded that there exists a gender-based difference in the subjective wellbeing of children. Smith and Reise (1998) argued female encompass low subjective wellbeing. Nevertheless, Manzoor et al. (2014) and Khalid et al. (2018) reported that boys possess positive subjective wellbeing in comparison to girls. Conversely, Hallen and Hadler (2006) discussed males possess low subjective wellbeing. Shams (2014) also concluded wellbeing depends on region, sex, literacy, income and the number of family members.

The study of children subjective wellbeing is insufficient in Pakistan. A few studies have been conducted including Manzoor et al. (2014), Khalid et al. (2018) and Shams (2014) that discussed about children subjective wellbeing in some parts of Pakistan. However, additional studies are needed to know the situation of children in the rest of Pakistani areas. Furthermore, a detailed study is missing on gender-differences, area-differences and age-differences in subjective wellbeing among Pakistani children. This study gave a comprehensive picture of the level of satisfaction of children with themselves, familial relations, peer-group, school experience, surrounding and people they live with. It reported how the satisfaction level differs among the children of urban and rural areas, boys and girls and among the three age groups.

Research Design

Children's world study is a project of ISCWB supported by Jacob foundation (Strózik et al., 2016). This is multi-country study aimed to apprehend children's concepts of their Subjective Well-being (SWB) and it analyzes inter-country comparisons. This survey adopted the methodological approach derived from sociology of childhood which views children as social actors who are productive members of their society. Within this approach, child-lenses research techniques are used in childhood studies which require taking children as subject of research and include active immersion of children in the research process

(Fattore et al., 2012). However, research must incorporate cultural contexts and experiential background of children (Zaman, 2011, 2013).

The survey was designed to collect authentic data of children's daily routine, their family life, their school, friends along with their surrounding using quantitative approach. Simply, it intended to probe into children's lives to mold the world into an enriched place for them to live in, a world in which their insights and thoughts are respected and their rights are ensured.

The research was carried out in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the twin-cities of Pakistan in 2018. The children between the age of 8 to 12 years from different private and public school were selected comprising different social class, gender, and ethnic background in different urban and rural locality.

The data was collected with three categories of closed ended questionnaires according to the age of the samples as per Children's World Study guidelines. This tool is also used in other countries of the world by the Children's World Study.

The total number of samples was 4500 but a huge data was discarded during the data management process which was not fully filled. The researchers managed 3600 respondents who filled all the questions. The samples took part in the study being the students of schools selected for the study, located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad Pakistan. The sampling was done through non-probability random sampling to ensure the probability of selection of all children. The ratio of both genders in each group was maintained equal. The schools selected for data collection were also chosen through random sampling.

The researchers used the questionnaire developed by the Children's World Study team. Following the tools and techniques by Strózik et al. (2016) and employing three psychometric scales that is single-item scale Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS), Students Life Satisfaction Scale SLSS and Brief Multidimensional Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (BMLSS) the results were drawn (Strózik et al., 2016). SLSS focuses on the overall life satisfaction without distinguishing any domain. BMSLSS in contrast, emphasizes the important life domains that in turn lead to a deep understanding of overall life satisfaction.

OLS

This scale measures the satisfaction of children with their overall lives (Strózik et al., 2016). The participants were asked about their life satisfaction on different scales. The questionnaire designed for the 8 years old children contained a 5-point scale comprising facial expressions (a crying to a laughing face). Whereas, the questionnaire designed by the Children's World Study for 10 and 12 years old samples constituted an 11-point rating scale.

SLSS

It was a 10-item measure that covers domain-free questions about life. Children were asked five questions about the overall life satisfaction.

The response sets varied with respect to their age 10- and 12-years age group were given an 11-point measure extending from 0 to 10 where 10 denoted totally agree. Whereas, 8-years category comprised of five responses (such as 1= I do not agree, 2= agree a little bit, 3= agree somewhat, 4= agree a lot, 5= totally agree). Studies have demonstrated that SLSS is an effective measure to evaluate psychological behavior of children. It has been used successfully on variety of population including differently abled and disabled children (Brantley et al., 2002).

Table 1 Scales

Instruments	Response Scales	Items Involved
OLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-point smiley face scale 	How satisfied are you with your whole life?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11-point scale (Not at all-Totally Satisfied) 	
SLSS-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-point scale (I don't agree-Totally agree) 	My life is going well My life is just right The things in my life are excellent I have a good life I have what I want in life
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11-point scale (Not at all agree-Totally agree) 	
BMSLSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-point smiley face scale 	Satisfaction with your family life Satisfaction with your friends Satisfaction with your school experiences Satisfaction with your own body Satisfaction with the area you live
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11-point scale (Not at all-Totally Satisfied) 	

Strózik et al., (2016, p.42)

BMSLSS

This scale gathers brief data on satisfaction of youth across various domains that help to predict overall wellbeing of children. To get the insight of student's life satisfaction in a multidimensional way, it was used in various studies (Seligson et al., 2003).

The BMSLSS encompassed five domains of children's lives that is family life, school experience, friends, their surrounding and self (Strózik et al., 2016). Different response sets were used for different age groups. Children belonging to 8 years age group were asked on a five-item expression measure. On the contrary, respondents of 10- and 12-years category were given an 11-point scale.

Data Analysis

Various tests were applied on the datasets using SPSS. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the means and percentages of different life domains. The Independent sample t-test and One-way Anova was applied to calculate significant differences among the overall life satisfaction of children gender-wise, age-wise and area-wise.

Results

Overall Life Satisfaction

Our results as shown in Table 2 displayed high levels of satisfaction of children with their lives. Lowest results were showed by 12-years old respondents and highest results by 8-years old samples reflecting that the satisfaction level of children with their overall life decreases as age increases. In 8- and 10-years old children the subjective wellbeing of girls and boys is approximately equal that showed children are treated equally by their families regardless of their gender. However, in 12-years age group, the average of boy's life satisfaction is less being 80.22 whereas girl's average is 87.79 being higher in this group

unlike other groups. This may be because girls in Pakistan remain inside their houses all day and they are grateful with whatever they have. While boys spend maximum time in streets, playing with friends, comparing their lives with other boys and they always demand for better life. Same results were acquired on SLSS. The average of girls' satisfaction is greater than average of boys. However, 12-years age group showed different results being the average of 84.67 in girls as compared with 87.65 in boys. Additionally, in BMSLSS the averages of boys and girls differ in all age categories. The highest difference was showed among the 12-years old respondents.

The subjective wellbeing of children does not differ within 8- and 10- year olds, in the urban and rural areas this means that OLS has no connection with the area the children live in. Children living in both urban and rural areas of Pakistan are equally satisfied with their lives as well as with their family. However, a slight change in their average is showed in children belonging to 12-years old age group that is 87.99 in urban and 90.22 in rural areas. This may be because the people of rural feel contented with their family. Their families provide enough time and support, they have good friends to play with and they like their surroundings. Moreover, there is less diversity in rural areas. Majority of people belong to same class minimizing the probability of children to compare themselves with the children of rich families. Hence, there are lesser chances of inferiority complex, depression and low subjective wellbeing.

SLSS is seen higher among the children of 8-years age category belonging to rural areas. Nevertheless, among the children of 10- and 12- age group of urban areas have greater SLSS. BMSLSS values are higher among girls in all the three age categories. On the contrary, the children of rural areas showed higher results in BMSLSS

Table 2 Measures of Children Subjective Wellbeing.

Age	Total		Boys		Girls		Urban		Rural	
	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%
OLS										
8-years	90.54	6.0	90.32	7.0	91.48	7.0	95.31	9.7	95.56	7.0
10-Years	87.79	7.0	88.11	9.0	89.90	6.0	93.24	8.5	92.54	6.0
12-Years	85.31	8.0	80.22*	6.6	87.79*	5.9	87.99	6.5	90.22	7.5
SLSS										
8-years	92.44	5.3	92.09	7.0	93.56	7.5	88.90	3.5	92.04	9.3
10-Years	89.90	7.8	89.64	8.0	89.90	8.5	90.41	5.5	86.89	9.4
12-Years	85.45	4.6	87.65	9.0	84.67	6.5	86.99	4.9	84.09	7.3
BMSLSS										
8-years	93.46	8.8	90.78**	7.5	93.23**	3.5	89.89*	7.3	92.66*	9.0
10-Years	88.76	7.8	87.32	6.5	90.06	5.0	86.05*	3.8	92.04*	8.0
12-Years	86.89	9.0	82.88	7.5	86.31	6.0	84.73	6.0	86.87	7.0

T-tests: * $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$

Table 3 showed children satisfaction with different life domains. It is found that the children of 8-years are mostly satisfied with their friends because children of this age have minimum likelihood of engaging in serious fights, they share and care for their friends. While gender wise, girls are highly content with their family and school experience. Girls in Pakistan remain at home most of the time and they go out only for school. Comparatively boys are satisfied most with their friends, own body and local area. It is clear from the findings that boys do like their family and school but comparatively they prefer their friends and local area because they mostly play in the playgrounds, parks, streets or fields with their peers.

In the case of 10-years old children, higher levels of satisfaction was showed with school experience and lowest satisfaction with local area. The average of girls is higher in every domain including statically different results in the satisfaction with school experience that is 9.23 as compared to boys (being 8.79). Nevertheless, this was the highest mean in the case of 10-years old boys. Boys are highly satisfied with school experience as compared to other domains. The 12-years old children showed high averages in school experience and own body. Thus, girls are more content with family life while the satisfaction with school, local area and own body is higher in boys.

Table 3 Participant's Satisfaction with Different Life-Domains

Satisfaction with	Total		Boys		Girls		Urban		Rural	
	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%
8-years old										
Family life	3.41	4.5	3.37	5.0	3.45	8.9	3.41	7.0	3.40	8.0
Friends	3.60	5.9	3.64	5.6	3.58	7.7	3.61	9.0	3.57	7.7
School experience	3.41	8.7	3.36	4.6	3.47	11.5	3.40	11.1	3.43	8.7
Own body	3.39	7.7	3.42	8.8	3.38	8.5	3.44	16.4	3.31	19.4
Local area	3.32	18.0	3.31	19.4	3.24	16.1	3.23	15.4	3.51	7.8
10-years old										
Family life	8.77	4.8	8.75	3.9	8.85	5.0	8.78	2.6	8.73	5.5
Friends	8.63	8.4	8.50	5.9	8.81	8.8	8.57	9.4	8.72	9.4
School experience	9.00	7.5	8.79	6.1	9.23	9.9	8.99	5.7	8.99	8.4
Own body	8.58	6.6	8.31	14.2	8.85	3.5	8.47	7.6	8.72	10.2
Local area	8.54	9.5	8.34	11.2	8.78	12.4	8.45	14.6	8.65	15.9
12-years old										
Family life	8.92	9.0	8.87	7.9	9.00	2.7	8.85	9.5	8.97	5.3
Friends	8.60	7.6	8.36	12.5	8.83	19.1	8.56	9.5	8.63	6.2
School experience	9.18	6.6	8.88	15.9	9.51	3.5	9.25	6.6	9.12	8.5
Own body	9.19	5.6	9.39	11.1	9.08	13.4	8.85	7.4	9.45	7.6
Habitat	8.32	14.7	8.39	15.6	8.28	16.5	8.12	19.8	8.48	11.4

Subjective Wellbeing of Children

Table 4 portrayed Pearson correlation analyzed within different psychometric scales and the 5 domains of BMSLSS. All of the five domains depicted significant correlation with OLS and SLSS. Meanwhile, a strongest correlation was showed among 10-years old age categories with the OLS and SLSS (0.438), OLS and BMSLSS (0.473), OLS and satisfaction with own body (0.460), SLSS and BMSLSS (0.493) and SLSS with satisfaction with school experience (0.434). Similarly, the highest correlation of the OLS with SLSS (0.451) and SLSS with BMSLSS was observed among 12-years old students.

Table 4 Pearson Correlation of BMSLSS Life Domains with Overall SWB Measures

	8-Years Old		10-Years Old		12-Years Old	
	OLS	SLSS	OLS	SLSS	OLS	SLSS
SLSS	0.149		0.438		0.451	
BMSLSS	0.303	0.229	0.473	0.493	0.340	0.406
Satisfaction with Family Life	0.176	0.170	0.270	0.251	0.281	0.221
Satisfaction with Friends	0.126	0.094	0.323	0.360	0.257	0.155
Satisfaction with School Experience	0.316	0.208	0.402	0.434	0.367	0.337
Satisfaction with Own Body	0.180	0.149	0.460	0.427	0.253	0.335
Local Area	0.227	0.218	0.349	0.305	0.295	0.356

The significance of life domains of BMSLSS on the children's OLS was concluded through multiple regression analysis (Table 5). In 8- and 10-years age category the OLS is highly influenced by satisfaction with own body (0.195 and 0.281 respectively). Sequentially, SLSS is manipulated by satisfaction with school (0.236). Likewise, in 12-years old age group satisfaction with school experiences has more affect regarding OLS and satisfaction with own body influenced SLSS the most.

Table 5 Regression of BMSLSS life Domains on the OLS and the SLSS

Satisfaction with	OLS		SLSS	
	Beta	P value	Beta	P value
8-Years Old				
Family-life	0.081	0.005	0.069	0.021
Peer group	0.056	0.044	0.029	0.310
School experience	0.052	0.351	-0.096	0.097
Own body	0.195	0.001	0.281	0.000
Surrounding	0.109	0.000	0.135	0.000
Adjusted R²	0.116	0.000 ^b	0.093	0.000 ^b
10-Years Old				
Family-life	0.071	0.021	0.054	0.093
Peer group	0.117	0.000	0.164	0.000
School experience	0.165	0.000	0.236	0.000
Own body	0.303	0.000	0.226	0.000
Surrounding	0.132	0.000	0.098	0.003
Adjusted R²	0.307	0.000 ^b	0.301	0.000 ^b
12-Years Old				
Family-life	0.070	0.022	0.056	0.078
Peer group	0.078	0.010	0.022	0.487
School experience	0.190	0.000	0.171	0.000
Own body	0.134	0.000	0.215	0.000
Surrounding	0.136	0.000	0.190	0.000
Adjusted R²	0.171	0.000 ^b	0.216	0.000 ^b

b. Predictors: (Constant), Satisfaction with: family-life, peer group, School experience, own-body and surrounding.

The results indicated great satisfaction levels of respondents with family, school and within the vicinity where they were living among 8 and 10 years of age. This indicates that the level of satisfaction is high except some indicators. However, less satisfaction was observed among 12 years age group children. Overall, the children were satisfied with family-life, peer group, school experience, own-body and surrounding.

Discussion

It was found that children can share their life experiences. The researchers primarily, avoided to collect data from children due to ethical principles (Anderson et al., 2018). However, the results of this study found that children can provide significant data about their lives, consistent with the results of Ben-Arieh (2008) and Huebner (2004).

Secondly, the findings revealed a significant satisfaction level of children with their overall lives. These results are parallel with Manzoor et al. (2014) and Khalid et al. (2018) that argued children in Pakistan have greater subjective wellbeing. Similar results were reported by Children's World Report (2013-2015).

Thirdly, concluding the age-group variations, highest life assessment was showed by 8 years old age group and worst assessment was of 12-years old children. Generally, the children belonging to 12 years old age group reported low satisfaction with each aspect as compared to 8- and 10-years age group. In 8- and 10-years old age group, no significant gender-wise or area-wise difference was observed. This means that the satisfaction of children fades away with increase in age in, no matter which country they belong to. Parallel findings were reported by Strózik et al., (2016) and Children's World Report (2013-2015). Moreover, multiple regression analysis indicated that overall children of 8-years are more satisfied with their own body. Children of 10- and 12-years are more contented with school experiences and own body.

Fourthly, considering the gender-based differences, it was concluded that girls among all age groups showed slightly higher satisfaction with different life domains. Pakistani girls are more content to their family life as compared to boys. Girls belonging to 12 years age group showed high subjective wellbeing (87.79) while boys showed high rate of low wellbeing (80.22). Russell and Saebel (1997) found a prominent difference in attachment of sons and daughters with their parents. This is not the case in Pakistan. Children of both genders are treated equally. Boys, on the contrary, are mostly happy with their local area and school experience.

Fifthly, the average values of the OLS, SLSS and BMSLSS scales depict that the level of satisfaction with life is somewhat greater in girls and among children living in countryside. In the children of 8- and 10-years age group no significant differences were seen based on living in urban or rural area. This finding contradicts the results of Shams (2014). A minor change was experienced in the 12 years old age category as founded by Strózik et al., (2016) that with the increase in age, satisfaction decreases. Each area has its own pros therefore children are satisfied with wherever they live. Children living in rural areas showed slightly higher results in overall life satisfaction. The results showed greater SLSS among the 8-years old children living in rural areas it means that most of the children have a good life and they have access to the things they want. In the case of 10- and 12-years old children, it was observed in the children of urban areas. Furthermore, BMSLSS was higher among all the age categories living in rural areas. The rural children are happy with their families, friends, school, own body and local area.

Thus, the overall wellbeing of children is appreciable in Pakistan despite of the fact that the country is facing multiple challenges like child labor, child abuse, illiteracy and

poverty. Majority of the children showed higher levels of satisfaction with approximately every domain of their life.

Conclusion

In-line with the Children's World Study, this article focused on the subjective wellbeing of the Pakistani children. It is concluded that the Pakistani children possess greater subjective wellbeing. They construct and place their wellbeing like the other countries as it is reflected in the body of research. However, an insignificant variation among the satisfaction level of children based on their gender, age and area was found.

A holistic vision is needed to understanding children subjective wellbeing. This study focused on wellbeing (present state) of children instead of well-becoming (their state in upcoming years). Wellbeing of children is important since children are innocent and fragile beings. If their wellbeing is ensured, well-becoming would be easy for them. The children should be helped to live their life fully and happily instead of preparing them for future. They must be taught what is good and what is bad for them and left to choose for themselves. The researcher strived to ensure a better environment for children through informing parents, adults and other concerned people regarding the viewpoints of children and their necessities. It is a more policy-oriented study that meant to provide an environment in which children would develop and flourish as children are the pillars of nations. It will let the parents and caregivers know that their attitude and acts determine the subjective wellbeing of their children. Nonetheless, this study has some limitations. It was taken in the premises of schools, so some aspects are yet to be studied in Pakistan that is the wellbeing of school dropouts, children who have never been to school and the disabled children. Another interesting topic to study is the association between family structure and the subjective wellbeing of children.

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