

Adult behaviour is expected from us, but we are treated like children

(Toms, male, 17 years old)

THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE ALLOCATED TO WELL-BEING BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LATVIA

Fieldwork characteristics

- October - December 2014
- 20 individual & 4 focus group interviews
- Location: Daugavpils, Rīga

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

- Age: 10-12 and 15-18 years olds
- Gender: 20 males, 20 females
- Ethnicity: 35 Latvians, 5 ethnic minorities
- Family: 25 two-parent, 7 single-parent, 4 m/f and stepf/stepm
- Background: 39 advantaged, 1 disadvantaged

Methodological issues

- semi-structured interviews
- 2 contrasting locations
 - different geopolitical situation
 - different economic situation
 - different ethnic composition
 - different information spaces
- 2 contrasting types of teaching
 - standard methodology
 - anthroposophist methodology
- 2 contrasting schools
 - Daugavpils Secondary School No. 12
 - Rīga's Waldorf School

MAJOR DOMAINS



Family

But what would you do without a family? What can you do without a family? Without a family, nothing, then you're in trouble.

(Roberts, male, 15 years old)



Happiness

Well-being means that ... I can return, come home and a warm bed awaits me, and Mum makes me something to eat.

(Liene, female, 18 years old)

Self-expression

My mother, I remember, dragged me to all sorts of groups - to choir, basketball and aikido, one after another, she also achieved my [becoming] fairly open.

(Liene, female, 18 years old)



School

School isn't useful. It's education, and you can gain an education at work, but well... The only reason why I try to do well is simply so that my parents would be proud of me. That's the only reason.

(Valdis, male, 15 years old)



Material well-being

I don't think that it [material well-being] should be a factor that influences the relationships between people.

(Kārlis, male, 17 years old)



Life satisfaction

Well, perhaps, when everything is good. When, well, everything is fine with me, I talk with everybody, well, on a day when I don't have any worries.

(Guna, female, 10 years old)

Country's wellbeing

Not everything is ideal, but there are [countries] where they live worse, and in comparison to other countries, even right here in the European Union, we are living quite well.

(Kārlis, male, 17 years old)



Psychological well-being

You have to feel some sort of emotional uplift, with no sadness, no bad experiences, but you are just happy and you understand that it is your real place and you are exactly where you want to be.

(Anna, female, 15 years old)

KEY FINDINGS

In the MYWEB research project, the well-being was examined from hedonic (life satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect) and eudaimonic (psychological well-being) perspective and measured using both subjective and objective indicators. Above all, the well-being framework was developed by placing children and young people's voices at its centre.

The most important domains to the children and young people interviewed in Latvia:

- **family** is described as a core part of their lives and an important factor to their well-being. It is not limited to the direct family as it also includes the extended one, such as grandparents and cousins. Children and young people describe their families as being a supportive and stable structure.
- **friends**. Young people are made happy on an everyday basis firstly, by the people around them. The respondents emphasised their need to socialise and the support provided by their peers. Friends tend to be especially valued by teenagers, from whom isolation or problems (quarrels, misunderstandings, etc.) may achieve a great importance.
- **school**. The opportunity to learn, acquire knowledge and attend school is considered to be a significant criterion of well-being. Those who lack such an opportunity or attend school irregularly are considered to have unfavourable living conditions. Children and young people associate education with job opportunities and consequently future quality of life. The negative effect on well-being: bullying is broadly perceived as a common event that can have a traumatic effect on those children and young people suffering from it. School is associated with stress and anxiety, particularly the case in relation to tests.
- **living conditions** have appeared as a key factor to explain happiness, life-satisfaction and psychological well-being. The better the material and family circumstances, the more the young person is involved in a variety of developmental activities. The significance of money is emphasized when speaking mainly about satisfying basic needs, like clothing, food and housing. The respondents are satisfied with living conditions: they do not lack anything as they have a family, parents, grandparents, or pets that they care for and can play with.

The age, gender, ethnicity of respondents are not determinative. A consistent similarity in the respondents' understanding of well is determined by the fact that the views of the primary school-aged group of respondents have been formed in families with a similar social situation, level of education, living conditions and mutual relationships. Meanwhile, respondents (15-18 years old) who were in a vulnerable situation emphasized the satisfaction of their basic needs more. They accented the need for a home, employment, family and health, as well as stability and equality.

There are differences in young people's views about the importance of family and friends. Even though the majority of respondents value the family higher than friends, young people with a lower level of education and who are not involved in activities outside of school are more attached to family. On the contrary, young people with a better education and who are more active outside of school value family and friends fairly equally.

Even though young people from two-parent families also discussed similar needs, among them there was still more discussion about opportunities for spending their free time outside the home (the cinema, theatre, cafe), participation in interest groups and other activities, travel, self-expression and the possibility of speaking up.

It was observed that children who achieve more at school than others are more confident about their ability to get a good education and to achieve what they want in the future, such as a good family, a good job, a house, travel, etc.

In Latvia, children and young people measured well-being using the specific criteria: whether a child had a good, friendly family, if they had both parents, if the child could attend school, acquire knowledge and find out a lot of new and interesting things. Material items were important: whether the parents were able to provide the family with everything they needed and whether the family had enough financial resources.

