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Cultural Moderators of the Influence of Environmental Affordances and Provisions on Children's Subjective Well-Being

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Abstract Children's subjective well-being is determined not only by what are, in themselves, satisfying; it is also determined by affordances and provisions that facilitate the attainment of capabilities for them to later on pursue their goals. Country and culture context, however, may influence how strongly affordances and provisions contribute to children's subjective well-being. As children are socialized in their culture's endorsed goals and understanding of a good life, their subjective well-being becomes linked to factors that help develop capabilities consistent with these goals. Data from the eight-year-old sample (Wave 2) of Children's Worlds: International Survey of Children's Well-Being were used in multilevel analyses to test interactions between hypothesized individual-level predictors and country-level moderators. Results show that children who have more material resources and move about in safer and more adequate spaces have higher levels of multidimensional life satisfaction (*MLS*) and subjective material well-being (*SMWB*); children who more frequently engage in worthwhile out-of-school activities have higher levels of *MLS* but not of *SMWB*. Both *MLS* and *SMWB* are more strongly predicted by safe, adequate living spaces in countries with high inequality-adjusted human development index (*InHDI)* or with collectivist cultures; these are also more strongly predicted by material resources in countries with restraint cultures. Moreover, *SMWB* (but not *MLS*) is more strongly predicted by material resources in countries with low *InHDI* or with individualist cultures. Results of the current study are generally consistent with the view of well-being as a psychological construct that changes with children's material and cultural milieu.

Keywords Children's activities and spaces · Subjective well-being · Individualism · Indulgence · ISCWeB · Material resources

The data used in this study were the responses of the eight-year-old sample of Wave 2 of Children's Worlds: International Survey of Children's Well-Being (ISCWeB; www.isciweb.org). The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not of ISCWeB.

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1 Introduction

Subjective well-being is an important child development goal in itself or concomitant with positive development outcomes (Gilman and Huebner 2003; Huebner et al. 2004). The current research examines factors in children's ecology that may in themselves bring satisfaction but, more importantly, are instrumental in developing capabilities needed to freely pursue goals and thus lead to enhanced subjective well-being (Nussbaum 1997, 2007). Material resources are needed for education and leisure and having one's material needs and wants met is a source of security to many children. Children also need to feel safe at home, at school, and in the community; they also need places conducive for study and play (Harper et al. 2003). Activities, such as sports and exercise, extracurricular classes, and housework develop in children both self-reliance and social responsiveness (Ochs and Izquierdo 2009).

Whether indeed these factors are determinants of subjective well-being and how strongly these enhance subjective well-being depend on country conditions and cultural dimensions. Children are socialized and reared in their culture's values and expectations on what is a satisfying life and what goals are important to pursue (Weisner 2002, 2014). To the degree that a factor is consistent with the prevailing values and expectations in a social-cultural milieu then to that degree would the factor influence subjective well-being. A country's poor state of economy would make material affordances scarce so that having more of these compared to the rest of the populace would markedly contribute to subjective well-being. In contrast, the wide availability of material affordances in an economically advanced country would not make these critically contribute to children's well-being as much as, say, nonmaterial provisions, such as the safety and quality of living spaces. An individualist culture puts premium on individual achievement while a collectivist culture puts premium on collective welfare (Hofstede 2011; Triandis 2001). As children are socialized in the culture's endorsed goals, then their subjective well-being would be linked to factors that help them achieve these goals. Determinants of well-being in indulgent and restraint cultures could vary, too: either material resources would be more critical in an indulgent culture for the facilitation and encouragement in procuring them, or they would be more critical in a restraint culture as delay of gratification in which children are socialized makes them value material resources more.

In the current research, it is hypothesized that affordances and provisions necessary for obtaining what are valued and expected in a country or culture influence children's subjective well-being. The current research goes beyond the conceptualization of subjective well-being as derived only from what is pleasurable. Rather, children's subjective well-being is contextualized in the development of capabilities valued in their culture and made possible by the available affordances and provisions. This contextualized view of children's subjective well-being can reveal how ecology, culture, and social conditions determine children's welfare, posing as conditions of either advantage or risk (Fegter and Richter 2014). By linking children's evaluations of their lives to the conditions of their surroundings, the current research has the potential of delineating effective initiatives for building children's strengths (Gilman and Huebner 2003). Furthermore, situating individual-level predictors of subjective well-being in country-level moderators leads to results that can be readily translated to policy and action appropriate to the country's conditions (country-specific initiatives for its general populace) while attuned to individual differences (country-specific initiatives for targeted sectors).

1.1 Multidimensional Life Satisfaction and Subjective Material Well-Being

Often, subjective well-being is construed as life satisfaction: either these are considered as synonymous terms (Ben-Arieh et al. 2014), or life satisfaction is considered as the cognitive component of subjective well-being (Diener et al. 1999). The cognitive nature of life satisfaction refers to the process of comparing one's state in life to what one thinks one deserves, to what one aspires or expects, or to what others have (Holte et al. 2014).

Children's life satisfaction has been measured across domains (Gilman and Huebner 2003), for example, in terms of the qualities of home, family, school, and neighbourhood (Huebner et al. 2004). Using a bottom-up approach, measuring life satisfaction across domains is useful in that domain-specific circumstances bear on the evaluation of life satisfaction, sometimes in differing saliency (Pavot and Diener 2008). It is also useful in integrative evaluations as domains have been shown to yield second-order factors subsumed in the higher-order factor of global satisfaction (Gilman, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2000; Huebner, Laughlin, Ash, & Gilman, 1998).

Subjective material well-being is also of interest to this study as material resources are needed not only to fulfill children's basic physical and health needs, but also to enable children to engage in family, social, and educational activities. Indeed, subjective material well-being reflects the stability and security that children feel from meaningful participation in life events, deriving from these happiness and quality of life (Bradshaw et al. 2013; Knies 2012).

The current research examines the effects of available affordances and provisions on children's multidimensional life satisfaction. This integrated or summative evaluation should adequately capture children's happiness across domains where capabilities-building affordances and provisions are available. Because many of these are material in nature, acquired only if there are adequate financial means, their effects on multidimensional satisfaction are examined in comparison to their effects on subjective material well-being.

1.2 Individual-Level Determinants of Life Satisfaction and Subjective Material Well-Being

The Convention on the Rights of the Child situates children's rights in their day-to-day domains: children have the right to live with and to be cared for by their family, to explore and socialize through activities, to choose and have friends, to learn, play, and rest, and to have clean and safe environments (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1989). These rights ensure both the present happiness of children and the development of their potentials (Brusdal and Frønes 2014). Indeed, identified domains of well-being, such as physical health and safety and cognitive, social, and emotional development, are aspects needed for success in culturally prescribed activities (Davidson et al. 2003). Likewise, a "good life" can be defined in terms of a so-called objective list or a bundle of goods (Axford et al. 2014).

The current research assumes the perspective that the determinants of children's subjective well-being are those that enable them to develop their capabilities (Fegter and Richter 2014) for achieving personal goals (Diener et al. 1995). In other words,

determinants of subjective well-being are not only those that inherently bring satisfaction, but those that contribute to positive development (Davidson et al. 2003). Thus, while individuals may differ in what they find satisfying, there are common sources of satisfaction to the extent that capabilities and goals are common across persons (Axford et al. 2014). The current research derives its framing assumption in the way Sen (1985) and Nussbaum (1997, 2007) perceive human capabilities as developing not merely from material goods but on the freedom to navigate one's life. To the extent that children are enabled to develop their capabilities, then to that extent will they experience well-being.

The current research also assumes the ecocultural model (Weisner 2002, 2014), which situates children's development in the ecology of day-to-day activities considered valuable and meaningful by the prevailing culture. Thus, children's education can occur even in contexts outside of formal schooling, such as through child-rearing situations or social relations (Stevenson and Worthman 2014). The environments proper to children's development are those that support children's active participation in culturally valued activities (Weisner 2014), fostering their curiosity, exploration, and novelty-seeking while providing the needed structure (Wentworth and Witryol 2003). These environments, for example, should provide an enabling space to act upon (Harper et al. 2003), social connectedness (Jose et al. 2012), and discretionary activities (Gilman and Huebner 2003).

From the capabilities perspective (Fegter and Richter 2014; Nussbaum 1997, 2007; Sen 1985) and the ecocultural model (Weisner 2002, 2014), the current research aims to establish that the determinants of subjective well-being are the affordances and provisions needed for children to have a secure ground from where to engage in worthwhile activities and to actualize their goals.

First, **material resources** are hypothesized to contribute to subjective well-being. The material resources considered here are not those needed for basic survival, but resources indicative of some degree of material sufficiency (e.g., computer at home) that would facilitate capability-building. While modern-day consumerism may offer products and services that are not in fact integral to capability-building, some of these provide parents the focus to cultivate their children's development (Brusdal and Frønes 2014).

Second, the safety and adequacy of places where children move about (**safety/space**) are hypothesized to contribute to subjective well-being. Where children live, play, and learn contain the elements for building capabilities and ensuring well-being, for example, friends, play space, leisure activities, and provisions for reflection (McKendrick 2014). Safety in families, peers, schools, and communities also are important (Sleet and Mercy 2003). In fact, an environment can be planned so as to ensure that children develop their potential and experience well-being (called "built-in" environment; Burton 2011).

Third, the frequency of children's engagement in worthwhile out-of-school **activities** is hypothesized to contribute to subjective well-being. Activities, such as sports and exercise, extracurricular classes, and housework, develop in children self-reliance and social responsiveness (Ochs and Izquierdo 2009). The extant literature indicates the positive effects of worthwhile extracurricular activities on child and youth development (e.g. Larson and Angus 2011) and the deleterious effects of an unstructured or chaotic environment (e.g., Evans et al. 2005).

1.3 Country-Level Moderators of Effects of Individual-Level Determinants of Well-Being

Empirical findings suggest that objective well-being cannot be equated to subjective well-being (Axford et al. 2014). For one, individuals with good objective well-being may report worse subjective well-being, for example, when individuals are able to fulfill various needs but at a great expense (Axford et al. 2014). For another, individuals with poor objective well-being may report better subjective well-being, for example, when children in socioeconomically deprived places enhance their subjective well-being to come to terms with the deprivation (Bradshaw 2015). In the same vein, having material resources, safe and adequate living areas, and various learning and leisure activities need not redound to subjective well-being and having less of these does not necessarily lead to poor subjective well-being. Establishing the contexts that would either ensure or cancel the effects of affordances and provisions on subjective well-being is a concern of the current research.

Culture determines to what extent environmental affordances and provisions contribute to subjective well-being given that culture shapes cognition and that subjective well-being is a cognitive assessment of one's life. A readily cognitively accessible construct in one culture primes certain outlooks or attitudes and make these prominent in peoples' lives (Hong et al. 2000). A psychological process may in fact be grounded in some shared cultural meaning, belief, value, or expectation so that examining the process in the light of its sociocultural context becomes useful in theorizing (Miller 2002; Stevenson and Worthman 2014). Examining subjective well-being in a cultural context entails ascertaining what are valued in the culture (Peterson et al. 2007; Lee and Yoo 2015; Weisner 2014), because having access to or actually possessing these contributes to a better sense of well-being. The developmental goals endorsed or supported in a culture need to be ascertained, too, as these have been shown to play a role in judgments of well-being (Oishi 2000; Pavot and Diener 2008).

That culture shapes what contribute to subjective well-being is likely true with children as well for they are typically socialized in their culture's various facets (Halberstadt and Lozada 2011). Through socialization, children internalize the cultural meaning or expectation of a "good child" (Trommsdorff and Kornadt 2003). While parents are generally concerned about their children's development, they tend to direct their parenting towards culturally endorsed behaviors and goals (Harkness and Super 2002).

The current research supplements the capabilities approach (Fegter and Richter 2014; Nussbaum 1997, 2007; Sen 1985) and the ecocultural model (Weisner 2002, 2014) with the framing assumption that country context provides the backdrop for affordances and provisions to be valued for their contributions to developmental outcomes and, consequently, contribute to children's well-being. Rather than directly determining well-being, country or cultural aspects determine whether and to what extent individual-level determinants predict subjective well-being (Klocke et al. 2014).

Thus, the current research concerns the interaction between individual-level variables, which shape well-being, and country-level variables, which determine in which country would the individual-level variables manifest their influence. Moderating influences of country-level variables have been documented. For instance, the negative impact of non-intact families on children diminishes in countries with lesser economic

inequality (Bjarnason et al. 2012). The negative impact of marital divorce and conflict on children's well-being diminishes in collectivist cultures (Gohm et al. 1998).

The current research aims to establish that the moderators of the effects of individual-level variables on children's subjective well-being are the prevailing country or culture conditions that endorse or direct particular values and goals. Individual-level variables that support the values and goals that are salient in a country would strongly predict subjective well-being.

First, a country's inequality-adjusted human development index (***InHDI***) is hypothesized to moderate the effects of material resources, safety/space, and activities on children's subjective well-being. As a measure of a country's status in health, education, and economics and their distribution in the population (United Nations Development Programme 2016), *InHDI* constrains the opportunity structures for capability-building (Ben-Arieh et al. 2014). Under conditions of economic inequality, for example, child development has been compromised not only because of poverty but because of psychosocial influences resulting in experiencing inferiority from social comparison (Stevenson and Worthman 2014).

Second, the cultural dimension of **individualism** versus collectivism is hypothesized to moderate the effects of material resources, safety/space, and activities on children's subjective well-being. In individualist cultures, people are not bound to set aside their individual goals in favor of an in-group and personal independence and uniqueness are valued, while in collectivist cultures, people are loyal to an in-group and often prioritize group over individual goals (Hofstede 2011; Triandis 2001). Accordingly, the values emphasized in parenting vary in individualist and collectivist cultures: parenting in individualist cultures emphasizes independence and exploration, while parenting in collectivist cultures emphasizes obedience and security (Triandis 1989).

Individualism and collectivism differ in whether the self is construed in term of, or oriented towards, the "other". In individualist cultures, the self is seen as "decontextualized" and independent; the construed stability of the self makes it a sound basis for people's judgement, reasoning, and causal attribution. In collectivist cultures, the self is seen as interdependent and its construal is often qualified in the varying social contexts and relationships; thus, the self, in itself, does not figure substantially in people's judgment, reasoning, and causal attribution (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Oyserman et al. 2002).

Third, the cultural dimension of **indulgence** versus restraint is hypothesized to moderate the effects of material resources, safety/space, and activities on children's subjective well-being. An indulgent culture emphasizes the gratification of desires as it allows individuals to indulge in things that lead to enjoying life, such as those pertinent to leisure and spending; individuals can freely convey their needs and expectations. In contrast, a restraint culture has strict norms and standards for controlling or delaying individuals' gratification; conveying one's needs and demands is construed as a form of egoism (Hofstede 2011, 2013; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al. 2015).

Today's almost universal recreational and consumerist culture has created a vast market for children and adolescents and has influenced how parents deploy consumer products in rearing their children, possibly even feeling some helplessness over the situation (Ambert 1994). Material goods, along with a stimulating environment that they make possible, can be instrumental in building nurturing and affectionate parent-child relations and can facilitate the development of children's capabilities (Kehily 2010; Nauck and Lotter 2015). With an indulgent culture or parenting style, however,

satisfying children's demands figures largely in their socialization and parents become less effective in giving limits and forming children in self-control (Chen et al. 2000; Lau et al. 1990). Knowing the importance of delaying gratification, however, influences how consumption contributes to well-being; and, while children may have the right to autonomy in consumption, they also need to be protected from overconsumption's ill-effects (Brusdal and Frønes 2014). Thus, whether a culture endorses indulgence or restraint in gratifying desires has a bearing on children's understanding of whether and how material goods contribute to a satisfying life.

As previously discussed, what a culture values, in terms of both a good life and children's developmental goals, would determine whether affordances and provisions for capability-building present in children's ecology would actually contribute to children's experience of a satisfying life. A thesis of the current research is that country conditions of social inequality and human development and a culture's endorsement of individualism and indulgence either strengthen or weaken the effects on subjective well-being of the availability of certain affordances and provisions.

This thesis is formulated at exploratory stage without specific predictions. Possible results include: people in countries with low *InHDI* would value material goods more, given their scarcity or difficulty of access, so that having more of these compared to the rest of the populace would markedly contribute to subjective well-being. The endorsed value of consuming material products in an indulgent culture would strengthen the effect of material resources on subjective material well-being, but it is also possible that a restraint culture would temper children's desire for material goods, distilling their importance to well-being. The interdependent self in a collectivist culture would put premium on safety/space in achieving well-being more so than the independent self in an individualist culture.

1.4 Children's Worlds: International Survey of Children's Well-Being

The current research uses data from Wave 2's eight-year-old sample of the Children's Worlds: International Survey of Children's Well-Being (ISCWeB 2017b). The ISCWeB provides data from a diverse selection of countries for purposes of comparative research on subjective well-being and its determinants (Rees et al. 2016; Rees and Dinisman 2015). Each country's research team is responsible for all aspects of data-gathering following ISCWeB's guidelines (Rees et al. 2016). Wave 2 of ISCWeB included 53,000 children in mainstream schools in the 8-, 10-, and 12-year-old groups in 15 countries from 4 continents (Rees et al. 2016; Rees and Main 2015).

Children are the focal participants of past and ongoing ISCWeB and, as they are acknowledged to be "social actors", the intent is to obtain first-hand data about their views. The ISCWeB examines aspects and contexts of living that matter to children themselves: how happy they feel about their family circumstances, school environment, peer relationships, the area they live in, and material things (ISCWeB 2017a). These topics were established from extensive discussions with children during the questionnaire development stage of the research. The first and second draft questionnaires had been piloted in a number of countries. Some questions were simplified or removed in the questionnaire for the eight-year-olds to ensure that they could understand and answer the questions (Rees and Main 2015).

The children's self-report data of the ISCWeB provide a contrast to the frequent practice of evaluating children's well-being based on adults' reports (e.g., parent). While there are advantages in "proxy" reports (e.g., better understanding and evaluation of the topics) and disadvantages in children's reports (e.g., lack of development or competence), children's self-reports are the primary and authentic data by the definitions of subjective well-being and quality of life so that the recommendation is not to discontinue children's reports but to improve the communication and conduct of research with children (Ben-Arieh et al. 2014; Holte et al. 2014). Indeed, children's subjective measures have been used increasingly in evaluations of children's lives and conditions (Lee 2014).

1.5 Objectives the Current Research

Children's subjective well-being is determined by circumstances that facilitate the attainment of developmental goals. Country and cultural factors, however, may determine whether these circumstances actually contribute to children's well-being as these factors bear on children's upbringing and socialization. The individual-level determinants considered here are: material resources that facilitate children's capability-building beyond what are needed for basic survival; the safety and adequacy of places where children move about that would enable them to have satisfying and productive engagements in study, play, and interaction; and, children's engagement in worthwhile out-of-school activities. The country-level moderators considered here are: inequality-adjusted human development index, individualism, and indulgence. Testing the effects of these predictors and moderators is done on two facets of subjective well-being: multidimensional life satisfaction and subjective material well-being. Multicountry data from the eight-year-old sample of Wave 2 of ISCWeB are used in multilevel analyses to establish main effects of the hypothesized individual-level determinants and their cross-level interactions.

2 Method

2.1 Data

The data used in this study were from the eight-year-old cohort of Wave 2 of ISCWeB that were collected from 2013 to 2015 (ISCWeB 2017b; Rees et al. 2016). Approved sampling strategies and a target sample size of 1000 per age group per country were applied. ISCWeB's eight-year-old cohort came from the grade level where most of the eight-year-olds were. Children who were younger than six or older than ten were excluded by the ISCWeB. ISCWeB also previously coded and cleaned the data sets, omitting respondents with a substantial number of missing values and with evidence of systematic responding (ISCWeB 2017a). Respondents who did not answer at least half of the items in any of the measures analyzed, or who had no data on any of the single-item variables, were excluded by the author; these omitted respondents constituted 5 % of ISCWeB's cleaned data set.

For the data used in this study, the respondents were from Colombia, Estonia, Germany, Malta, Norway, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, and the

United Kingdom. Algeria, Ethiopia, Israel, Nepal, and Romania were included in the eight-year-old cohort, but no data about these cultures' individualism or indulgence were available. Thus, data from these countries were excluded in the analyses; these constituted 30% of ISCWeB's cleaned data set.

Shown in Table 1, for each country, are the sample size for the data analyzed, the percentage of respondents retained from the ISCWeB's cleaned data set, the percentage of respondents in the analyzed data who were female, eight-year-olds, and were born in the country. The mean and standard deviation of age also are shown.

Of the countries included in the analysis, there was one country each in East Asia and the Pacific (South Korea), Latin America and the Caribbean (Colombia), Middle East and North Africa (Malta), and Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa); there were seven countries in Europe and Central Asia (Estonia, Germany, Norway, Poland, Spain, Turkey, and United Kingdom (World Bank 2017). In 2014, three countries were classified by the World Bank as upper-middle income (Colombia, Turkey, South Africa), while eight countries were classified as high income (Estonia, Germany, Malta, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Spain, United Kingdom; World Bank 2017).

2.2 Measures

Scores on the individual-level variables multidimensional life satisfaction (*MLS*), subjective material well-being (*SMWB*), material resources, safety/space, and activities were obtained from the ISCWeB (2017b). A respondent's score on a measure was obtained by averaging the responses on all answered items. The differently scaled

Table 1 Respondents' demographic characteristics per country

Country	Sample size for data analyzed	% retained from the ISCWeB's cleaned data set	% female	Age *M (SD)*	% of eight-year-olds in the sample	% born in the country[a]
Colombia	857	95%	52%	8.0 (.00)	100%	98%
Estonia	1016	94%	47%	8.1 (.35)	87%	96%
Germany	988	94%	51%	8.6 (.58)	44%	95%
Malta	766	96%	39%	7.5 (.54)	52%	91%
Norway	857	92%	51%	8.3 (.47)	70%	94%
Poland	969	95%	47%	8.3 (.52)	62%	99%
South Africa	995	100%	49%	8.0 (.00)	100%	99%
South Korea	2365	97%	52%	8.0 (.00)	100%	99%
Spain	997	97%	49%	8.0 (.41)	84%	100%
Turkey	918	96%	51%	7.9 (.49)	74%	100%
United Kingdom	895	90%	52%	8.5 (.50)	54%	No information
Total	11,623	95%	50%	8.1 (.46)	79%	96%[b]

[a] Percent missing information were: 0% (Colombia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey), .2% (Norway), .3% (South Korea), .4% (Germany, Poland), .5% (Malta), .7% (Estonia), and 100% (United Kingdom)

[b] Excludes United Kingdom

measures were transposed as appropriate so that scores all were on a 0-to-100 scale with higher scores indicating greater possession of the construct being measured. To establish the unidimensionality of each measure, a one-factor exploratory factor analysis was done with the study's data; the percentage of total variance explained by the one-factor solution, the average item loading on the factor, and the average inter-item correlations are reported below.

2.2.1 Multidimensional Life Satisfaction (MLS)

MLS was measured with five domain-based life satisfaction items similar to Huebner's Brief Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale (BMLSS; Huebner et al. 2004). Participants indicated how happy they feel with their family life, their friends, the area where they live, their school experience, and their own body using an illustrated five-point Likert-type scale from a crying face (scored 0) to a widely smiling face (scored 4). Percentage of total variance explained by a one-factor solution = 43%, average item loading on the factor = .66, average inter-item correlation = .29.

The BMLSS has been shown to be appropriate for children ages 8 to 18 (Huebner et al. 2006). A factor analysis of responses of third to fifth graders to the five-item measure on family, school, friends, self, and living environment yielded a one-factor solution (Seligson et al. 2005).

2.2.2 Subjective Material Well-Being (SMWB)

SMWB was measured with the questions: *How happy do you feel with all of the things you have? How often do you worry about how much money your family has?* The first question used an illustrated five-point Likert-type scale from a crying face (scored 1) to a widely smiling face (scored 5). The second question had the response options *Never (*scored 1*), Sometimes, Often, Always (*scored 4*), Don't know* (reverse-scored). In the questionnaire, the first question was positioned before the second question and after the questions on material resources. Percentage of total variance explained by a one-factor solution = 51%, average item loading on the factor = .72, inter-item correlation = .03.

2.2.3 Material Resources

Respondents indicated whether they had (scored 1) or did not have (scored 0): *clothes in good condition to go to school in, access to computer at home, access to internet, a family car for transportation*. Percentage of total variance explained by a one-factor solution = 56%, average item loading on the factor = .71, average inter-item correlation = .37.

2.2.4 Safety/Space

Safety/space was measured with the items: *I feel safe at home*; *I have a quiet place to study at home*; *In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time*; *I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in*; *I feel safe at school*. The response options were *I*

do not agree (scored 1), *Agree a little bit*, *Agree somewhat*, *Agree a lot*, *Totally agree* (scored 5), *Don't know*. Percentage of total variance explained by a one-factor solution = 39%, average item loading on the factor = .62, average inter-item correlation = .23.

2.2.5 Activities

Respondents indicated how often they spent time on the following out-of-school activities: *taking classes outside school on matters different than at school (like music, sports, dancing, language,…)*; *reading for fun (not homework)*; *helping up around the house*; *doing homework*; *playing sports or doing exercise.* The response options were *Rarely or never* (scored 1), *less than once a week*, *once or twice a week*, *everyday or almost everyday* (scored 5), *don't know.* The items *Watching TV* and *Using a Computer* were omitted as their positive contributions to children's development are equivocal compared to the rest of the items. Percentage of total variance explained by a one-factor solution = 39%, average item loading on the factor = .61, average inter-item correlation = .22.

2.2.6 Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (InHDI)

InHDI was computed by the United National Development Programme (UNDP) to measure a country's status in the aspects of health, education, and income with each aspect adjusted down according to the inequality of distribution in the population. The indicators used were life expectancy at birth, years of schooling, and gross national income per capita (UNDP 2016). This study used the *InHDI* for 2014 as the ISCWeB data were collected in 2013–2015.

2.2.7 Individualism and Indulgence

Country scores for individualism and indulgence were from the research of Hofstede and colleagues (Hofstede 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov 2010) as documented in https://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html. Scores were on a 0-to-100 scale with higher scores indicating greater possession of the construct being measured (Hofstede and Minkov 2013). Scores were based on survey responses of more than 100,000 IBM® employees worldwide (Hofstede 2001). Individualism was one of the cultural dimensions derived by Hofstede (1983, 2001) from factor analyses of these data, supplemented by conceptual analyses. Indulgence was a recent addition to the dimensions (Minkov 2007).

The instrumentation used by Hosftede are found in Hofstede (1980, 2001). The Values Survey Module was later on developed from Hofstede's work and also measures Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede 2013; Hofstede and Minkov 2013). Hofstede's individualism country scores correlated positively with scores of the Work-Values Survey and of Triandis (Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener 2002), as well as with the "practice" scores on collectivism of the GLOBE Project data (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness 2004). Hofstede and Minkov (2013) reported an internal consistency reliability coefficient of.77 given a six-item version of the instrument and computed from the IBM database with country as unit of analysis.

3 Results

Shown in Table 2 are the countries' *InHDI*'s for 2014 and the country scores for individualism and indulgence. Also shown are the country means for the respondents' scores on *MLS*, *SMWB*, material resources, safety/space, and activities. The correlations among individual-level and country-level variables are shown in Table 3.

3.1 Significant Predictors of *MLS* and their Moderators

Using hierarchical linear modeling (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002), multilevel analysis was conducted with *MLS* as outcome variable, and material resources, safety/space, and activities as the individual-level predictors of interest. Gender (coded 0 if female, 1 if male) and age were also included in the model as predictors. Consistent with the moderating hypotheses, the individual-level predictors were made to interact with the country-level variables of *InHDI*, individualism, and indulgence.

Individual-level variables, except gender, were centered around the group mean, while country-level variables were centered around the grand mean. The intercept of the individual-level model was specified as random, while the coefficients for slopes were specified as fixed. The full maximum likelihood model of estimation was used. The ISCWeB-provided weights were used at the individual level (ISCWeB 2017a, b).

The individual-level variance estimate is 128.55. The country-level variance estimate is 6.71 and is significantly different from zero, $\chi^2(10) = 692.94$, $p < .001$. The intraclass correlation coefficient is .05, that is, 5% of the variance in *MLS* is due to country variations (where, in this study, country-level variables are limited to interaction effects).

Shown in Table 4 are the estimated regression coefficients for the mixed model, along with the standard errors. Gender has a significant effect with girls reporting greater *MLS* than boys. All individual-level predictors of interest have significant, positive coefficients: higher scores on material resources, safety/space, and activities predict greater *MLS*.

The significant main effect of material resources is qualified by a significant Indulgence X Material Resources interaction effect. The significant main effect of safety/space is qualified by significant *InHDI* X Safety/Space and Individualism X Safety/Space interaction effects. Analyses of the nature of the significant interaction effects are in section 3.3.

3.2 Significant Predictors of *SMWB* and their Moderators

SMWB as outcome variable was analyzed in the same way as *MLS*.

The individual-level variance estimate is 379.26. The country-level variance estimate is 26.74 and is significantly different from zero, $\chi^2(10) = 782.60$, $p < .001$. The intraclass correlation coefficient is .07, that is, 7% of the variance in *SMWB* is due to country variations (where, in this study, country-level variables are limited to interaction effects).

Shown in Table 5 are the estimated regression coefficients for the mixed model, along with the standard errors. Gender has a significant effect with girls having better *SMWB* than boys. Material resources and safety/space have significant, positive coefficients: higher scores on material resources and safety/space predict better *SMWB*. The effect of activities on *SMWB* is not significant, however.

Table 2 Country profiles on country-level and individual-level variables

Country	*InHDI* 2014	Individualism	Indulgence	Multidimensional life satisfaction *M (SD)*	Subjective material well-being *M (SD)*	Material resources *M (SD)*	Safety/space *M (SD)*	Activities *M (SD)*
Colombia	.542	13	83	91.45 (11.90)	73.50 (20.61)	71.52 (27.93)	83.34 (17.11)	74.85 (21.62)
Estonia	.782	60	16	88.15 (13.87)	74.57 (21.12)	91.48 (17.71)	84.52 (18.21)	77.57 (18.24)
Germany	.853	67	40	84.98 (14.12)	82.85 (17.92)	81.28 (23.81)	79.61 (18.25)	73.13 (18.69)
Malta	.767	59	66	87.01 (13.93)	77.69 (21.89)	93.80 (14.18)	73.36 (19.39)	75.86 (18.55)
Norway	.893	69	55	90.69 (12.00)	79.98 (18.76)	95.66 (11.18)	85.38 (16.41)	78.24 (17.15)
Poland	.760	60	29	91.10 (11.29)	78.55 (19.35)	93.21 (15.88)	88.07 (14.37)	77.11 (18.52)
South Africa	.428	65	63	87.30 (14.87)	73.13 (23.08)	76.59 (26.91)	76.30 (19.95)	76.28 (17.74)
South Korea	.751	18	29	85.00 (14.74)	82.56 (17.60)	95.36 (13.56)	74.23 (18.43)	72.68 (17.93)
Spain	.775	51	44	92.21 (11.57)	73.67 (19.73)	90.71 (17.58)	84.98 (16.31)	77.51 (18.52)
Turkey	.641	37	49	92.11 (12.77)	77.28 (22.97)	72.29 (27.75)	77.31 (22.10)	68.66 (23.10)
United Kingdom	.829	89	69	87.33 (14.48)	91.84 (17.87)	90.88 (17.92)	76.07 (19.16)	68.53 (21.62)

Table 3 Correlations among individual-level (top panel) and country-level (bottom panel) variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Individual-level variables									
1	Age	8.10	.47	–					
2	Multidimensional life satisfaction	88.37	13.76	−.02*	–				
3	Subjective material well-being	79.10	20.51	.07**	.21**	–			
4	Material resources	87.63	21.54	.02*	.10**	.11**	–		
5	Safety/space	79.66	18.92	.06**	.52**	.14**	.13**	–	
6	Activities	74.38	19.38	−.01	.26**	.01	.12**	.28**	–
Country-level variables									
1	*InHDI* 2014	.73	.14						
2	Individualism	53.45	22.60	.42					
3	Indulgence	49.36	20.18	−.40	−.01				

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

The significant main effect of material resources is qualified by significant interactions of material resources with *InHDI*, individualism, and indulgence. The significant main effect of safety/space is qualified by significant interactions of safety/space with

Table 4 Regression coefficients for the model with multidimensional life satisfaction as outcome variable

Predictors	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Intercept	89.1556	0.8004	111.388	10	< .001
Control variables					
Age	−.5201	.3103	−1.68	11,598	.09
Gender	−.8289	.2429	−3.41	11,598	< .001
Hypothesized individual-level predictors					
Material resources	.0446	.0068	6.59	11,598	< .001
Safety/space	.3539	.0071	49.64	11,598	< .001
Activities	.0903	.0067	13.41	11,598	< .001
Interactions of hypothesized country-level moderators with individual-level predictors					
InHDI X material resources	.0000	.0545	0.00	11,598	.99
Individualism X material resources	−.0003	.0003	−0.98	11,598	.33
Indulgence X material resources	−.0009	.0004	−2.29	11,598	.02
InHDI X safety/space	.4859	.0643	7.56	11,598	< .001
Individualism X safety/space	−.0007	.0003	−2.03	11,598	.04
Indulgence X safety/space	−.0003	.0004	−0.69	11,598	.49
InHDI X activities	.0078	.0686	0.11	11,598	.91
Individualism X activities	−.0000	.0003	−0.08	11,598	.94
Indulgence X activities	−.0004	.0004	−0.93	11,598	.35

Table 5 Regression coefficients for the model with subjective material well-being as outcome variable

Predictors	*B*	*SE*	*T*	*df*	*p*
Intercept	79.2333	1.588	49.89	10	< .001
Control variables					
Age	−.4468	.5329	−.84	11,598	.40
Gender	−1.2666	.4171	−3.04	11,598	< .001
Hypothesized individual-level predictors					
Material resources	.0560	.0116	4.82	11,598	< .001
Safety/space	.1968	.0122	16.07	11,598	< .001
Activities	−.0160	.0116	−1.39	11,598	.17
Interactions of hypothesized country-level moderators with individual-level predictors					
InHDI X material resources	−.2327	.0937	−2.48	11,598	.01
Individualism X material resources	.0014	.0005	2.73	11,598	.01
Indulgence X material resources	−.0039	.0007	−5.73	11,598	< .001
InHDI X safety/space	.4521	.1105	4.09	11,598	< .001
Individualism X safety/space	−.0012	.0006	−2.20	11,598	.03
Indulgence X safety/space	.0001	.0007	.18	11,598	.86
InHDI X activities	.1557	.1179	1.32	11,598	.19
Individualism X activities	.0009	.0006	1.70	11,598	.09

InHDI and individualism. Analyses of the nature of the significant interaction effects are presented in the next section.

3.3 Country-Level Variables as Moderators of the Effects of Individual-Level Variables

To examine the nature of the cross-level interactions, simple slopes analyses for multilevel modeling were conducted (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006) through Preacher's (2017) online utilities. The regression coefficients for the two interacting variables and their interaction effect were encoded, along with the corresponding variances and covariances. The regression coefficients from the larger models reported in Tables 4 and 5 were used. Note that only the interacting variables and their interaction term were included in the analysis, because the rest of the individual-level variables were kept constant at the centered mean of zero. As all interaction terms included an individual-level variable, these terms also became zero, except for the interaction term that was being analyzed.

3.3.1 Moderated Effects of Material Resources on MLS

The significant Indulgence X Material Resources interaction effect indicates that the effect of material resources on *MLS* changes as a function of indulgence.

The slopes of lines with material resources predicting *MLS* for different indulgence scores are plotted in Fig. 1. For countries with moderate indulgence scores (Germany, Spain, Turkey, Norway), children with more material resources tend to report greater *MLS* (significantly positive slopes of .06 to .08 *SD* change in *MLS* per 1 *SD* change in material resources). For countries, with the highest indulgence scores (South Africa, Malta, United Kingdom, Colombia), material resources did not predict *MLS*. Note, however, that for countries with the lowest indulgence scores (Estonia, South Korea, and Poland), the slopes, while larger compared to other countries, were not significantly different from zero due to their relatively large standard errors.

3.3.2 Moderated Effects of Safety/Space on MLS

The significant interactions of safety/space with *InHDI* and individualism indicate that the effect of safety/space on *MLS* changes as a function of *InHDI* and individualism. Across differing *InHDI*, the slopes of lines with safety/space predicting *MLS* are all significantly different from zero (.29 to .60 *SD* change in *MLS* per 1 *SD* change in safety/space). Likewise, across differing individualism scores, the slopes of lines are all significantly different from zero (.45 to .52 *SD* change in *MLS* per 1 *SD* change in safety/space). The higher a country's *InHDI* and the lower the individualism score, the steeper the slope (see Fig. 2); that is, the positive contribution of safety/space on *MLS* is greater in countries with higher *InHDI* and with lower individualism scores.

3.3.3 Moderated Effects of Resources on SMWB

The significant interactions of material resources with *InHDI*, individualism, and indulgence indicate that the effect of material resources on *SMWB* changes as a function of these variables. For countries with the highest *InHDI* (Norway, Germany), material

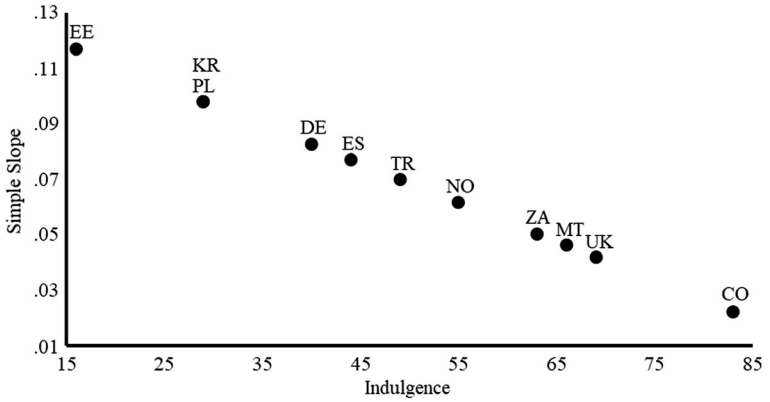

Fig. 1 Simple slopes of lines with material resources predicting *MLS* for different indulgence scores. Simple slope is the *SD* change in *MLS* per one *SD* change in material sources. EE = Estonia, KR = South Korea, PL = Poland, DE = Germany, ES=Spain, TR = Turkey, NO=Norway, ZA = South Africa, MT = Malta, UK=United Kingdom, CO=Colombia

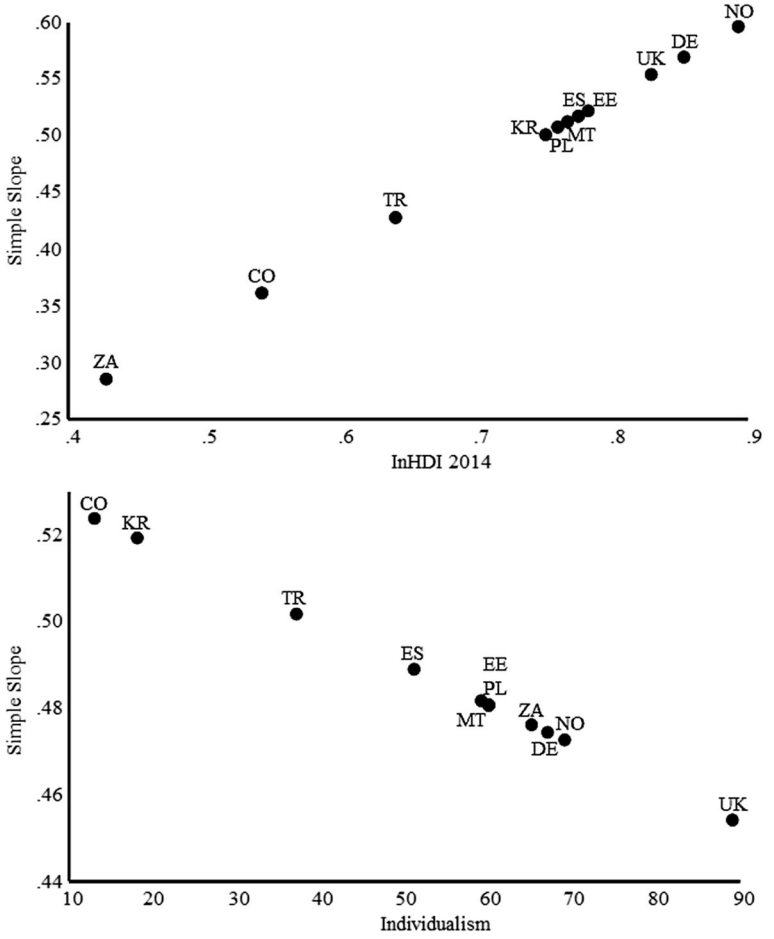

Fig. 2 Simple slopes of lines with safety/space predicting *MLS* for different *InHDI*s (top) and individualism scores (bottom). Simple slope is the SD change in *MLS* per one SD change in safety/space

resources do not predict *SMWB*. For countries with lower *InHDI*, however, children with more material resources tend to have better *SMWB* (.03 to .13 *SD* change in *SMWB* per 1 *SD* change in material resources). The lower a country's *InHDI*, the steeper the slope (top panel, Fig. 3).

For countries with the lowest individualism scores (Colombia, South Korea), material resources do not predict *SMWB*. For countries with higher individualism scores, however, children with more material resources tend to have better *SMWB* (.04 to .11 SD change in SD *SMWB* per 1 *SD* change in material resources). The higher a country's individualism score, the steeper the slope (middle panel, Fig. 3).

For the country with the highest indulgence score (Colombia), children with more material resources tend to have worse *SMWB*. For the countries with the next highest indulgence scores (United Kingdom, Malta, South Africa), material resources do not predict *SMWB*. For the rest of the countries, the slopes of lines are all significantly different

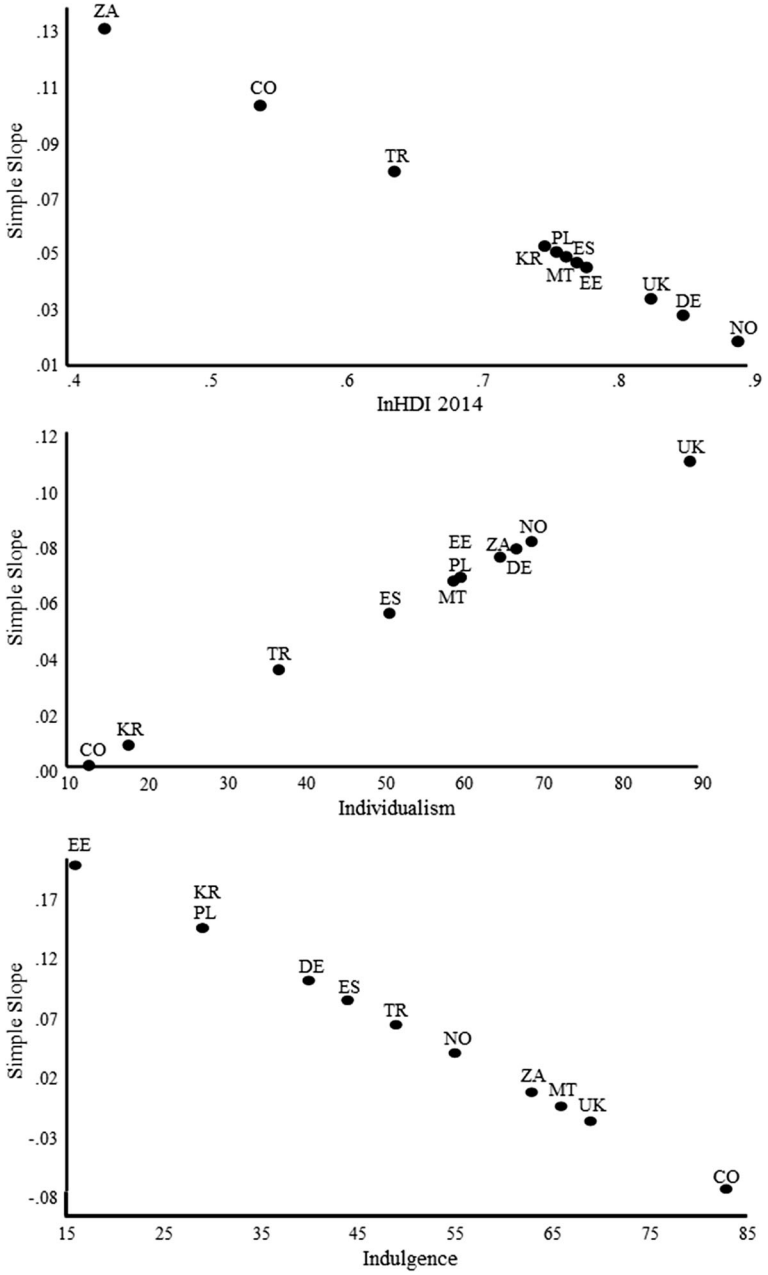

Fig. 3 Simple slopes of lines with material resources predicting *SMWB* for different *InHDIs* (top), individualism (middle), and indulgence scores (bottom). Simple slope is the *SD* change in *SMWB* per one *SD* change in material resources

from zero (.04 to .19 *SD* change in *SMWB* per 1 *SD* change in material resources). The lower a country's indulgence score, the steeper the slope (bottom panel, Fig. 3).

3.3.4 Moderated Effects of Safety/Space on SMWB

The significant interactions of safety/space with *InHDI* and individualism indicate that the effect of safety/space on *MWB* changes as a function of these variables. Across differing *InHDI*, the slopes of lines with safety/space predicting *SMWB* are all significantly different from zero (.05 to .25 *SD* change in *SMWB* per 1 *SD* change in safety/space). Likewise, across differing individualism scores, the slopes of lines are all significantly different from zero (.14 to .24 *SD* change in *SMWB* per 1 *SD* change in safety/space). The higher a country's *InHDI* and the lower the individualism score, the steeper the slope (see Fig. 4); that is, the positive contribution of safety/space on *SMWB* is greater in countries with higher *InHDI* and with lower individualism scores.

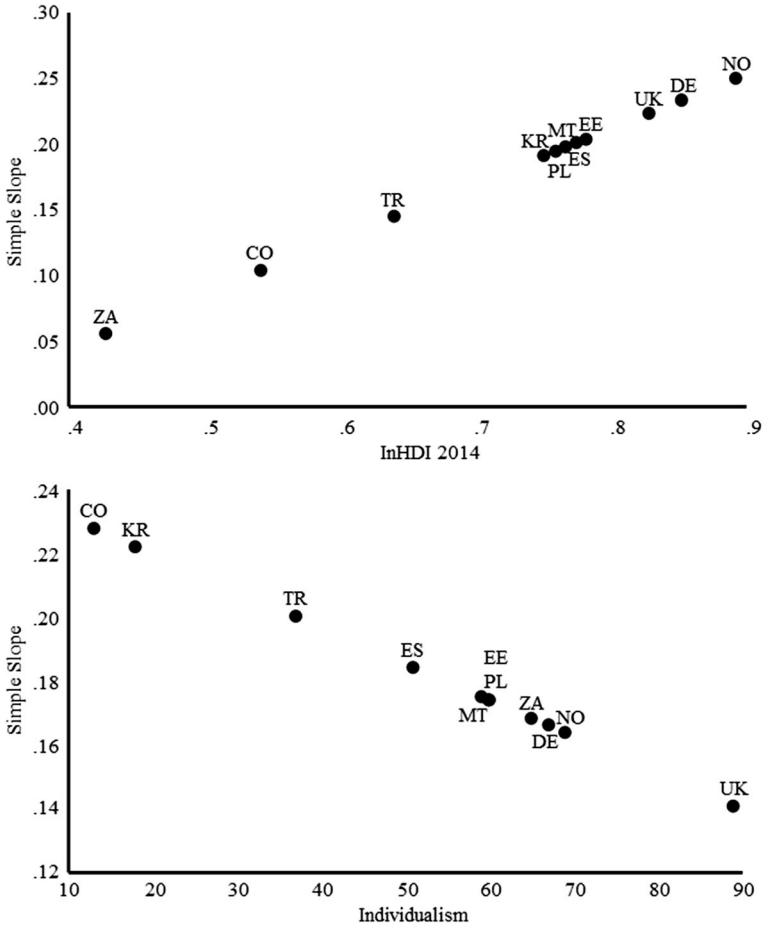

Fig. 4 Simples slopes of lines with safety/space predicting *SMWB* for different *InHDIs* (top) and individualism scores (bottom). Simple slope is the *SD* change in *SMWB* per one *SD* change in safety/space

4 Discussion

Using children's self-reports from 11 countries varying in location, culture, and economic development, the current research has shown that environments equipped with material resources, safety provisions, and affordances for worthwhile activities contribute positively to how children feel about various life domains (e.g., family, school, friends) and with the things they have. The current research has also shown that the degree to which children can experience well-being as a result of their environments' affordances and provisions depends on their country's economy and culture of individualism and indulgence. In other words, children's evaluation of their lives is dependent on the context of their immediate environment as qualified by their cultural milieu. The main evidence for this conclusion is the individual-level main effects of material resources, safety/space, and activities with some of these interacting with the country-level moderators of *InHDI*, individualism, and indulgence. This evidence suggests similarities and differences across countries in the "pathways" leading to children's subjective well-being. These pathways reflect what Weisner (2002, 2014) envisions as "coherent cultural models" of how child well-being is connected to the social and cultural contexts that shape children's socialization in values and endorsed goals.

4.1 Comparisons of Determinants of *MLS* and *SMWB*

The results of the current research show that children who reported more material resources and a greater sense of safety and space also reported better *MLS* and *SMWB*. That these factors are, to a good extent, material in nature explains why they predict children's experience of material well-being. That these factors also predict children's satisfaction across domains (e.g., family, school, community) confirms the necessity of material affordances and provisions in the non-material aspects of subjective well-being.

In contrast, children who reported being more frequently engaged in worthwhile out-of-school activities did not report higher levels of *SMWB* but reported higher levels of *MLS*. Engagement in some of these activities is indicative of available finances in the family (e.g., music and language classes), but many of these are available in many schools (e.g., sports, reading for fun) or do not require financing (e.g., helping around the hours). Thus, out-of-school activities are not as much material in nature as are material resources and safety/space. The result that engagement in activities that are not heavily dependent on families' wherewithal predicts *MLS* (and in fact does not predict *SMWB*) suggests a pathway to well-being available for children of families with limited material means.

The unique determinant of *MLS* (activities) and its determinants common with *SMWB* (material resources, safety/space) suggest that *MLS* and *SMWB* are non-separable but that *SMWB* is subsumed under *MLS* at least as far as their determinants are concerned.

4.2 Country-Level Moderators of Individual-Level Determinants

The results of the current study include cross-level interactions with all hypothesized moderators, although the nature of these interactions varies across moderators. All these interactions, however, can be explained by this study's framing assumption that country

context provides the backdrop for culturally endorsed values and goals to determine which of the affordances and provisions available to children will strongly contribute to their subjective well-being.

4.2.1 The Moderating Effects of InHDI

High *InHDI* weakens the effect of material resources on *SMWB* but strengthens the effect of safety/space on both *MLS* and *SMWB*. These moderating effects can be explained by Brusdal and Frønes' (2014) analysis of modern developed countries as "risk-oriented" cultures that, while having attained a degree of safety, are more concerned about risks from which children, regarded as vulnerable, should be protected. Precautions for safety are communicated to children by parents and other grown-ups and, possibly, the attached value to risk avoidance makes children's sense of safety/space contribute to their well-being. Also according to Brusdal and Frønes (2014), modern developed countries have to increasingly contend with some ill-effects of consumer goods; these include the lack of the right goods, or their poor quality, or overconsumption. While precautions for the ill-effects of consumerism may not be well-communicated to children by grown-ups who have to contend with consumerism themselves, the increasing awareness of these ill-effects in both children and grown-ups would lessen their prominence as a source of well-being.

4.2.2 The Moderating Effects of Individualism

An individualist culture strengthens the effect of material resources on *SMWB*, but it is a collectivist culture that strengthens the effect of safety/space on both *MLS* and *SMWB*. Individualist cultures are oriented towards the decontextualized self as a stable nexus for people's judgment and reasoning. On the other hand, collectivist cultures are oriented towards social contexts, and people are cognizant of their social roles, including the need to contribute to harmony and the common good (Oyserman et al. 2002). This characterization of individualist versus collectivist cultures is consistent with Markus and Kitayama's (1991) classic characterization of the independent self in individualist cultures, which is perceived as unique and geared towards self-expression and self-goals, and the interdependent self in collectivist cultures, which perceives the importance of belonging and fitting in a group and is geared towards others' goals.

To the extent that the material resources tapped in this research (clothes, computer, internet, car) are representative of goods largely at the service of individual goals, then, the individualist culture's emphasis on self over social context could explain the greater role of material resources in shaping children's *SMWB* in individualist cultures. This result is consistent with the evidence generated by Markus and Kitayama (1991) that the relationship between autonomy and life satisfaction is stronger in individualist than in collectivist countries. Indeed, a country's individualism or collectivism influences how individuals define quality of life. In an individualist culture, quality of life refers to individual success and achievement, whereas in a collectivist culture, quality of life is linked to the family and the group (Hofstede's 1984).

Likewise, to the extent that the safety/space indicators used in this research (feelings of safety at home, place of residence, school; quiet place to study; enough places to play) are social contexts, then, the collectivist culture's emphasis on social context could explain the greater role of safety/space in shaping children's *MLS* (which likewise reflects social contexts) in collectivist cultures compared to individualist cultures. Safe and adequate spaces are ensured through social initiatives, requiring collective efforts and cooperation; this is evident in social development programs that train children in social skills contributory to safety in shared spaces, as well as in partnerships among parents, teachers, and community members for monitoring children safety (Sleet and Mercy 2003). Such collective efforts to promote safety and security in various settings increases the chances of children's well-being (Sleet and Mercy 2003). The finding that collectivism strengthens the positive effect of safety/space on children's subjective well-being indicates that affordances and provisions provided to children through collective and cooperative efforts and found in social realms are what determine children's subjective well-being; this is less evident in individualist cultures.

An alternative explanation to why collectivism strengthens the positive effect of safety/space on children's subjective well-being can be sourced from Markus and Kitayama's (1991) conceptualization of social interactions in collectivist cultures. In collectivist cultures, the person is sensitive to the current, particular social interaction and gauges what are the permissible ways to interact. The nuances on social contexts that are the bases of behaviors of the interdependent self in a collectivist culture are delimited or simplified in children who feel that the places where they interact are safe and adequate. This explains why safety/space is important to children in collectivist's cultures and why it is a factor in ensuring children's subjective well-being.

4.2.3 The Moderating Effect of Indulgence

An indulgent culture weakens the effect of material resources on *SMWB*. Because children from restraint cultures are socialized in delaying gratification and in putting lesser premium on the desires of the self, it is possible that these children enhance their judgments of their material well-being. Such enhanced sense of well-being suggests the operation of the so-called adaptive preference in which people enhance their evaluation of situations that are objectively inadequate or disadvantaged (Fegter and Richter 2014). Adaptive preference entails lessening one's expectations for a satisfying life; it is adaptive as it spares one of any pain brought about by the inadequate or disadvantaged situation (Bradshaw 2015).

Child socialization in a non-indulgent culture is not necessarily a situation of inadequacy or disadvantage. Being socialized in restrain and self-control in the use of material goods is an advantage to children, allowing them, for example, to acquire autonomy from the creation and advertising of new, so-called socially constructed goods (Cross 2002). Still, the adaptive-preference reasoning can be applied. It is possible that children do not exercise adaptive preference at very low ratings of material resources but would do so above a certain threshold. Below this theorized threshold, children in restraint cultures would not exercise adaptive preference in evaluating their well-being, but above this threshold, their ratings of *SMWB* would markedly increase even with small increases in ratings of material resources. How material resources translate to *SMWB* in restrained cultures exemplifies how children can adapt their

preferences for a good life as warranted by their culture. It is important to qualify this result, however, by the finding of relatively large standard errors of the slopes for well-being vs. resources for countries with the most restrained cultures, which suggests large variabilities in the exercise of adaptive preference.

4.2.4 The Unmoderated Effect of Activities

Because the interactions of activities with *InHDI*, individualism, and collectivism are all not significant, then activities positively contribute to *MLS* regardless of a country's *InHDI*, individualism, and collectivism. Thus, worthwhile activities beyond the school hours provide a universal pathway to children's well-being. The fact that there are many worthwhile activities that do not require substantive financial investment by the family all the more makes this pathway promising. A better understanding of the nature of children's activities as a capability-building approach contributory to children's well-being can point to ways by which these activities can be developed and encouraged in various countries. While not all out-of-school activities are leisure activities, literature on leisure education provides insight to this proposed activities-pathway to well-being. For example, leisure education contributes to knowledge-building and skills development at the same time that it builds self-awareness and self-determination, and the happiness and flourishing derived from leisure activities can well be an end result of these developed capabilities (Dattilo 2015).

4.3 Improving Children's Subjective Well-Being

Initial analyses of ISCWeB data (Rees et al. 2016) show country comparisons along various aspects of life. According to the authors, these comparisons, however, do not reveal how children's lives can be improved. The data trends generated by the current research suggests directions for improvement of children's lives in different countries. Rather than examining country differences, the current research examined particular variables along which countries differ and, by doing so, is able to detect country characteristics, that may pose as threat or as advantage to children's subjective well-being. The conclusions of the current research, thus, are in the form of which country characteristics contribute to children's subjective well-being, rather than which countries have children reporting better well-being.

It is noteworthy to repeat the basic premises of the current research: individual-level variables are what contribute to children's subjective well-being, but the degree to which these contribute depend on country-level variables. These individual-level variables pertain to elements of children's environments that provide affordances and provisions for the building of capabilities. Whether children's subjective well-being can be modelled as a function of these affordances and provisions depends on whether the prevailing socioeconomic conditions and cultural dimensions socialize children to work toward capabilities and goals where these affordances and provisions are needed.

The limitations of the current research qualify the validity of its results and are listed here to serve as caveat, as well as to indicate possible refinements in future studies. First, the data regarding predictors (material resources, safety/space, and activities) were obtained from the children as were the data regarding outcomes (well-being). The

fact that measures of predictors and outcomes were obtained from one source necessarily contributed to the percentage of variance in the outcomes explained by the predictors. While subjective well-being necessarily had to be obtained from the children, children's reports of objective indicators could have been corroborated by adults' reports. Predictors that were subjective indicators could only come from the children (e.g., how safe they feel at home), but these could be verified with data obtained using other methods, such as observations and implicit measures.

Second, the slopes describing the strength of the relationships between predictors and outcomes are mostly small in magnitude, ranging from .03 to .25 *SD*-unit change in outcome for every 1 *SD*-unit change in the predictor. The slopes describing the strength of the relationships between safety/space and well-being are moderate in magnitude, however. The variability of these slopes across countries, however, still provides evidence that the children's assessment of their well-being vary across cultural milieus.

Built on the abovementioned basic premises, and with the recognition of its limitations, the current research provides evidence for the following conclusions: material resources indicative of some level of comfortable living, safe and adequate living spaces, and worthwhile activities beyond what schools offer all contribute positively to children's subjective well-being. Both *MLS* and *SMWB* are more strongly predicted by safe, adequate living space in countries with high *InHDI* or with collectivist cultures; these are also more strongly predicted by material resources in countries with restraint cultures. Moreover, *SMWB* (but not *MLS*) is more strongly predicted by material resources in countries with low *InHDI* or with individualist cultures.

Countries where individual-level determinants have stronger, positive contributions to subjective well-being are not necessarily where the highest levels of children's subjective well-being are observed. These stronger effects, however, indicate how country and culture conditions can increase children's subjective well-being from the resources available in their living environments. The results of the current research suggest that the primary way to increase children's subjective well-being is to increase the capability-building affordances and provisions in the environment, but a supplementary way is to understand the social and cultural conditions that provide a climate (so to speak) in which affordances and provisions build well-being. Clearly, the recommendation is not to change social or cultural conditions as these are either hard or not advisable to do. Rather, a more logical recommendation is to be aware of the national and cultural currents that may undermine or support a family, school, or community's efforts to build children's well-being.

Some country trends from the data analyzed exemplify confluences of *InHDI*, individualism, and indulgence in building well-being. Germany and Norway both have high *InHDI* and are individualist and moderately indulgent cultures. In these countries, *InHDI* boosts the effect of safety/space on *MLS* and *SMWB*, individualism boosts the effect of material resources on *SMWB*, and moderate indulgence boosts the effect of material resources on *MLS*. In contrast, Colombia and South Korea both have low *InHDI* and are collectivist cultures. In these countries, the low *InHDI* boosts the effect of material resources on *SMWB* and collectivism boosts the effect of safety/space on *MLS* and *SMWB*. The restraint culture of South Korea further boosts the effect of material resources on *SMWB*, whereas the indulgent culture of Colombia deflates this effect. Analyses of this type are useful in understanding the sources of children's well-being in the context of a country's social and cultural conditions.

4.4 Monitoring Children's Well-Being

A foundational principle of the ISCWeB project is that children are actors in their environment and research needs to account for their points of view, including their evaluations of their lives and well-being. Children's surveys, such as the ISCWeB, are important in their own right. Based on various documents and statements of organizations, Richardson and Ali (2014) consider it a priority to repeatedly monitor children's well-being across countries, covering the different aspects of well-being and types of children (e.g., different age groups, at-risk children).

As earlier mentioned, the ISCWeB has taken steps in developing and refining survey items appropriate for young children. Still, Ben-Arieh and colleagues (Ben-Arieh et al. 2014) recognize a major gap in literature concerning suitable measures and techniques for obtaining information from younger children. Moreover, they acknowledge attendant challenges that need to be addressed, such as effectively communicating with children and the limitations in children's current state of understanding; thus, they recommend the use of multimethod approaches and innovations to supplement self-report approaches.

It is hoped that the current research typifies the valuable knowledge that can be gained from international surveys of children's well-being. As this knowledge is at the level of quantifiable variables, precise trends can be generated that have clear implications to policy and practice. Yet, for children's own authentic perspectives to emerge, these trends and their implications need to be corroborated by children's actual experiences. As culture has been shown in this study to be implicated in the improvement of children's well-being, ethnographic methods characteristic of anthropological research should also be used (Stevenson and Worthman 2014). Ethnographic studies of children's well-being better elucidate cultural nuances that bring about improvements, or worsening, of children's well-being.

Indeed, scientific contributions to policy and practice come about from multicultural, transdisciplinary approaches (Davidson et al. 2003). Mixed methods research all the more will reveal how social and cultural contexts that frame children's socialization bring about their well-being (Weisner 2002, 2014).

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