

# **Decomposition of Children's Subjective Well-being by Countries:**

## **What Matters to Whom?**

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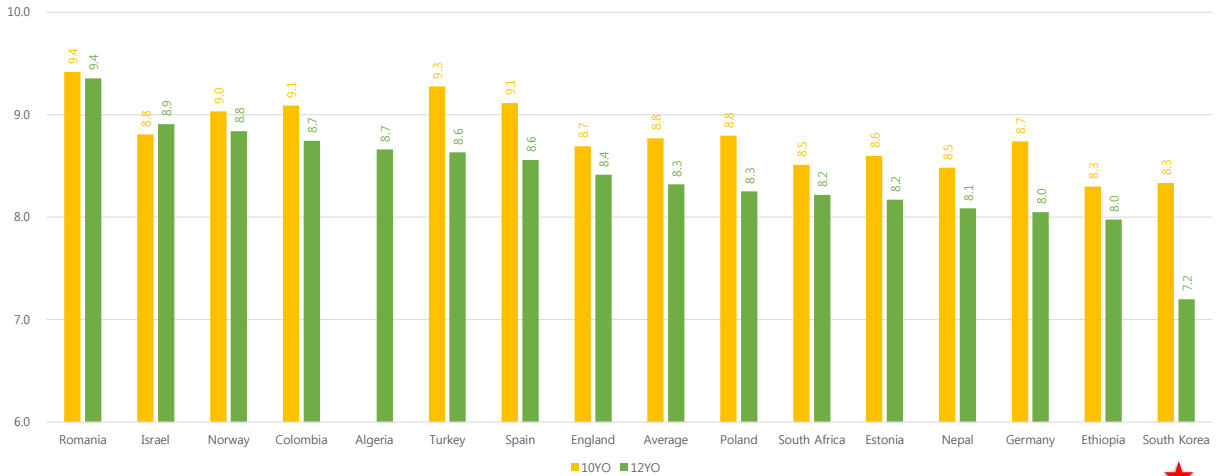
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## **Introduction**

- Increased interest in children's quality of life, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being
- Recent studies report variations in children's subjective well-being among the different countries.
- Many recent studies, including this one, report that Korean children's levels of happiness and subjective well-being are among the lowest. Why?
- No 'firm' explanations why and how are these differences in SWB

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## The Variations in Children's SWB Across Countries: Life Satisfaction(SLSS) (4 items, 0-10, 11point scale)



## Goal of this study

- The primary purpose of this study is to examine what factors explain the SWB differences across the 14 ISCWb countries.
- In order to do that:
  - We decompose the children's SWB by seven areas: self, environment, learning, leisure, money, relationships, and freedom to choose (Bradshaw, 2014+freedom to choose)
  - We examine what areas are accountable for the variations in the overall SWB.

## **For example:**

### **Why is the level of Korean children's SWB lower than others?**

- There are several possible explanations
  - Asian reporting bias?
  - Korean children are 'really' unhappy?
- If Korean children's SWB is lower than others, what 'factors' are accountable for that?

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## Methods

- Data: ISCWeB (14 countries) 12 years old dataset
  - Algeria, Nepal, Estonia, Spain, Colombia, Turkey, Ethiopia, South Korea, Germany, England, Romania, Norway, Poland, South Africa (Israel is not included because it didn't have the 'self' and 'freedom to choose' questions)
- Analysis: OLS decomposition

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• Dependent variables

Scale	Definition	Items
SLSS	Adapted version of the Student Life Satisfaction Scale  11-point scale, from 'Not all agree' to 'Totally agree' is used. 4 items.	<p>◆ Here are five sentences about how you feel about your life as a whole. Please tick a box to say how much you agree with each of the sentences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My life is going well</li> <li>• My life is just right</li> <li>• I have a good life</li> <li>• I have what I want in line</li> </ul>

• Independent variables

Domains	Definition	Items
Self	Have a positive view of themselves and an identity that is respected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I like being the way I am</li> <li>• I am good at managing my daily responsibilities</li> <li>• People are generally pretty friendly towards me</li> </ul>
Environment	Have a safe and suitable home environment and local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time</li> <li>• I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in</li> <li>• I feel safe at home</li> <li>• I feel safe at school</li> <li>• I have quiet place to study</li> </ul>
Learning	The condition to learn and develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel that I am learning a lot</li> <li>• I like going to school</li> </ul>
Leisure	Have opportunities to take part in positive activities to thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in organized leisure time activities (like youth movement, scout, ...)</li> <li>• Playing sports or doing exercise</li> <li>• Taking classes outside school time on matters different than at school</li> </ul>
Money	Have enough of what matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clothes in good condition to go to school in</li> <li>• Access to computer at home</li> <li>• Access to Internet</li> <li>• Mobile phone</li> <li>• Your own room</li> <li>• Books to read for fun</li> <li>• A family car for transportation</li> <li>• Your own stuff to listen to music</li> <li>• A television at home that you can use</li> </ul>
Relationships	Have positive relationships with family and friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My parents (or the people who look after me) listen to me and take what I say into account</li> <li>• My friends are usually nice to me</li> <li>• My parents (or the people who look after me) treat me fairly</li> <li>• My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account</li> <li>• My teachers treat me fairly</li> </ul>
Freedom to choose	Have enough choices for time use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have enough choice about how I spend my time</li> </ul>

# Descriptive Findings

Country	Leisure	Environment	Learning	Money	Relationship	Freedom to choose	Self	SLSS
Algeria	1.47	2.98	8.96	0.59	3.24	8.54	8.86	8.66
Nepal	1.70	3.05	8.99	0.52	3.19	7.76	8.46	8.01
Estonia	1.43	3.18	6.73	0.92	3.17	8.45	8.40	8.12
Spain	1.59	3.23	7.28	0.90	3.32	8.33	8.68	8.48
Colombia	1.74	3.25	8.50	0.72	3.17	8.88	8.89	8.76
Turkey	1.81	3.00	8.35	0.75	3.12	8.71	9.00	8.56
Ethiopia	1.26	2.45	8.99	0.21	3.08	7.73	7.94	7.98
South Korea	1.15	2.63	7.30	0.94	3.00	7.44	7.32	7.20
Germany	1.49	3.06	6.48	0.91	2.98	8.43	8.12	8.02
England	1.75	3.09	6.81	0.94	3.13	8.56	8.18	8.38
Romania	1.62	3.05	7.84	0.84	3.19	9.05	9.24	9.32
Norway	1.48	3.47	7.50	0.98	3.38	8.81	8.77	8.83
Poland	1.47	3.43	6.34	0.93	3.17	8.41	8.27	8.12
South Africa	1.95	2.76	8.12	0.76	3.01	8.24	8.38	8.13
Total	1.54	3.03	7.61	0.80	3.16	8.32	8.39	8.29

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## Results (Pooled-data)

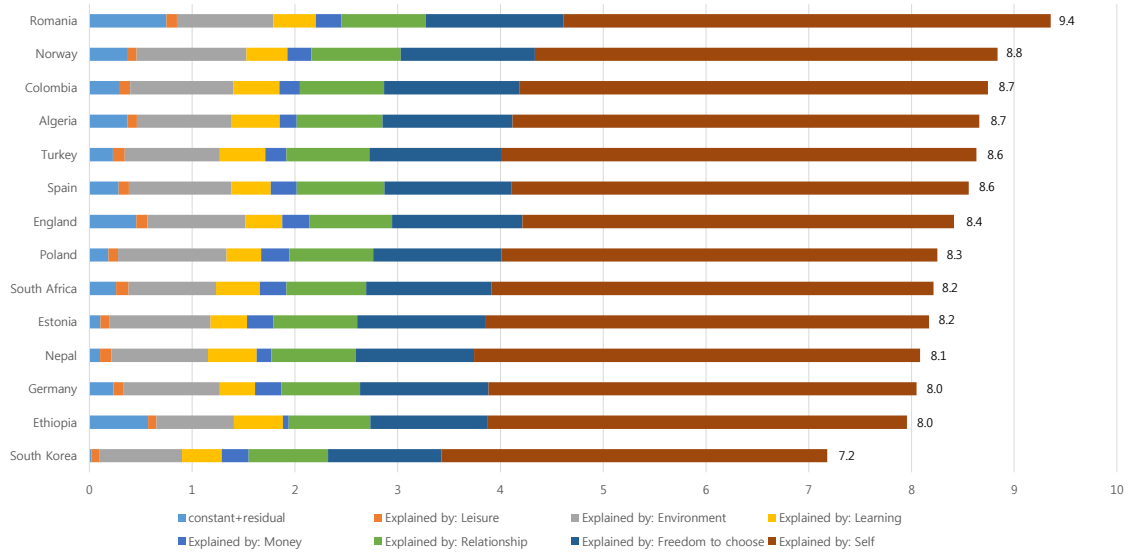
Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: SLSS			
	B	S.E.	Beta	Sig.
Leisure	.063	.014	.024	.000
Environment	.308	.017	.121	.000
Learning	.053	.006	.059	.000
Money	.278	.043	.035	.000
Relationship	.258	.020	.089	.000
Freedom to choose	.148	.006	.167	.000
Self	.513	.008	.472	.000
N. Of observations	16,940			
Adjusted R-square	.576			

Note 1) Standard errors in parentheses

2) \* p<.1 \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01

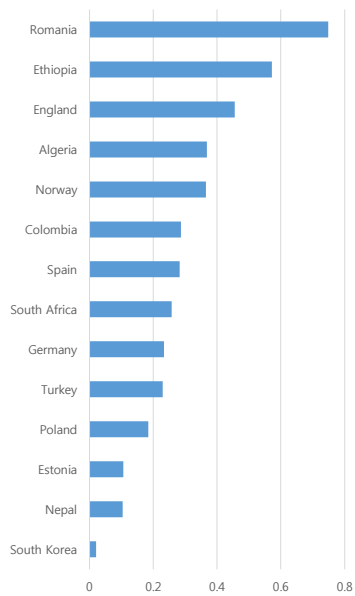
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### Decomposition of SWB by countries (SLSS)



### Decomposition of SWB by countries

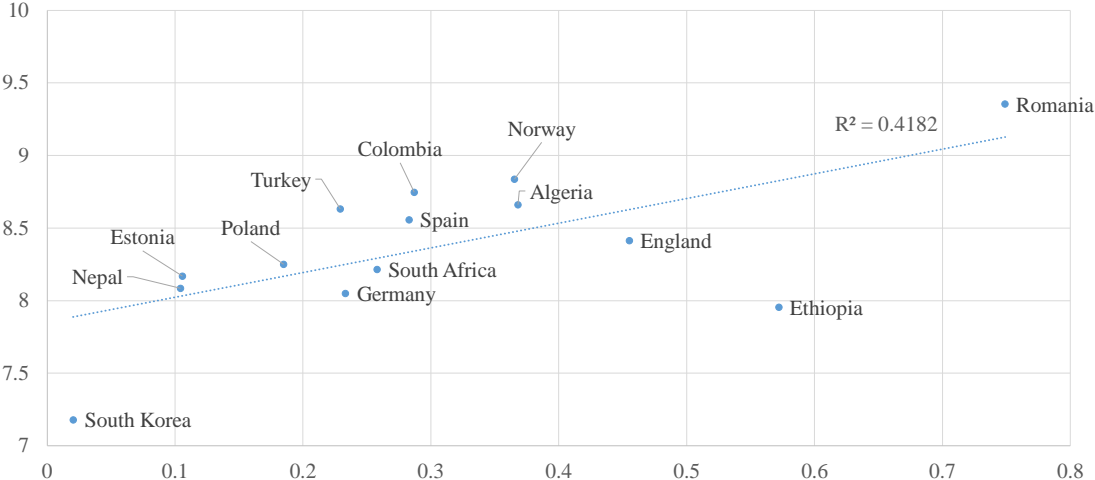
#### Constant + Residual



Variations in the 'unexplained'

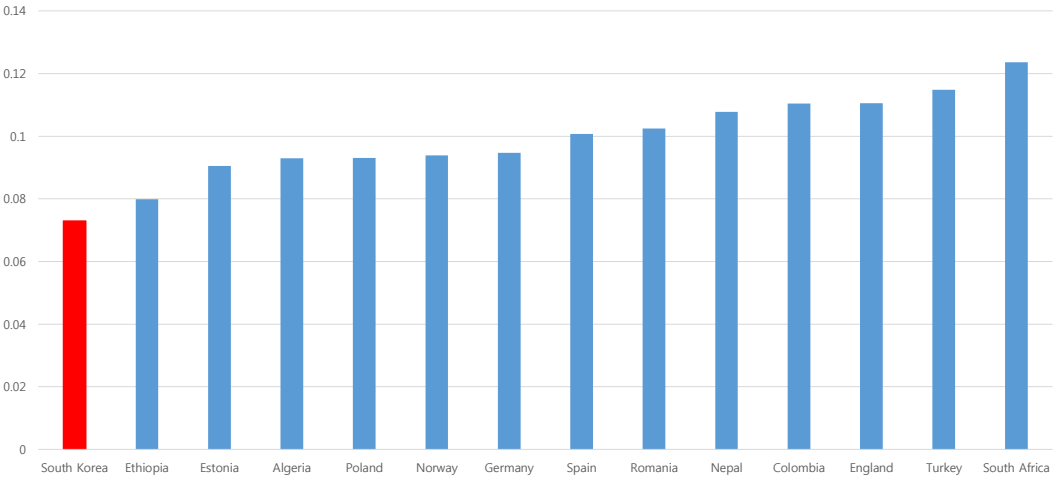
But, the 'unexplained' variations do not tell the whole story!

# The relationship: Constant+Residual - SLSS

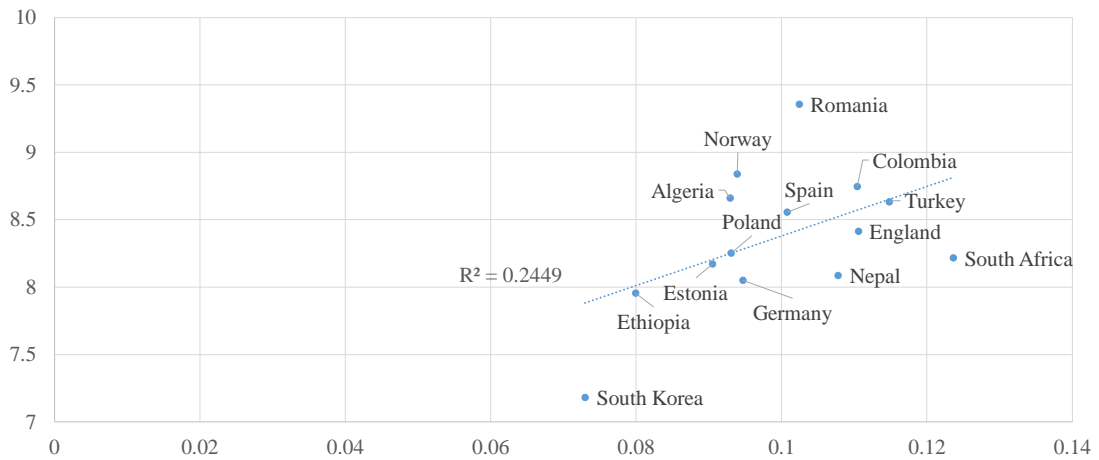


## Leisure

- Participate in organized leisure time activities
- Playing sports or doing exercise
- Taking classes outside school time on matters different than at school



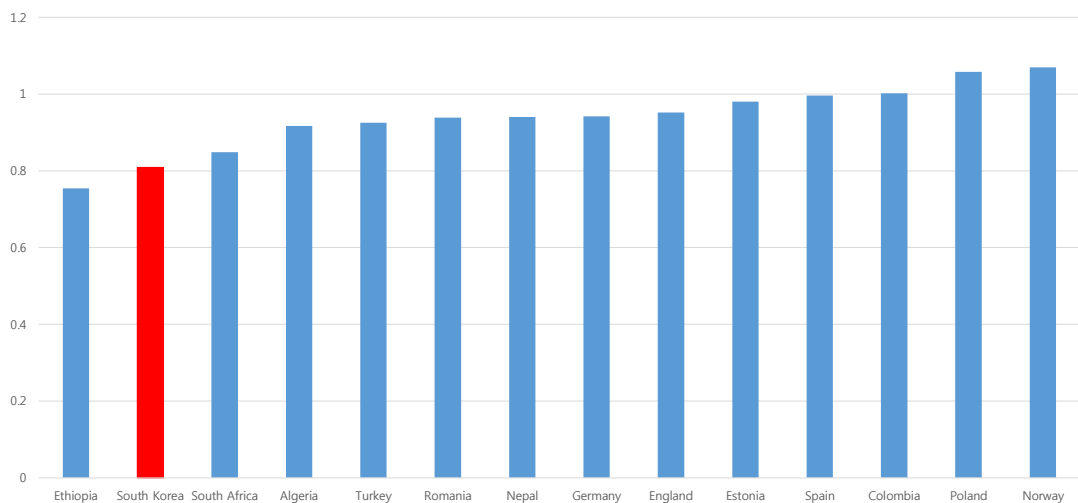
# Leisure-SLSS



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# Environment

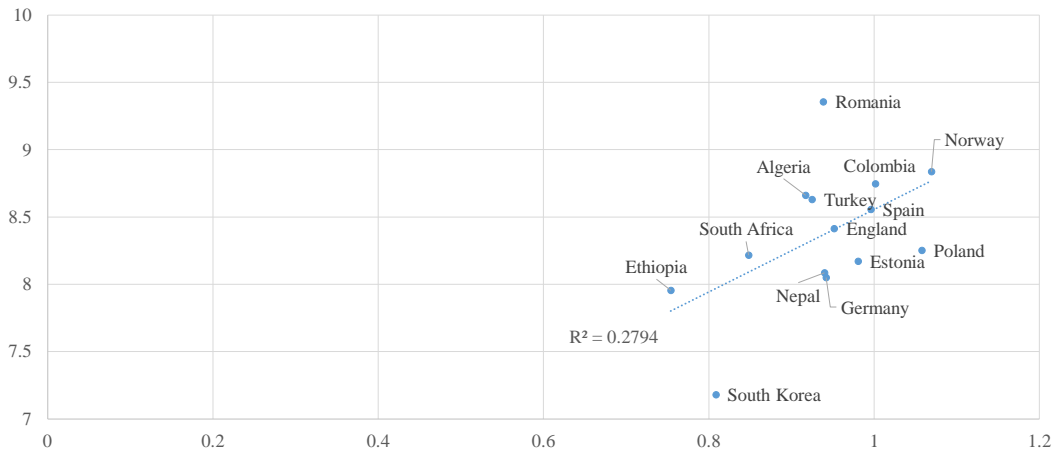
- In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time
- I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in
- I feel safe at home
- I feel safe at school
- I have quiet place to study



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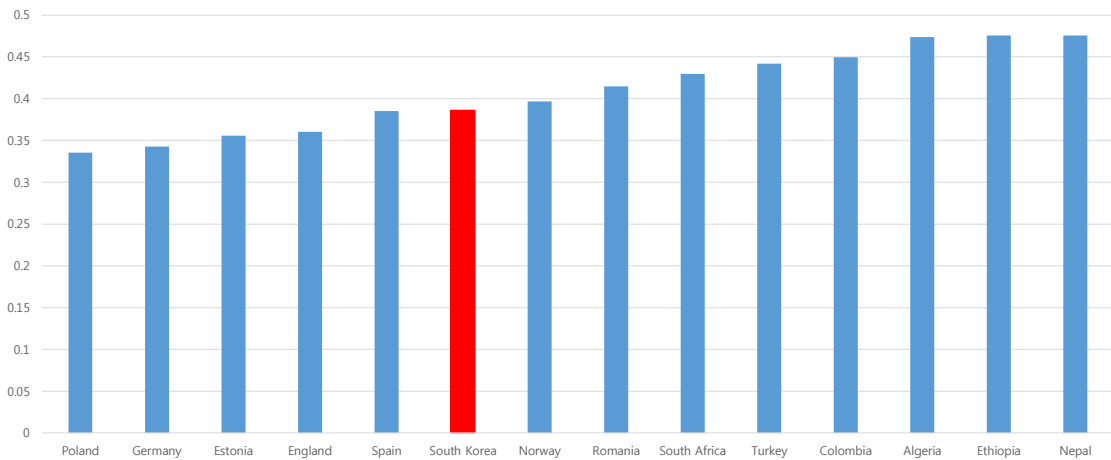
# Environment-SLSS



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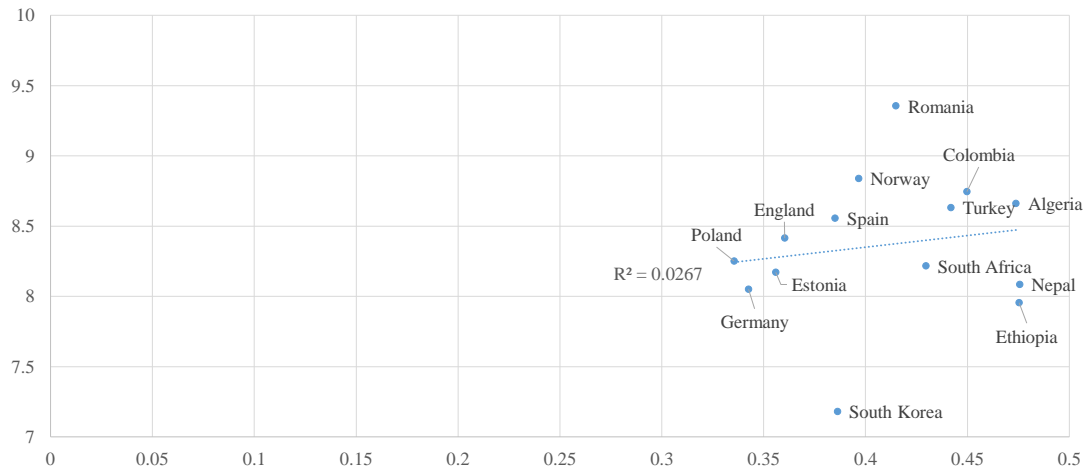
## Learning

- I feel that I am learning a lot
- I like going to school



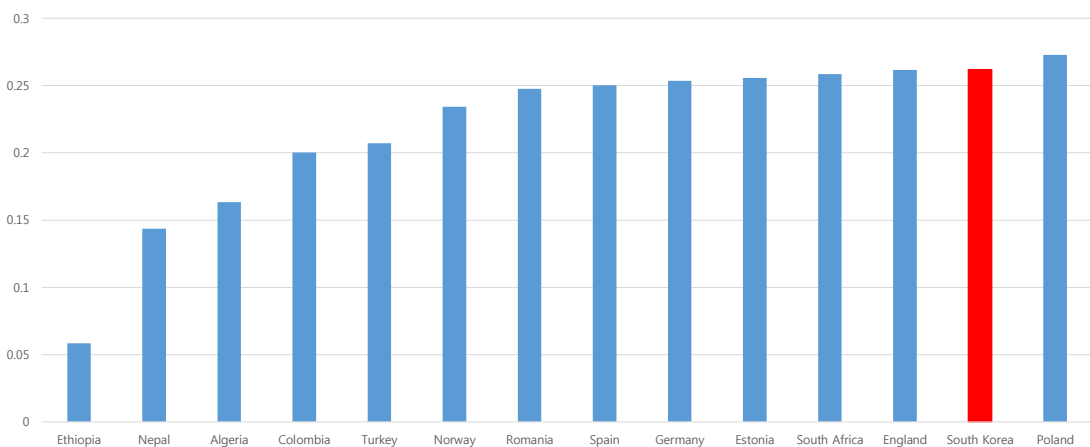
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# Learning-SLSS

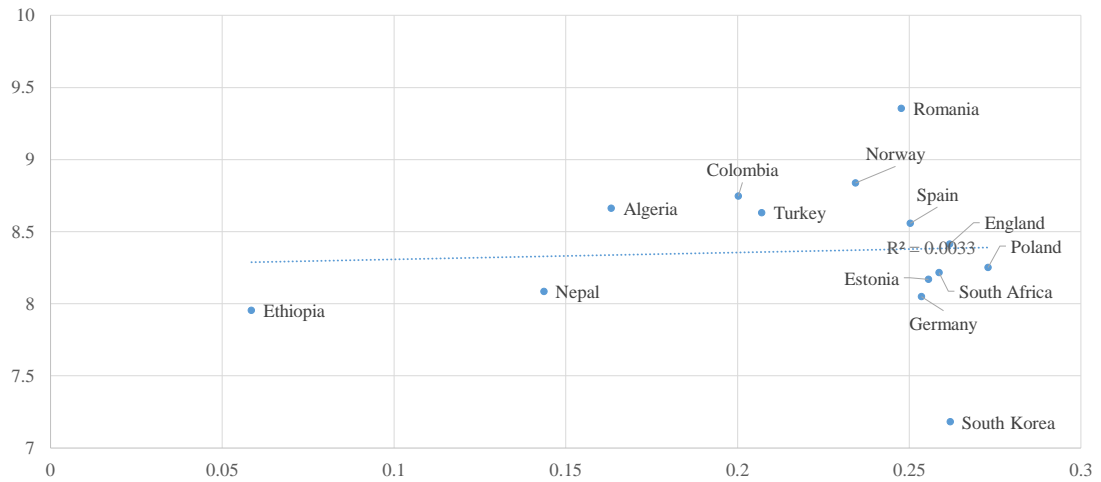


## Money

- Clothes in good condition to go to school in
- Access to computer at home
- Access to Internet
- Mobile phone
- Your own room
- Books to read for fun
- A family car for transportation
- Your own stuff to listen to music
- A television at home that you can use



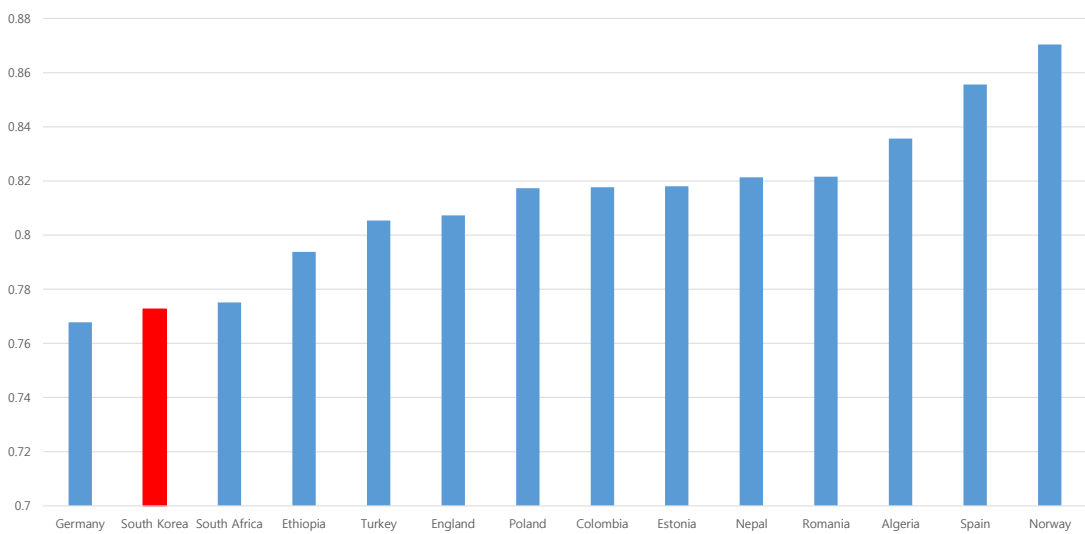
# Money-SLSS



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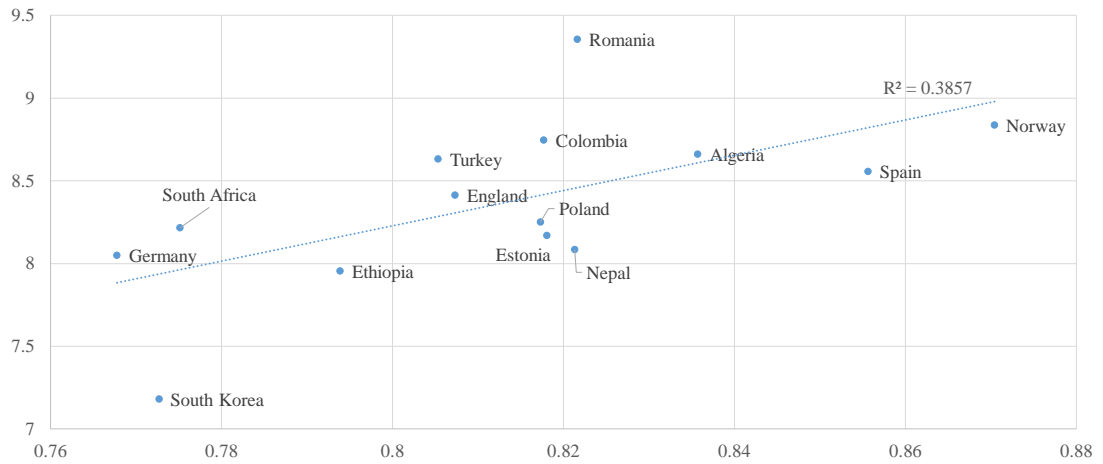
# Relationship

- My parents (or the people who look after me) listen to me and take what I say into account
- My friends are usually nice to me
- My parents (or the people who look after me) treat me fairly
- My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account
- My teachers treat me fairly



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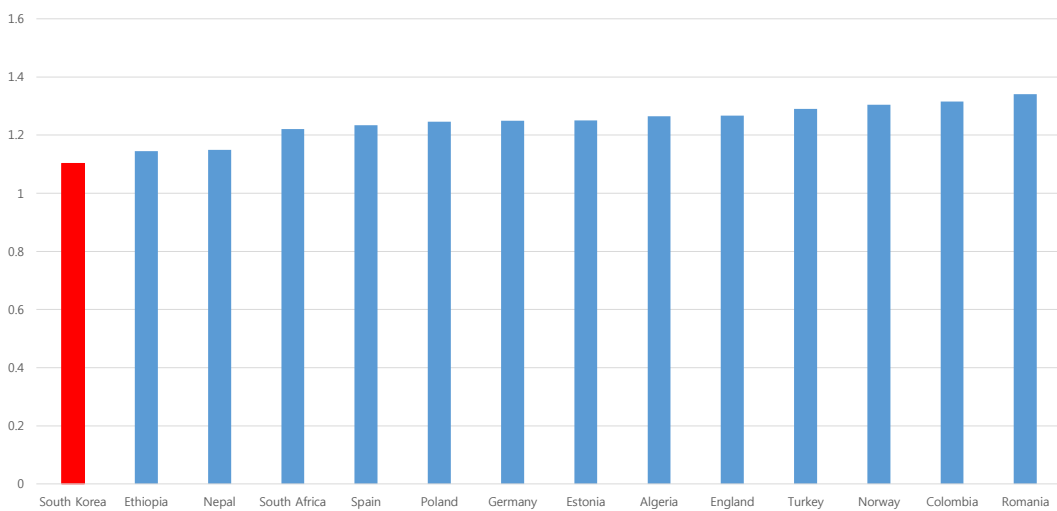
# Relationship-SLSS



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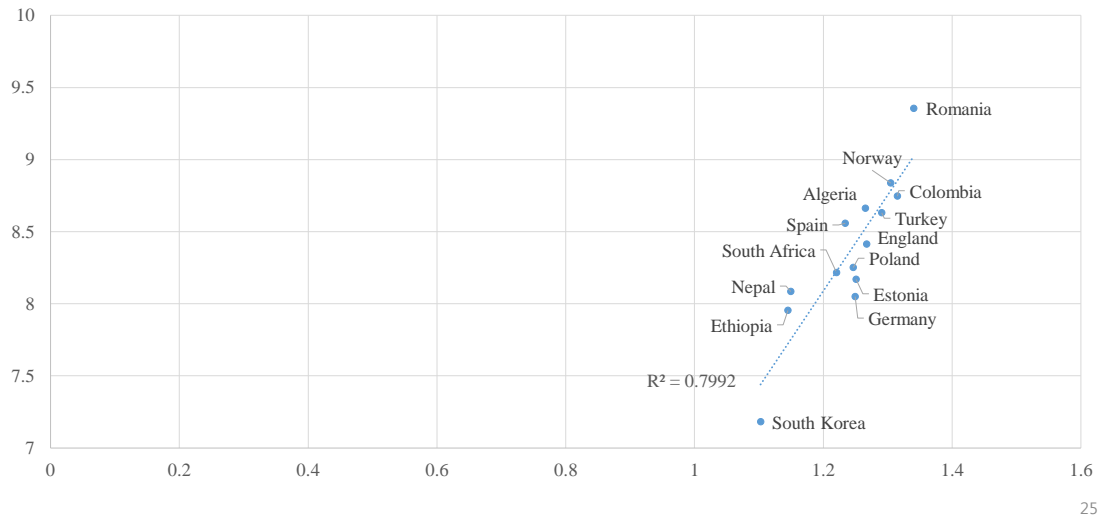
## Freedom to choose

• I have enough choice about how I spend my time



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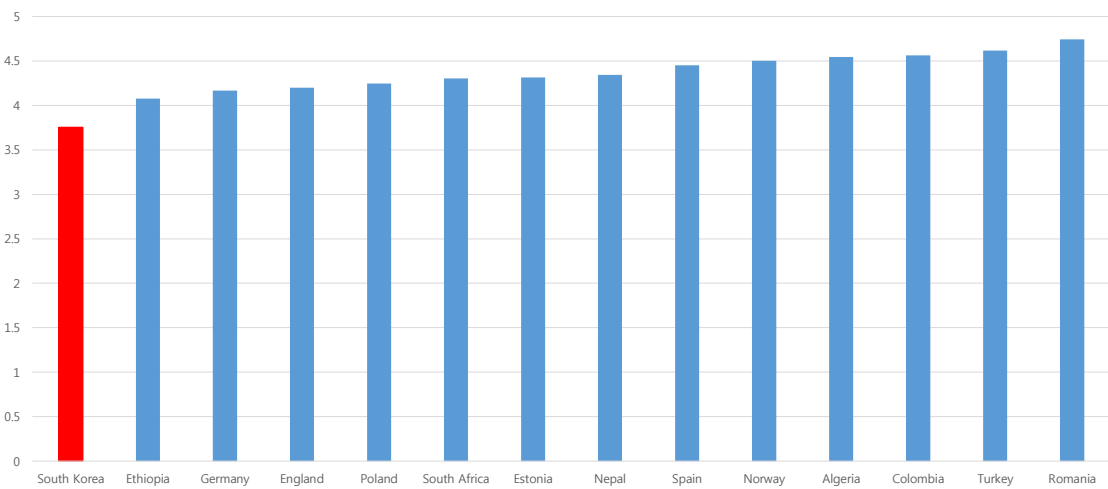
# Freedom to choose-SLSS



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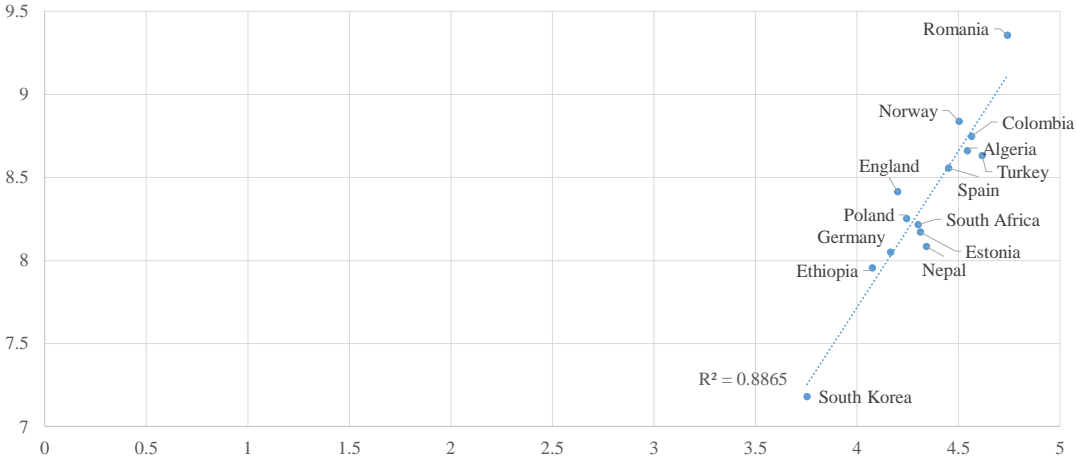
## Self

- I like being the way I am
- I am good at managing my daily responsibilities
- People are generally pretty friendly towards me



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# Self-SLSS



## Discussion

**What matters to whom?**

## Discussion

- The results showed that the variations of children's SWB exist across countries.
  - South Korea, Nepal, and Ethiopia's children reported low level of SWB consistently.
  - But, why?
- Decomposition of SWB
  - We decomposed of SWB using the pooled-data, individual-level country data.
  - We divided differences of SWB between countries into the 'explained' and 'unexplained' portions.
  - The 'effects' of the 7 major factors are different across countries.

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## Discussion

- We can assume the 'unexplained' part (intercept and residuals) of SWB could be due to 'reporting bias'.
- However, the differences in the 'unexplained' parts do not fully account for the observed SWB variations.
- Then, what matters really?

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## **Different level of influences to ‘determine’ children’s SWB**

- ‘Weak’ factors
  - Learning
  - Money
- ‘Moderate’ factors
  - The ‘unexplained’
  - Leisure
  - Environment
  - Relationship
- ‘Strong’ factors
  - Freedom to choose
  - Self

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- In fact, the reason why Korea has the lowest level of SWB is due to the facts that Korean children have lower level of ‘self’ and ‘freedom to choose’
- Along with more obvious policy targets (such as learning, money, relationship, etc.), more attention is needed to how children view themselves and the choices they can make.

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# References

- Bradshaw, J. (2014). Overview: Social Policies and Child Well-Being. In *Handbook of Child Well-Being* (pp. 2921-2943): Springer.
- Bradshaw, J. (2014). Subjective Well-Being and Social Policy: Can Nations Make Their Children Happier? *Child Indicators Research*, 1-15.
- Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., Sachs, J., & Council, E. C. (2013). *World happiness report 2013*: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- Sachs, J. D., Layard, R., & Helliwell, J. F. (2012). World happiness report. *The Earth Institute-Columbia University*.